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Introduction to the Reading Packet

by Kamesh Sankaran

Welcome to the final course in the Whitworth's Worldview Studies Program! As you know from the syllabus, the primary question that guides everything we do in this course is, "*How should we act, as individuals and as a community, in response to a broken world?*" As you also know from the syllabus, this course looks at the application of the worldview claims that were discussed in CO 150 and CO 250.

However, because CO 150 and CO 250 are not pre-requisites for this course, this reading packet will succinctly summarize some key concepts from those courses in ways that will allow you to succeed in this course. Therefore, while some of the materials in this reading packet (specifically, some elements of the epistemology, metaphysics, and the Faith & Culture briefings) will be a review/refresher for many students, they will be new for others. Regardless of your background in the Worldview Studies Program, you will notice the emphasis on the applications of these ideas in addressing real-world problems.

You will also find valuable summaries of various ethical principles. They shape our thinking of the just ends to achieve for the problems we see in the world (based on our own worldview commitments).

CO 350 treats the policymaking process as a means for achieving social ends that are consistent with one's worldview commitments. Therefore, this reading packet also features succinct briefings on the policymaking process, actors and interests that influence it, arenas where a problem could be addressed, tools that can be used to enact a policy, and ways to evaluate a policy.

You will see that this packet does not contain any assigned reading materials for the middle five weeks (Unit II) of the course. The content for that will be provided by your section's instructor.

The readings for the five categories of social tensions (Unit III) are partially in this packet; please watch out for supplemental readings posted on Blackboard during this unit. Thank you.

Wyma's Briefing on Epistemology

by Keith Wyma

The Set-up

These briefings serve to cover a lot of the ground that would otherwise be devoted to in-class lectures. By using the briefings, we can use class time to simply recap a few important points, and then spend the majority of class time on issues of application—examples, class discussions, group work, etc.

And now a word of caution: remember that just because Wyma mocks a position, doesn't mean he thinks it's false. First off, ***no worldview—Christian or otherwise— is ever completely free of either intellectual or practical problems***. Thus, there are faults enough in every worldview for Wyma to mock. Second, and perhaps more important for these briefings, Wyma has been thoroughly saturated with postmodernism, suffers from the hipness unto death, and is so chronically detached that his retinas are endangered. As a result he can no longer describe anything with unreserved enthusiasm except for those suicides-of-reason known as Hollywood blockbusters, which are so intentionally stupid as to be irony-proof.

Epistemology

This briefing quickly summarizes the four epistemological approaches studied in Core 250, and notes ways in which those epistemologies are utilized in social and political argument. For those of you who've had CORE 250, you'll find a breezy refresher on all the hard studying you already did on epistemology, the scourge of philosophy. For those of you who've somehow escaped 250 and epistemology, your luck has just run out. (And just think, we get to do metaphysics, too!)

Now for the basic definition: *'epistemology' refers to the study of knowledge*—what knowledge is, how we can acquire it, and how we can identify it. Why is a basic grasp of epistemology so important to us in this class? Well, in an interdependent way, *epistemology and metaphysics* (the study of the basic make-up of reality, and particularly of human beings*) form the foundation of any person's worldview*. For instance, if you think all knowledge strictly has to be based in sense experience (the pure *empiricist* approach, see below), you'll never accept beliefs in anything not able to be sensed, at least indirectly. That pretty much commits you to a physicalist/materialist metaphysical position, which holds that only physical and physically based things exist. Of course that wipes out any notion of a transcendent, non-physical God. And you have no basis to believe in immortal souls for people. But then in your ethics and politics, you will exclusively focus on the material concerns of people, in this (the only) life,

since everything else—like preparing people for eternity with God—is nothing but wasting time on fairy tales ("Paging Karl Marx…"). Similarly, if you start with physicalist metaphysics, then since physical things are all that's out there, of course your physical senses will be the key to gaining knowledge. And God is once again out of the picture, and so on. In short, a person's beliefs about what to do in life are crucially dependent on his or her epistemology (and metaphysics).

Thus epistemological and metaphysical positions are a bit like puzzle pieces: they're shaped to fit together well with certain others, and to fit badly with still others. When they do interlock, they give a frame (like putting the edges together) that determines which further puzzle pieces (like religious and ethical and political beliefs) can fit in to complete the emerging picture (the worldview).

As I said, later we'll look at connections to metaphysics, focusing on conceptions of human nature. But for now, here are the big Western approaches to epistemology.

Epistemological Approach 1: Empiricism

Empiricism claims that knowledge comes from experience, particularly sense experience—what we see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. How do you know that your friend is wearing perfume? You just smelled her (discreetly, I hope). How do you know sub-atomic particles exist? Because you saw trails made by their passage in a cloud chamber. Not everything known to you has to be experienced by you directly; somebody else could experience it and tell you about it. Or sometimes we can know based on technology, like cloud chambers, built to extend our powers of perception. Indeed, modern science is the flagship of empiricism's fleet, giving us at least indirect experience of all kinds of stuff that we otherwise couldn't have access to, like the geological past, or distant stars.

Empiricism has many *strengths*: (a) Its claims are backed by "the test of experience," the proverbial phrase for certain proof. (b) Its claims are usually quantifiable and measurable. (c) Its proof is presumably accessible to anyone with functional senses and a grasp of their implications. (d) It's a solid fit with science and scientific evidence. These strengths can make empiricism highly attractive and effective in political debate.

However, empiricism also has some *limitations and cautionary points*: (a) As mentioned above, religious beliefs (and ethical beliefs and much of human mental life), cannot be justified or sometimes even described empirically—think a moment, what sense experience could you point to in justification that "stealing is wrong?" (b) Empirical conclusions are, by necessity, always provisional, perhaps being overturned by future investigation. Which leads to (c) empirical data's provisional nature allows it to be easily manipulated, so that it may seem to support either

side of a political question. And (d) empirically supported claims may be undermined by biased or faulty data-collection techniques.

Epistemological Approach 2: Innatism

Innatism claims that knowledge comes from what is self-evident to every (functional adult) person's inborn reason. That is, certain things, like "2+2=4" are *immediately seen to be necessarily true* by everyone, once the meanings of "2" and "4" and "+" and "=" are grasped. Somehow the recognition of, and belief in, these truths is innate; we just see that that's the way things are and *have* to be. It's not that everyone knows them (little kids, etc., don't), but everyone who understands the meanings and operations of the mathematical terms does, and maybe the kids could be said to know them "potentially"—they're just waiting for the opportunity. Innatism holds that such truths are the basis of knowledge, and other knowledge should be built upon them by logical steps that are, themselves, self-evident to reason. Not surprisingly, math and logic are the flagships of the innatist fleet, but fundamental value statements often sail with them.

Innatism has a number of *strengths*, including: (a) Self-evident truths have a 100% certainty, offering unarguable support. (b) They offer un-revisable conclusions, unlike empiricism's findings—i.e. one doesn't have to worry about the next study overturning all one's arguments. (c) They include moral beliefs—everyone just immediately sees that torturing infants is monstrously wrong. And (d) their universality makes them cross-cultural.

However, innatism also has *limitations and weaknesses*: (a) Innatist-style argument can often cover arrogance and ethnocentrism—"*everyone* values *X*…," when in fact only one's own culture or class or gender, etc., values *X*. (b) Indeed, in actual practice it's hard to find much—anything?—that everyone believes, even when the conditions for doing so are present. And (c) innatism has trouble with religious belief, because while some have claimed that we innately recognize God's existence ("John Calvin to the white courtesy phone, please"), most people don't buy that, which is a big problem for supposedly universal knowledge.

Epistemological Approach 3: Intuitionism

Intuitionism claims that knowledge comes through flashes of insight, epiphanies, hunches, "sixth-sense perceptions," etc.—the key is that in some deep, inexplicable, yet self-authenticating way a person suddenly connects with reality. When everything just clicks together with an, "Aha! Of course, it was so simple all along!" that's intuitionism. (Apparently, Oprah has literally trademarked the "aha!" moment[tm], and all profits from this section will go to her.) Intuitionism works well with the intangibles that give empiricism fits, and it's not troubled by disagreement the way innatism is. Intuitionism often appears in political arguments when

someone maintains they have a special sensitivity or insight (thank you, Mr. Clinton, for "feeling our pain"). Environmental appeals to the sacredness of nature—Mr. Thoreau says, "Just go out into the woods alone, and you'll feel it!"—exhibit an intuitionist stance (sacredness being a very difficult property to test for: "Well, I spit on it and lightning didn't strike me. I think it's OK to chop this one down, Biff.")

In fact, all joking aside, intuitionist appeals have several *advantages*: (a) They are often contagiously impassioned, because intuitional flashes can be deeply moving and powerful motivators—think of how effective a Christian conversion story is. (b) As mentioned above, intuitionism is not undercut by lack of testable proof or by disagreement in others. (c) Indeed, intuitionism can actually use disagreement to discredit the opponents, "Well, I guess we know now who *doesn't* get it." And (d) intuitional experiences can convince others by the certainty and "ring of truth" conveyed.

But again, intuitionism has significant *limitations*, too: (a) Intuitions can be mistaken ("I was so *sure* she was The One!"), but their completely un-testable nature makes that very hard to detect, short of disaster ("I can't believe she took my *whole family's* credit cards, too!"). (b) Despite their power—perhaps because of it?—intuitional insights can be difficult to communicate ("How can I get through to you…?!"). And (c) the claim to insight that, by definition, is so personal that not all will have it can easily be abused ("Since you clearly don't get it about Communism, Mr. Solzhenitsyn, you'll have to attend our little "summer camp" in Siberia.").

Epistemological Approach 4: Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism claims that knowledge is gained from authorities, trustworthy external sources that have privileged access to the truth that the rest of us can't [feasibly] duplicate. Authoritarianism does utilize *rational justifications, but they concern the legitimacy of the authority,* not the claims. For example, if I know from God that heaven awaits those who are saved, I can't rationally justify why heaven must be there, but I can rationally justify why the sovereign, all-knowing, holy God would be trustworthy about that. Authoritarianism has a bad odor in our fiercely democratic society, but the fact is that it's invoked all the time. Most of education proceeds by authoritarian means (you may bow to me now), and we have many more authorities than just the obvious ones of God or government. For instance, science and scientists often function as authorities. We always get their impressive credentials, and completely aside from any empirical data they *offer* (which they may yet have, unrevealed to us), they make sweeping policy declarations—check out some of the climate change rhetoric for examples of this. Authoritarianism also appears in identity politics, for instance when oppressed groups claim that no one not of their ethnic/sexual/religious group can truly know their experiences or the extent of their harms.

Authoritarianism actually has significant *advantages* in argument: (a) It's a very efficient way to spread knowledge, not limited by requisite education or special insight (which is why "Because I said so!" accompanies most of what small children learn). And (b) shared allegiance to an authority can help knit communities together into more effective political entities—think of how NYC rallied around Mayor Giuliani after 9/11.

However, authoritarianism also has its own *drawbacks:* (a) Its reliability can't be any better than the trustworthiness of its source (which is why I hate to see [most] internet sources cited in papers)—think again of Giuliani, and how his scandal-riddled credibility went down so far he had to withdraw from the U.S. Senate race. (b) It's completely unpersuasive to anyone who doesn't accept the authority—unsurprisingly, many in the Arabic Muslim didn't believe U.S. President George W. Bush's claims about why the U.S. had to go to war with Iraq. (c) In argument it tends to look less rational and respectable than some of the other options. And (d) the power of an authority—needing no justification or explanation for its claims—can be a powerful temptation for abuse.

Practical Upshot

Since all four approaches appear regularly in social and political arguments, it's highly useful to be able to *recognize them* when they do. If you realize what kind of epistemological stance is in use, you can tell *where to assess the claims*: (1) For empiricism, examine the accuracy and adequacy of the data and the likelihood of the interpretation. (2) For innatism, evaluate the rationality and universality of the principles. (3) For intuitionism, well, good luck there if you yourself don't have the insight—but you can look for alternative explanations for the supposed insight, or at least guard against the contagion of the passion, until you treat the claimant as a proposed authority and check for general trustworthiness—"And that's why I never voted for Clinton," he explained smugly. And (4) for authoritarianism, investigate the legitimacy of the claimed expertise and the trustworthiness of the claimant.

Finally, let me make this plea: Please be aware that while I've given the four in pure forms, ***almost nobody is an absolute purist in his or her epistemological approach*.** An abortion protester might base much of her position on revelation, an authoritarian epistemological stance, but also appeal to scientific data about capabilities of the fetus, an empirical epistemological tack. One reason for the lack of purists is that none of the approaches has been able to show that it accounts for all our knowledge in a convincing and definitive fashion (other than in the minds of philosophical extremists—the Montana militias of the Academy). For instance, hardcore empiricists not only have trouble justifying belief in God, which doesn't much bother them, they also can't really justify belief in *other* people's *minds* (have you—*could* you—ever sense one?), which is a bit more inconveniencing.

However, given what I said at the outset about how epistemologies have metaphysical connections and how not every one fits with every other one, you might be wondering, doesn't that mix-and-match attitude leave us in a confused, probably inconsistent state? YES, it does (I never said the militias didn't have attractive recruiting points). Our claims to knowledge have become so muddled, that we've finally spawned the postmodern epistemological strategy of simply tearing down every knowledge-claim that appears, while never really being able to make any of one's own (without of course immediately knocking them down…if you've run out of drugs yet feel the need for more brain damage, just read Jacques Derrida). For the rest of us, not ready to be "militia" extremists or dropout, extreme-postmodernists, ***we need, at the very least, to adopt an attitude of humility about our own claims*.** If the one thing we can be sure of is that our own position hides flaws unseen by us, then maybe our opponent isn't as dumb as he or she looks. And maybe our own views aren't the perfect solution to every problem—which might not be a bad thing at all for us to keep in mind as we act in the social and political spheres.

Wyma's Briefing on Metaphysics

by Keith Wyma

The Set-up

This briefing covers a few key metaphysical disputes that surface regularly in Core 350. The issues also have some roots in Core 250, and relate to the epistemologies from that class. So here's where we complete the recap of some of CORE 250's essential concepts as they appear in social decision-making. I'm assuming you've read the epistemology briefing; we now turn to metaphysics.

Here's the definition: '*metaphysics' refers to the study of the nature of reality, of what exists and how*. And as I mentioned in the last briefing, metaphysics, together with epistemology, forms the foundation of any worldview. Metaphysics normally includes whether the universe is a self-existent thing or depends on God to exist; whether all that exists is physical, or spiritual, or some combination (or something else entirely); and so on.

For our purposes, the pertinent metaphysical questions deal with *human nature*, because *every ethical position—and hence every political position—"rests" upon a foundation in metaphysics.* That is, any time you make claims about how humans should behave, either individually (ethics) or corporately (politics), the *goals and values* you argue for will *only be desirable and valuable, given certain conceptions of human nature*. For example, it's no use arguing to Nietzsche that he's in the wrong for not supporting universal human rights, because (a) he doesn't think humans are the sorts of beings who can *have* rights, and (b) he thinks humans differ so much in capability that it's a moral mistake to treat them all the same. Given Nietzsche's metaphysics of human nature, his ethical elitism and political acceptance of slavery make complete sense. So to argue with him, you must address his metaphysics.

Therefore, since metaphysics underlies all the ideological stances—the value and goal systems—we'll be confronting in social and political argument, it helps us to see what some of the basic metaphysical disagreements are, concerning human nature. We're going to look at three separate points that also interrelate, with a quick glance at the opposing sides of each.

Free Will

Perhaps the most obvious metaphysical disagreement with application into policy-making is the controversy over human free will. `*Free will*` refers not to political freedom—can you vote, do you have civil liberties, etc.—but to *the metaphysical issue of whether we have control over our*

own actions, in what we do and in whether and how we do it. That is, are we merely puppets of our genes or of our environments or of God? Or is our decision-making a point under our control in the stream of events?

On the one side are deniers of freedom: B.F. Skinner, Karl Marx, etc. The most common motivation for denying free will is the belief in *determinism*, the thesis that *every event, everything that happens, had some prior cause that made it happen just the way it did***, and either** that *every cause is itself an event, so the causal chain goes back indefinitely* (the *scientific* version of determinism), **or** that *every cause is ultimately caused by God* (the *theological* version). Given determinism, many draw the logical conclusion that human actions—as results of long, necessary chains of events—cannot be free. (Some deterministsˆcalled *compatibilists*—deny that. They want to have their deterministic cake and eat their freedom too. But we're not going to go there as I think it's incoherent: "Well, of course, Mr. Jones couldn't do anything about the fact that he yelled at his wife, but we're going to blame him for it anyway." OK, then…) On the other side are the supporters of freedom, John Locke, William James, etc. They typically reject determinism, and argue that human actions might be influenced by prior factors, but that the decision to act and the responsibility for it lie with the person who acts.

It seems highly plausible that we're not totally free, with no hindrances on our options, in every decision we ever make. And most supporters of free will wouldn't propose such a high standard. So note that admitting that there are limits to our exercise of freedom does *not* imply accepting the (logically incoherent) compatibilist position. The question becomes, *how much restriction can we suffer and still be meaningfully free?* Or again, given the various restrictive conditions we experience on our decisions, how much control can we individually exercise? And *how responsible are we, as individuals*, for our actions? And on the other side, *how responsible are the institutions* around us for the conditions they place on our actions? In short, what's the upshot if we're free, or not?

Now, when *freedom is denied, ethics and politics are affected enormously*. For one, as indicated by my snide comment above, it doesn't seem sensible anymore to hold people morally responsible for their actions, if they really had no control over doing them. That has drastic implications for the legal system (note how often defense lawyers attempt to get their clients acquitted by blaming some uncontrolled factor for the crime, say, abusive parents, lack of economic opportunities, excessive consumption of Twinkies [that was a real defense, BTW], etc.). For another, personal, civic liberty begins to look much less like a good political idea. It's not like civic liberty really allows people to be free, in a meaningful sense, and it just makes the shaping influences on their political actions that much more confused. Indeed, it's not at all clear whether people deserve such liberties, anyway, since *much of human dignity finds its support in the belief in human free will*. It seems much more logical to exert strong, unified pressures on

people towards politically conformable positions ("It's time for your re-education to the principles of Marxism; pack your bags for the Gulag."). You could see this exemplified at a smaller level in something like parenting solutions. The more parents view humans deterministically, the more sense it would make to heavily structure their child's upbringing.

As might be expected then, when freedom is affirmed, it usually coincides with firm declarations of the dignity and worth of individuals. Such commitments then lead to ideologies that value individual civil liberty, that privilege individuals' control over their own lives as much as possible against societal control, and so on. Parents, for instance, might pursue strategies that build their child's sense of agency and independence. But affirmation of free will also fits with holding individuals responsible for what they've done, so a belief in free will may often underlie refusals to support state aid for drug rehab, welfare, and the like ("They got in this mess by their own actions, so they can get out on their own, too, by gum! Harrumph!"). So while deterministic stances can contribute to doing away with people's personal liberties, free-will stances can create tension with community responsibility, institutional responsibility and the like.

Human Malleability

This controversy with the strange title has been going on for centuries, but recently Thomas Sowell has put it under more manageable terms: he calls it the debate between *constrained* and *unconstrained* conceptions of human nature. `Malleability` means the property of being moldable or workable into various shapes. So the dispute here concerns *whether human nature itself is changeable, particularly by societal influences*.

Those on the *constrained* side think it's not, at least not much and probably not at all with respect to some basic dispositions—i.e. *human nature is itself constrained within certain boundaries, regarding our moral dispositions and cognitive capabilities, so that people will always be basically like we are*. And given our experience with humans, it's not surprising that constrained thinkers often have a pessimistic view of human nature. That is, we're stuck the way we are, and the way we are is pretty selfish, violent, etc. (you might notice a connection to the Christian doctrine of original sin, but also to Darwinian theories of evolutionary psychology).

Unconstrained thinkers, on the other hand, regard *human nature itself as changeable—i.e. the moral and cognitive limits of our nature can be changed, so that we're not constrained to always be like what we're like now.* Unconstrained theorists usually have optimistic views of human nature. They see all the same bad activity the constrained group does, but they chalk it up to inappropriate societal influences, and reason that when the influences are changed, the dispositions and behaviors will change. Marx, for example, exposed the brutality and selfishness of life in a capitalistic system, and predicted that such behavior would change under communism.

It seems to me you could make a little game (a la Jeff Foxworthy) of, "You might be a(n) (un)constrained thinker, if _____." For example, "You might be a constrained thinker, if you tell all substitute teachers to prepare for an unruly class." Or, "You might be an unconstrained thinker, if you like John Lennon's song, "Imagine."" These competing visions of human nature show up in our positions on everything from early childhood psychology (For example, Augustine: "If babies are innocent, it's only for lack of strength, not ill will."), to hopes for a truly just society (For example, Martin Luther King, Jr.: "I have a dream…"). But they especially show up in our expectations of government.

The *constrained* vision lends itself well to a largely *negative view of government's role*. It's not that they don't think we need governing, they do. Yet government can't really change us, and it's made up of the same pesky, corruptible humans as the rest of society, so the best thing government can do is impose law to limit and punish corruption. Moreover, government itself needs to be under tight controls (say, through checks and balances—thank you so much, Federalists), with limited powers for civil officers and limited sphere of control for the governmental institution as a whole. It's as if the constrained thinker would *like* to have a really big government—heaven knows we need the smack down put on us regularly—but *can't support* one because it would need smack downs, too, and there's no one who could deliver them (former wrestling champion, Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, being unavailable for political reform movements due to his busy Disney movie schedule…). Thus, the constrained vision's attitude towards government can be summed up in this proverb from the Roman satirist Juvenal: who will watch the watchmen? (That proverb, BTW, inspired the best graphic novel ever and a somewhat disappointing movie—you can guess the title…)

The *unconstrained* vision, however, lends itself to a *much more positive view of government's role*. Now, let me clarify here that the unconstrained vision *need not lead* to big government, but it *can easily do so*. The *role of government depends on where in the social conditions the unconstrained thinker locates the unhealthy social influences*. That is, if it's government's intrusive control that's making people act badly, then of course government must be reduced so that humanity's natural goodness may emerge. That's Rousseau. It's also Adam Smith's position; in spite of all his talk about how our decisions are all based on selfish motives, he leans towards unconstrained thinking, since he believes that if government would leave us alone, we'd make good moral decisions (for selfish reasons) and thereby improve society. However, if the unhealthy influence on our nature is located anywhere other than government—in the economic or family structures or societal ideals, say—then it's time to feed the government with Miracle Grow. That's Marx's position. Government, as the most powerful social institution, has the most potential to change society in ways that will shape our natures for the better. The obvious implication, then, is that government ought to be able to encourage and promote virtuous moral actions, rather than just prohibiting our vicious ones. That opens whole new realms of policy the

constrained camp would not explore. Moreover, the more powerful and wide-reaching government is, the more effectively it can do its job of creating positive change. So unconstrained thinkers often argue for larger and more unified government and a wider scope for policy control. Many radical feminists, for example, argue that gender equality will always be hampered by the presence of a "private sphere" of life, in which sexist assumptions can go unchallenged by social sanctions, and therefore they advocate more government regulation of family life, and so on.

The Constitution of Human Beings

The last controversy surrounds the *constitution—the make-up—of human beings*. It turns on the question, what are the essential components of a human person? In the West, this dispute usually involves two positions: *physicalism* (the new name for *materialism*) and *dualism*.

Physicalism says human beings are composed solely of matter and energy (which are in fact the same thing; thank you, Mr. Einstein). Obviously, our bodies are physical, but our minds too are only electrical reactions in our brains (or at most some offshoot phenomena of that). Humans don't have immortal souls, since everything physical about the person—and that's all there is—clearly decomposes at death. In the words of physicalist Paul Churchland, "We are elegant meat machines."

On the opposing side, *dualism holds that in addition to the physical body, human composition includes an irreducibly non-material mind.* Mind is often described in terms of "spirit" or "soul." Not all dualists believe in human immortality, but many do, based on the presence of a soul. Descartes is perhaps the most famous dualist, with his claim, "I think, therefore I am," contributing to his argument for the metaphysical independence of the mind.

Now, as you might expect, *physicalists focus their concerns for justice solely in this life, on the conditions and needs of physical existence in the here-and-now*. To direct social energy and action towards "eternal concerns" is a misguided waste at best, evil oppression at worst. Marx, for example, referred to Christianity as "the opiate of the people" and "the garland on the chains"—i.e. it was a manipulative illusion of heavenly reward to keep the oppressed from being too upset by their condition. Moreover, questions of human life are ultimately going to be settled empirically. Functioning humans exhibit certain neurological activity, for example, and anything not exhibiting that doesn't count as human in ethical and political questions. The implications for abortion, fetal testing, euthanasia, etc., are obvious.

However, *dualism [often] also considers matters beyond physical-measure to be pertinent to justice.* For any dualist who believes in immortal human souls, there may be much more to the moral status of a human being than the functioning of one's body and brain. On that account,

dualism lends itself much more easily to defense of human rights for unborn fetuses, comatose patients, etc. In addition, dualists can much more easily tolerate the presence in society of religions and the resources they draw. Even if government has no say in religious belief—as in our system—it need not be considered a waste of government money to fund religiously based social programs (The last Bush administration pursued this line. "Thank you, George W." said the bishop).

Interrelation

Some of these positions fit together and some don't. For example, both positions on freedom seem to fit easily with either view of human malleability; and both dualism and physicalism accommodate either position on malleability. However, support for freedom seems to link more easily to dualism than physicalism (solely physical events seeming to follow on deterministic lines, given our everyday and scientific observations).

Epistemological Connections

Again, as I mentioned earlier, these metaphysical positions tend to fit well with certain epistemological approaches and to grate with others. For example, physicalism and empiricism make a very tight fit; the physical senses can tell us all we can know about human beings, and we don't believe there's any more to us than that. On the other hand, commitment to human freedom seems much more suited to some other epistemology than empiricism. We might know that we're free by God's authoritarian revelation (the owner's manual for humans, as it were), or by some purely rational proof (Immanuel Kant used this strategy), by immediate intuitional grasp of our own "spontaneity of consciousness" (Jean Paul Sartre's view), but we could never tell by empirical observation (you probably don't even realize that some of the friends you see every day are merely the robotic puppets of Noelle Wiersma's psychology experiments, let alone which ones…). When it comes to malleability, support for *either* the constrained or unconstrained positions ultimately must come from some epistemology other than empiricism. It's not that there's no empirical data on this—the record of human affairs is open to all—it's just that it's subject to interpretation to the extent that the data can be read either way. I think anyone is blind who looks at human history and comes away with any conclusion other than that humanity is constrained to its faults. Karl Marx found it equally obvious that humanity had never had a true showing of its unconstrained natural possibilities, since it had never lived under the real justice of communistic society. My "reading" of the data is influenced by my acceptance of Christian revelation, Marx's by his intuitional certainty of the communistic ideal.

So with regard to epistemological connections, at the very least we should be alert for what approaches are being used to defend the metaphysical bases of political ideology, since some of those connections are fruitfully persuasive and others aren't.

General Political Upshot

When investigating ideologies, always check the metaphysics. What are apparently moral or political disputes between ideologies frequently have much deeper roots in the metaphysics underlying those ideologies. On one hand, you may find that an ideological position you're attracted to presupposes a metaphysics opposed to yours, or that your dispute with someone of a different ideology grows out of metaphysical disagreement. And that deeper divide should be made plain, because *metaphysical disputes are not resolvable by debate over courses of action.* You can't expect political or ethical argument to achieve consensus, if metaphysical divisions underlie the debate. On the other hand, if someone morally disputes you, and shares all your metaphysical presuppositions, you might expect a fuller resolution of your political differences. In other words, *sometimes the possibility of political or ethical consensus is created, or destroyed, by the metaphysical commitments of the players.*

Ideology

by Michael K. Le Roy, revised by Kamesh Sankaran and Michael Artime

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Political Ideologies

We can try to be as analytical, objective, and dispassionate as possible when we are talking about public policy, but most of us just can't get over the fact that our deeply held convictions eventually kick in and become influential in our judgments about most important issues. In a very real sense, we all have an ***ideology***. Any attempt to define the term *ideology* is bound to be pretty loaded. Most secular thinkers have used the term ideology almost synonymously with the term *worldview*. That is, thinkers from DeStutt de Tracy to Karl Marx have thought of ideology as though it were a lens through which we interpret all reality. Moreover, for the past 150 years, a wide variety of political theorists and philosophers have used the term in a rather negative way. An ideologue is someone who holds to a set of beliefs in a rather narrow and dogmatic way.

In CO 350 we will <u>not</u> use the term *ideology* synonymously with the term *worldview*. Instead, we refer to a narrower component of a *worldview* that is specifically concerned with the way that individuals understand and react to social and political realities in any group. It is a set of beliefs that shape our understanding of people, power, and our reaction to it. The beliefs may be shaped by moral conviction, or by our simple human needs and interests. These beliefs or assumptions about the nature of political and social reality usually consist of a wide range of opinions about the following topics: human nature, the origin of society and government, political obligation, law, freedom, equality, community, power, justice, the end of society or government, and the structural characteristics of government. Every one of us may have slightly different opinions on any of these eleven topics mentioned here, but most personal political ideologies follow a somewhat limited set of variations, and it is, therefore, possible to classify most political belief systems in a definite list.

Political scientists find it helpful to use a simple spectrum to describe and explain this pattern of belief systems. The terms *left* and *right*, in connection with political ideas, are believed to have originated during the French Revolution when relatively conservative delegates sat on the right side of the assembly hall and liberal delegates sat on the left side. Liberal and conservative might be fairly well-known terms in the United States, but when we study ideology cross-culturally it is important that we understand more than just these two terms. For this class, it is important to note that simple *left* and *right* categorizations common in American politics will not suffice. The terms *radical, liberal, moderate, conservative,* and *reactionary* are the most common terms used to explain the classic political spectrum. (NOTE: the classical political spectrum is <u>not</u> the recommended terminology for use in this course and its assignments.)

The Classical Political Spectrum

IDEOLOGY	Radical	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Reactionary
Analysis of the Existing Order	Extremely dissatisfied.	Somewhat dissatisfied with the existing order, but much less so than radicals.	Fundamentally satisfied with the existing order, although they agree that there is some room for improvement.	Generally very supportive of the status quo, and reluctant to see it changed. Conservatives often believe that the status quo is probably as good as it gets and is not too confident in human efforts to advance social goals.	Very dissatisfied with the existing social order. Advocates a return to the past.
Speed of changes in government	Rapid, revolutionary and even violent at times.	Gradual reform through the political system by means of the law.	Slow to no change should be gradual and minimize disruption.	Little to no change.	Rapid, revolutionary and even violent at times.
Freedom and the law	Individual freedom must be maximized so that the positive capacities of human beings can be released.	Individual freedom is extremely important. There is not much that government can do to correct human sinfulness, but it can contain evil by means of law.	Freedom is important but must be balanced by the rule of law.	Individual human freedom poses a potential threat to the social order. The law serves to contain evil and act as a moral teacher so that citizens know the difference between right and wrong.	Individual human freedom has become too expansive and must be curtailed in order to preserve the social order.
Human Nature	Humans are good and evil comes in the form of oppressive institutions: social norms, governments, and corporations are evil.	Humans are generally good, have a capacity to solve human problems through reason, but also have some capacity for evil. For example, they may accumulate property unfairly. When human freedoms are maximized the good of all is best served.	Both the human capacity for good and evil is recognized.	Conservatives have less faith than liberals that people can use reason to restrain their animalistic impulses and their emotions; they mistrust human nature. More willing to readily embrace non-rational epistemologies and religion.	No faith in human reason, but a high degree of faith in tradition and traditional values. Readily embrace authoritarian epistemologies.
Preferred Epistemology	Innate	Empirical, innate	Eclectic	Authoritarian, intuitive, innate	Innate, intuitive, authoritarian
Leading Thinkers	Jean-Jacques Rousseau	John Locke, Adam Smith, Thomas Jefferson	Moderation is not really a philosophy, so there is no “leading thinker”.	James Madison, Edmund Burke	Ayatollah Khomeni, Militia groups

Political ideology is the expression of two mental pictures of the human condition. The first picture is *of the world as it is, with its gravest problems.* The second picture is *of the world as it should or could be.* In the table listed below, the classical political spectrum explains the key issues that shape political ideology on the classical political spectrum. These issues are: the analysis of the existing order, speed of changes in government, freedom and the law, human nature, and the preferred epistemologies of each belief system.

A Critique of the Classical Political Spectrum

The classical political spectrum listed above does a reasonably good job of explaining 18th-century politics (which is what it was originally designed for). Issues like social change and human nature are very important and they capture an important dimension of ideological belief, but the advent of capitalism in the 19th century changed the character of political ideology. By the late 18th and early 19th century societies throughout the west were in conflict between *property rights* and *human rights*.[1]

Most people in western societies have a fairly good understanding of human rights, since such rights appear in general terms in documents like the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Bill of Rights in the Constitution, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Human rights include things like life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, freedom of press, speech, and religion, *habeas corpus*, and so forth. These liberties were incorporated into the U.S. political tradition by our country's founders who embraced classical liberal ideology.

The right to private property was originally thought to be a human right as well. Classical liberal social thinkers such as **John Locke**, **Adam Smith**, and **David Ricardo** were convinced that people could not be truly free unless they were allowed to accumulate private property. It was not long, however, before liberals observed that the control of property by some people could be used to deny liberty to others. Hence, the property right was relegated to a secondary status compared to other human rights. Today, most liberals think of private property as a *social right* rather than an inalienable human right (if it was inalienable, then no one could ever justify taking it away). People like **Thomas Jefferson** and **Jean-Jacques Rousseau** refused to recognize property as an inalienable right. One of the most hotly debated phrases in the Declaration of Independence was "life, liberty, and the *pursuit of happiness.*" People more conservative than Jefferson, its author, believed that the phrase should be changed to "life, liberty, *and property.*"

[1] Of course the conflict is infinitely more complex and more nuanced than this simple characterization, but for our purposes it must be dealt with at least in a superficial way. Also, be sure to think of this conflict as though it is also situated along a spectrum of beliefs. They are not mutually exclusive values. It is possible for individuals to strongly value human rights and property rights at the same time!

Leon Baradat succinctly explains the nature of liberal opposition to property as an inalienable right:

> "Classical liberals challenge private property as a human right on the basis that no necessary logical link exists between human well-being and private property. Human rights are those things that are necessary to the species in order to lead a decent human life. Consideration of the constituents of the phrase "life, liberty, and property" reveals that life is obviously an essential factor. Liberty is also fundamental if one accepts human equality as a reality. If people are equal, then no person has the moral right to subject another without consent. People, therefore, have the right to be free. Private property, however, does not enjoy a similar status since it is not essential for people to lead a decent human life. Food, clothing, and housing are, of course, necessary for people to enjoy life, but these things need not be privately owned."

The tension between human rights and property rights is put to the test when we consider the following scenario. Should you be able to shoot a person who is stealing your car that is sitting in your driveway? The conservative would say yes, if that is the only way you have of defending your property. The liberal would argue that no piece of property is worth a human life and that with insurance and police protection the owner has less drastic ways to recover the property. Therefore, one does not have the right to shoot a burglar (unless, of course, the life of the owner is threatened).

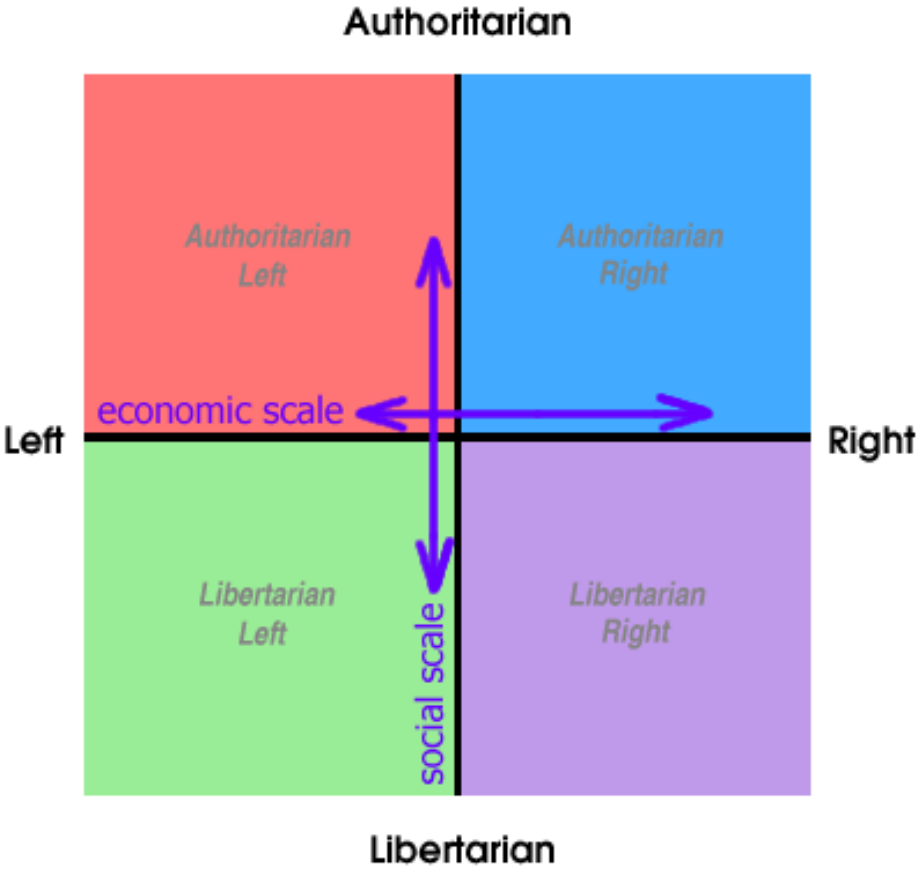
The balance between human and property rights becomes increasingly one-sided as we move toward the ends of the political spectrum until, at the farthest extremes, one side insists that there is no property right and the other totally denies human rights. On the far left, **Karl Marx** predicted that communism would be democratic, allowing absolutely no private property or inequality of any kind. **Benito Mussolini,** Italy's dictator during WWII, at the opposite extreme, denied human rights entirely, insisting that people had no justification, no rights, no reason for being that was not bound up with the nation-state. Indeed, the individual's only function was to produce for the good of the state, and anyone who failed to do so could be liquidated.

By the twentieth century, political conflict becomes focused on material wealth and the distribution of private property. Those on the extreme left are more communal and reject the notion of private property in favor of human rights, while those on the extreme right reject the notion of intrinsic human rights in favor of property rights.[2]

[2] Be sure to keep in mind that these values are accepted and rejected to differing degrees along a spectrum. Most liberals still believe in private property, but they argue that the right is not an absolute and that property owners can be taxed for the general welfare. Conversely, most conservatives would say that human rights such as the freedom of religion, press, and speech are very important. In most democratic societies the differences between left and right are differences in *emphasis*.

Because much of political conflict now centers on economic as well as social values, it is important to revise the one-dimensional classical political spectrum into a two-dimensional spectrum that emphasizes economic and social questions. Political scientists have debated the best way to do this, but there is a general approach that includes social and economic dimensions:

The Contemporary Political Spectrum[3]

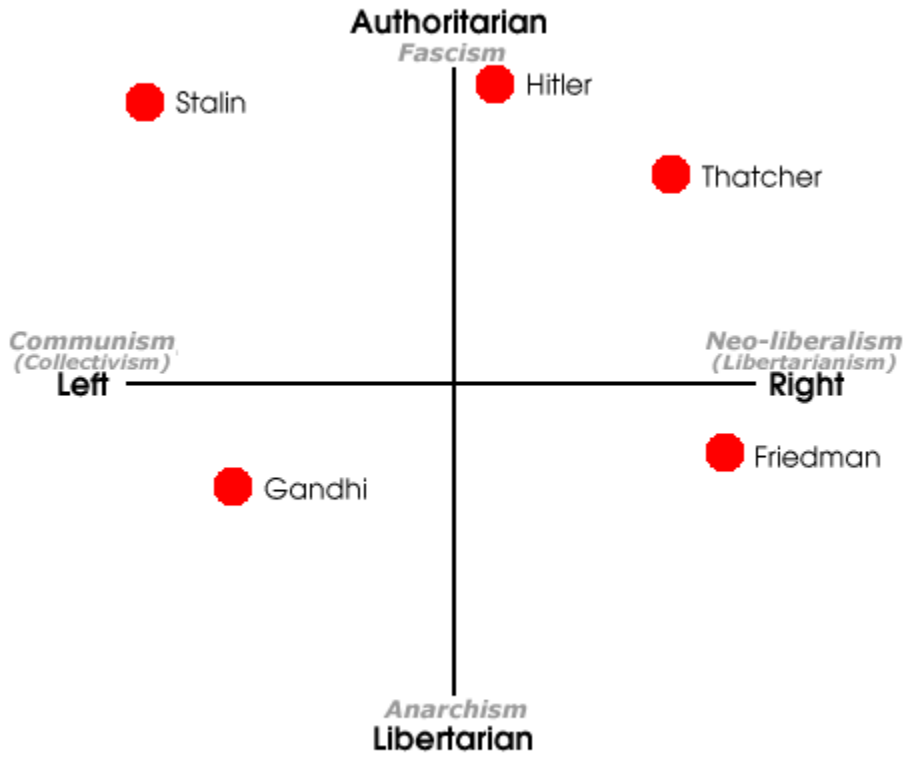


If we use only the left-right political spectrum to explain political ideologies then we would conclude that socialists like Gandhi and Josef Stalin are on the political left, and strong proponents of the free market like Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, and General Pinochet, a dictator who ruled Chile for more than twenty-five years, are on the right. However, it is clear that there are important differences between Gandhi and Stalin, just as there are between Bush and Pinochet. This difference may be found on the social scale, which indicates the degree to which one believes that human beings should be free. Or to use the metaphysical terminology

[3] This graphic and most of the associated explanation comes from the Political Compass website, although many of the examples have been changed. www.politicalcompass.org.

proposed by Thomas Sowell (explained in the Metaphysics Briefing), the authoritarian view is more constrained and the libertarian view is more unconstrained.

In the graphic below you will see that Stalin and Gandhi are in very different places on this political spectrum. The difference is that Gandhi has a much higher view of human freedom and is more suspicious of power and control exercised by the government. Gandhi believed in the intrinsic and absolute worth of the individual and that this was inviolable, whereas Stalin believed that the individual did not exist and that humans only existed to serve the interests of the state. On this spectrum, we see what we already know: that Hitler and Stalin had more in common politically than Stalin and Gandhi.



On the libertarian half of the social scale, you will see a term that might confuse you at first. *Anarchism* is usually associated with left-wing ideology synonymous with the kind of radicalism espoused by Rousseau. But the literal definition of anarchism is the rejection of all authority. An absolute anarchist is really much more like a libertarian than anything else. Anarchists believe that the only legitimate authority is the individual, and so they reject all authority outright. This is why straight-laced pro-business think tanks like the CATO Institute and hippie

groups like Freedom to Exhale can both be in favor of the legalization of marijuana. They both believe that the individual rather than the government is the best judge of what is harmful.

For Core 350, the common language of the course when discussing ideology will consist of the terms used on the Political Compass. This means that the use of terms *liberal* and *conservative* (at least in the way that they are typically used in contemporary American political debates) will be used sparingly (and will cause you to lose points if you choose to use them in your assignments). This is not because the teaching team consists of fascists who enjoy making arbitrary rules which students must follow. Rather, we have made this decision because the Political Compass allows us to talk about ideology in a more nuanced way than does the one-dimensional dichotomy of American politics. As noted above, any ideological scale which places Gandhi and Stalin together is certainly not very nuanced.

Now, these graphics represent a lot of political extremes, but the Political Compass website has also created a spectrum that places a lot of contemporary international figures in this grid. Where were you placed when you took the test? Do you know why? Additionally, take an opportunity to think about the origin of your political beliefs (i.e. parents, church, friends, teacher, etc.).

Ethics "Heads Up" Notice

by Keith Wyma

Over the next class periods, we'll deal with four ethical approaches that frequently serve as the basis for determining and defending just, social decisions in the U.S., both in public policies and in private life. There's a lot of information, here, so to help make the important considerations more visible in the briefings on the ethical positions, I've constructed the briefings in an outline form, with the *outline-divisions flagging and identifying crucial information*. The *categories of the outline-divisions will also remain the same from outline to outline,* so that you can make quick and easy comparisons from one ethical approach to another on, say, their grounds for public argument. When you know how it works, the outline is your friend!

The outline's categories look like this:

Wyma's Briefing on _____'s Ethics

I. _____'s Position: this main heading lays out the basics of the view itself.

- A. **Focus:** this identifies a situation's *most crucial factors to examine* in making an ethical decision according to _____'s approach.
- B. **Central Idea 1:** these points give the *main values and rules* of the particular ethical position; they tell you *how* to act ethically in _____'s view.
- C. **Central Idea 2:** etc.

II. Connections to Recurrent Themes: now we see how _____'s view *connects (or doesn't) to the other worldview-level commitments and themes* explored in this class and in CO 150 and 250.

- A. **Epistemological Commitments:** I'll refer to the CO 250 terms (*innatism, empiricism, authoritarianism, and intuitionism*) to indicate which epistemological approaches _____'s view fits with (or doesn't)—in other words, this lays out the evidential basis for _____'s claims.
- B. **Conception of Human Nature:** This makes the *metaphysics* connection for _____'s view, because *every ethical judgment only makes sense, given its underlying assumptions about what it means to be human.* That includes whether human nature is:
  1. *(Un)constrained*—i.e. Thomas Sowell's terms referring to whether human nature is perfectible ("unconstrained") or not ("constrained") by our own efforts at individual and societal improvement.
  2. *(Not) Uniquely valuable in nature*—this indicates whether moral obligations will extend only to other humans, or to animals and possibly plants, as well (and this

question frequently depends on whether the view is *dualistic* or *physicalistic* about human beings and/or whether it affirms human *freedom*).

C. **Grounds for Public Argument:** This will likely cover several points, possibly including both pros and cons, to indicate how well _____'s view fares in American political debate, and why.

D. **Christ & Culture Model(s):** Later in this course, we'll look at Richard Niebuhr's Christ & Culture typology, which outlines several prominent ways Christians have worked out their theological beliefs in the activities of their wider cultures. This section of the outline is only a quick preview of how the various types fit (or don't) with the specific ethical approaches. This is important because a big part of living out one's religious beliefs is how that plays out in one's thinking on right and wrong. I'll propose one or more models that might fit __ ___'s view. I recommend you take a look at these connections again, after you've seen the types in detail. For now, though, you need a couple of pieces of information to make sense of the connections:

1. First, a list of the types and their basic moves that define their interaction with culture.
    i. Christ AGAINST Culture—either *withdraws from,* or actively *opposes/condemns* the wider culture (and human reason, in general) as fallen and hostile.
    ii. Christ OF Culture—feels comfortable with wider culture as God-made and *accommodates* Christian belief and practice to it, adapting Christianity to culture's intellectual leading.
    iii. Christ ABOVE Culture—finds *common ground* with culture in the basics, but *extends and redirects* culture's understanding through Christian revelation.
    iv. Christ TRANSFORMING Culture—also begins with some degree of *engagement* with culture, but has a stronger sense of the world's fallenness than Above, so it continues more *critically* with a goal to *transforming* culture for/in Christ.
    v. Christ & Culture in PARADOX—regards wider culture as *thoroughly fallen,* but sees Christian culture as just as flawed; so although it condemns the practices of the world, it doesn't seek much to change them, but lives in the *paradox* of fallen-and-saved.
2. Second, an expansive note about the typology: It has examples in more than Christian views. Other religions can take "Of" or "Above," etc., approaches, and connect (or not) to the ethics accordingly. Also, non-religious views include their own perspectives on how religions can, or should, interact with ethical decision making. For example, some atheists might take an "Of" line, expecting religious belief to have a role in culture, but one directed by the non-religious knowledge (including ethics) of the culture. That's the way John Stuart Mill, founder of utilitarianism, viewed Christianity. Other atheists (like Richard Dawkins) take an "Against" approach that seeks to exclude religious belief from any important cultural matters, including ethical decisions. In short, even non-religious ethics can imply an analogy of a C&C type—be alert for that.

E. **Relation between Individual and Society:** This usually connects closely to the *conception of human nature* and to the *principle values* of the theory, and it indicates where the view fits most comfortably on the political spectrum of ideologies. It includes:

1. *Individuals are (not) primary*—this tells whether _____'s view sees individuals as coming first, so that society must serve them, or vice versa.
2. *Society's benefit is (not) paramount*—this tells whether society can "use" you or harm you involuntarily in order to further its existence (and is obviously connected to the preceding point).

III. Upshot: Here's where I try to leave you with a few quick points to connect _____'s view to the everyday social/business/political/etc. scene.

A. Keyword(s): These are the "buzzwords" for _____'s view that you might hear in debates, and what they mean when the deeper connections are revealed.

B. Contemporary Representative(s): This identifies prominent players on the current social/political philosophy scene who are in _____'s camp.

Wyma's Briefing on Utilitarian Ethics

by Keith Wyma

I. Utilitarianism's Position: 'Utilitarian' broadly names many theorists—e.g. Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and Peter Singer—and often serves as a slander for them and others. The slander presumes that 'utilitarian' implies a crudely pragmatic, unprincipled view; that's false. What does seem common to all utilitarian views is twofold:

A. Focus: Utilitarians think the *consequences, or results,* are the most important consideration in moral questions. What really matters for whether something is good or evil, right or wrong, is whether it would make the world a better place. Moreover, making-the-world-better can't be calculated with respect only to yourself and your own. The consequences are assessed *impartially* on the *widest possible scale*. Would the world be better if developed countries gave significant aid—for alleviating famines, diseases, poverty, etc.—to developing ones? Yes? Then giving such aid is right, and not giving it is wrong, in spite of the fact that giving it would mean taking out a large new tax from your paycheck. Further, utilitarians care only secondarily about motives or character. Think about Oskar Schindler—he was a war profiteer, and had murky motivations for saving the Jews on his "list." But as one of the characters in the movie, *Schindler's List,* says, the list is an "absolute good" because it means life for those on it.

B. Well-being: What does it take to make the world better? *Increasing well-being.* 'Well-being' is spelled out differently in various utilitarian theories; it could be measured by happiness, by pleasure, by preference-satisfaction, and so on. Whatever the terminology, the *production of well-being is synonymous with 'utility,'* so utilitarianism aims at increasing life (both in duration and quality), health, safety, opportunity—everything needed for happiness, or pleasure, or satisfying life-preferences, etc. Of course, well-being is normally measured according to what produces the *most possible, for the most recipients possible*—i.e. according to the overall consequences. Thus:

1. *The Principle of Utility—actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness.*
   a. J. S. Mill formulated this *"greatest happiness principle"*—understood as *the most possible happiness for the most people possible*—as the basis of utilitarianism, the *one rule that holds universally and absolutely*, and *determines the application of every other moral principle*.
   b. Changing Mill's well-being terminology, the Principle of Utility [henceforth, the P of U] describes the bedrock of most utilitarian thinking. Thus Captain Kirk's heroically self-sacrificial claim at the climax of *Star Trek: Into Darkness,* "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few or the one." [Of course, as Mike Ingram will happily tell you at

length, JJ Abrams was merely doing an homage/reversal to Spock's classic line from *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan.* So we all know who the real hero is.]

2. *Well-being's Continuum*—note that if morality is about producing well-being, *everything* that can experience well-being (pleasure, etc.) *counts, morally speaking*, but that *not everything counts the same*. Virtually every animal, then, should get moral consideration (so utilitarianism lends itself easily to support for animal rights), but almost [?] no animals should receive the same level of consideration as a normally-functioning human, because humans can experience well-being (or its lack) in so many more and deeper ways (e.g. dogs don't feel career frustration). Note that if certain humans (the unborn, the severely handicapped, etc.) happen to *fall lower on the continuum of experience-able well-being* than normal, they may rightly be *assigned less moral status* than normal.

D. **Lack of Absolutes:** Utilitarianism commits absolutely to the P of U (in some variant), but *every other moral principle—including those dealing with human rights—is NOT absolute*. So torture may be wrong under ordinary circumstances, but having caught a terrorist about to detonate an atomic bomb in a major city, you'd be right to torture him to find the bomb's location (as some members of the Theology Dept. have assured me…!). The P of U provides your reference for when circumstances demand moral action not ordinarily allowed.

E. **Impartial Equality:** Given its focus on overall results, utilitarianism rejects virtually every kind of special preferences not reflective of the well-being continuum. It's OK to value humans over cats, but not men over women, the rich over the poor, whites over blacks, compatriots over foreigners, etc. Every (normal) human has an equal claim to the resources of well-being, and so counts equally in making any moral decision.

II. Connections to Recurrent Themes:

A. Epsistemological Commitments: Utilitarians are hardcore *empiricists*. Human nature, animal natures and the whole well-being continuum are all discovered, defended and possibly amended by empirical investigation. What produces well-being—what would make us happy—is found through experience, be it personal, historical, sociological, etc.

1. In fact, utilitarianism prides itself on *not being dependent on any religious or metaphysical "speculations,"* and adding in such ideas—say, about the well-being of eternal souls—only dismantles utilitarianism's recommendations and undercuts its plausibility.
2. In other words, utilitarianism's lack of metaphysical/religious commitments doesn't mean that it will fit with whatever commitments that someone wants to add; it means that utilitarianism *fits only views without deeper metaphysical/religious commitments.* Not surprisingly, it's one of the more common ethical views among the non-religious.

B. Conception of Human Nature:

1. *Either Unconstrained or Constrained*—utilitarianism works either way. It often presumes unconstraint, that people can be shaped by society to become more and more good, and that society can be shaped to more and more effectively do that. Mill says virtually every problem of human life is solvable by better technology, increase of democracy, and better education. On the other hand, some utilitarian's take the more pessimistic constrained view. Singer seems to lean a little to this side. Constrained utilitarianism has even spawned what's called *"government house" utilitarianism*, in which only the leaders know the utilitarian truth, while the masses—who otherwise can't be trusted to do right—are told the lie of "divine reward and punishment" or some such to compel their virtue.
2. *NOT uniquely valuable in nature*—species-wise, if any animals (e.g. dolphins or chimps) should turn out to experience well-being with the breadth and depth we do, those lives would be just as valuable as our own. This valuation depends crucially on utilitarianism's assumption of *physicalism*.
    a. Moreover, individually, certain human lives (by reason of hampered or damaged development) can merit less consideration—both against other humans (society should give more resources to save a normal premature infant than to save one with significant defects) or even against animals (in a fire, you should save a healthy dog before a coma patient).
    b. Also, utilitarianism typically considers *quality of life as paramount over mere life*, i.e. if someone's life would be miserable no matter what, we're not obligated to extend that life. So euthanasia can be OK.

C. Grounds for Public Argument: Utilitarianism performs superbly in public debate, but also has an Achilles heel.

1. *Equality and democracy*—the strong emphasis on *equality of human claims to well-being* fits excellently with democratic ideals.
2. *"Greatest happiness" and democracy*—utilitarianism aims to *benefit the largest possible majority as much as possible*. What could play better in a democratic arena?
3. *Empirical basis*—utilitarianism's empiricism makes it *hugely sensible and defendable*. You don't believe that *X* would increase well-being? Let's look at the precedents in history; let's ask people whether they would be better off with *X*, etc.
4. *Plausible goals*—who doesn't want to be happy? Who doesn't want access to the resources of well-being? Who doesn't admit that everybody else needs and wants, and is just as entitled to, the same? Utilitarianism directs us to *immediately attractive and persuasive goa*ls.
5. *Achilles heel*—utilitarianism has *no guaranteed protection for the minority* (indeed, extraordinary circumstances may demand harms to a small enough

minority to greatly enough benefit a large enough majority). Making one out of every ten people a slave would completely free the other nine from any drudgery and allow them sublime accomplishments? Let's break out the manacles and round up the redheads! Such possibilities can make utilitarian arguments exceedingly *un*attractive and *im*plausible to those either in the unprotected minority or sympathetic to them.

D. Christ and Culture Model(s):

1. *Christ Against Culture*—the most obvious interaction-type is opposition, and it may seem that utilitarianism won't fit with Christianity at all. Lots of Christians (paging the editors of *World* magazine…) react with righteously indignant horror to the "godless" and "worldly" principles of utilitarianism (Singer, esp., gets a lot of this kind of press—actually, he courts it, even entitling one of his books *Unsanctifying Human Life*!).
3. *Christ Of Culture*—on the other hand, Mill says utilitarianism is perfectly compatible with religion, *IF God is understood as a utilitarian*, i.e. if He wants our temporal, physical well-being and pursues it according to the P of U. Much of New Testament morality fits this understanding (feed the poor, share the wealth, etc.), making Christian utilitarianism a possibility (Singer is also especially good at finding and exploiting this common ground in argument). Notice, too, that the Of-strategy is most likely to be able to accommodate itself to utilitarianism's physicalist commitments.
4. *Christ and Culture in Paradox*—maybe God's goals don't always fit the P of U, but that's just the difference between the purity of Christ's kingdom and the "dirty hands" of earthly politics. While in this life, we have to act in the political sphere according to this world's rules, and those are utilitarian. So it's not that Paradox folks would accept utilitarianism's physicalism, etc. as all true, but that they might say, "we have to play along with this, because this is how things get done in the world" (my torture-happy Theology colleagues seem to subscribe here).

F. Relation between Individual and Society:

1. *Individuals are NOT primary*—the central moral consideration is increasing the well-being of the largest possible group of beneficiaries; individual identities, unique relationships, etc. are factored out as much as possible. Also the goal is to work not for one's own happiness, but for everybody's (thus St. Spock). So private possessions are less important than meeting the wider community's needs, thereby inclining utilitarianism to the *Left*.
2. *Society's benefit is paramount*—individuals (even innocent and unwilling ones) *can* be sacrificed for society's good, if society's need is exceptionally great and urgent, as determined by the P of U—e.g. some utilitarians have advocated a universal draft for medical experimentation subjects (remember the Achilles

heel). The current government policies of domestic spying—gobbling up your right to privacy in the name of national security—are another example of this leaning (and, yes, it's possible I have strong opinions about this). Thus it seems safe to say that utilitarianism leans towards the *Authoritarian* ideologies. Interestingly, though, Mill himself bucked this trend and was a staunch advocate of personal liberty as the very key to societal benefit; but this may not have been entirely consistent, and the history of utilitarianism doesn't side much with Mill.

III. Upshot:

A. Keywords in Public Debate: *Well-being* (in its various specific aspects), *equality* and *outcomes*. Of course, not everyone arguing for equality is a utilitarian, but when it's equality of outcomes or of measurements of well-being, like how much of the population makes at least *X* amount, you know you're in utilitarian territory. That also holds for arguments about increasing the number of women CEO's, the number of black professors, etc. (mandating an outcome is a typically utilitarian way of eliminating the immorality of discrimination and alleviating its ills). These utilitarian goals are usually assessed by means of *cost-benefit analysis*, another particularly utilitarian buzzword that's highly influential in not only public policy but also business policies. And remember that although *no* politician likes to be thought of as a "utilitarian" (recall the slanderous connotation and the angry Fundamentalists), utilitarian arguments are HUGE in American politics—just check out who gets covered for what under Medicaid, and why.

B. Contemporary Representative: *Peter Singer*. He gets immense press (and often rancorous vilification) for his support of euthanasia, animal rights, infanticide of seriously defective newborns (who would be a lifelong drain on society), etc. He's not twisted or evil; he's just a philosopher—he makes his utilitarianism consistent and takes it explicitly to the conclusions most don't see. And given the subtext of utilitarianism in American public decision-making, Singer may be the voice of America's true conscience or at least the prophet of its political future.

Wyma's Briefing on Kantian Ethics

by Keith Wyma

I. Kant's Position:

A. **Focus:** Kantian ethics (after the founder Immanuel Kant) considers *action* the most important subject of morality; what kind of person you are or what results your actions produce are secondary. What matters most is what you do and why—your *action* and its *intention*. If you're a complete jerk, but uncharacteristically happen to save a drowning man (because you can't get over your moral duty to help those in need), and that guy turns out to be Hitler and later ravages the world, none of that other stuff changes that you still did a morally good thing in saving him. Now, if the key to ethics is doing the right actions, then we most need to know the moral laws—the rules that identify right actions.

B. **The Categorical Imperative:** Kant calls the moral law the *'categorical imperative'* [henceforth, the CI]. 'Imperative' means a *command*, of course, and 'categorical' means the command is *unconditional and universal*. "Thou shalt not commit adultery," is a CI; the command binds your obedience no matter who you are, and it offers no concessions for your spouse getting sick or fat or bald, or for your "accidentally" running into your favorite movie star at some pay-by-the-hour motel. In fact, Kant holds that all the moral laws we're familiar with in everyday life, like "Don't steal," are *specifications or applications* of *one—"the"—CI*. The CI itself has five different *formulations* (which Kant views as simply different ways to express the same idea), but the three formulations that most connect for this course are:

1. *Universal Law*—act only according to *maxims* (i.e. rules for action, like "When in Rome, do as the Romans do") that you could *simultaneously will* to become *universal law*.
    a. In other words, would it be OK if everyone in similar circumstances were allowed to do what you're planning? Sure you might want to filch your roommate's cookies from home, but would it be alright for your roommate to do the same to you? No? Well, then hands off to you too!
    b. Note the close similarity to the Biblical golden rule.
2. The *End in Itself*—act so as to treat *rational beings*, whether yourself or others, always as an *end* (i.e. something pricelessly valuable), and never *solely* as a *means*.
    a. Kant calls this pricelessness '*dignity.'* So this formulation requires treating every person (including yourself) with dignity, making every human life (or any other rational beings' life, like an extra-terrestrial's) effectively sacred.

b. Note that it's OK to get something out of your interactions with people—for them to be "means" to your desires—as long as you still treat them with dignity; you can't coerce or manipulate them so that they're *solely* means to your goals.

c. Note, too, the connection to Universal Law: what actions would you be willing for everyone to be allowed to do? The ones that treat all parties involved with dignity.

3. The *Kingdom of Ends*—act so as *to harmonize your goals and values* with those of *all other rational beings*, as far as possible, so that *each person is treated as an end*.

a. In other words, treat other people's goals and values with respect, as far as possible. Their goals/values are extensions of their personal dignity, so don't impede them unless necessary to protect persons' dignity (we don't have to allow hitmen to go unhindered about their chosen work).

b. Note the connection to the other two formulations—what goals/values should we affirm? Those that we could accept others pursuing in their relations to us, i.e. the values that would direct treating us with dignity and the goals that would not involve degrading us. That's the harmonizing.

c. Compare to Supreme Court Chief Justice Holmes' edict: "My right to swing my fist ends where the other fellow's nose begins."

4. The *CI is a product of reason*—reason allows you to hypothesize yourself into every role in a situation to see what would be universally acceptable as respecting each party's dignity.

C. **Autonomy:** Kant's ethics is based in *rational autonomy*. 'Autonomy' means *self-rule*, and Kant argues that it's *reason* that makes autonomy possible. Reason is what allows us to transcend nature and nurture to achieve self-rule, to formulate and pursue our own goals and values, to be responsible for our own actions.

1. Autonomy is *priceless* (ask yourself: what payment would be acceptable to let someone else make you their absolute puppet?). In fact, it's humanity's ability through their rational nature to be autonomous that gives people dignity.

2. Autonomy is the *essence of ethics*. If being rational is being autonomous, and if rationality yields the CI, then acting on the CI is being autonomous. Indeed, what actions would be universally acceptable and would treat everyone with dignity? Those that *protect and enable the autonomy of everyone involved*.

II. Connections to Recurrent Themes:

A. **Epistemological Commitments:** Kant tried to show that moral laws were *objective truths*, *universal* in scope and in recognizable by all. As a Lutheran (the "true Church," according to Dale Soden, anyway), Kant wanted his ethical theory to be *consistent with revealed Christian morality*. Yet as an Enlightenment thinker, Kant wanted to *justify*

morality by appeal to *reason*, alone, by embedding it into *rationality's very nature*. He also advised checking his theory against our actual moral *experience*. So Kant functions as a combination of the *innatist* and *empriricist* approaches (to use the Core 250 terms).

B. Conception of Human Nature:

1. *Unconstrained*—Kant actually has a strongly developed notion of human depravity, but his view of reason's accuracy and power to correct depraved desires is stronger yet. Thus, he believes that humans are capable of accurately knowing and carrying out their moral duties, with the right education.
2. *Uniquely valuable in nature*—as rational and thereby autonomous, human life is priceless, and effectively sacred. No other kind of being (unless it should turn out to be rationally autonomous, too) has comparable moral status. Part of Kant's view is that humans have immortal souls, which also contributes to our value/uniqueness (but lots of contemporary Kantians leave this part out). Kant's basic point, though, is that *rationality links to morality*. Suppose a jogger on Mt. Spokane has been killed and eaten. Do you think the killer is morally evil, if it's a mountain lion? If it's Forrest Baird? If it's an armed extraterrestrial on a hunting vacation (like from *Predator*)? Isn't the distinguishing trait in every case whether the killer is a rational being? So *morality applies always and only to* rational *beings' actions*. Hence both morality's duties and its privileges are human alone (as far as we know).

C. **Grounds for Public Argument:** Because Kant appeals to *reason as the sole basis of morality and autonomy as its essence*, he has a powerfully persuasive platform for public debate.

1. We do *highly prize autonomy*. This may be doubly true in the U.S., but holds everywhere—adolescence always seems to include the struggle to break free of one's parents and to think for oneself; tyrants are always hated, etc.
2. The *CI is the rational implication of valuing autonomy*. If we so value autonomy, then don't we have to agree that we should protect and empower it, wherever it exists? And that's what the CI does. It perfectly embodies key American values of equality and tolerance of diverse opinions—i.e. everybody has the right to his/her own opinion, and everybody's opinion/vote counts equally.
3. *Not following the CI is irrational*. Could you even make sense of lying to get out of a debt, if everyone knew it was OK to lie to get out of debts? Wouldn't your lie then just be pointless? And don't you want everyone *not* to lie to you when they owe you debts? So you do affirm a universal rule against lying, which means when you decide to lie, you're *contradicting yourself*. Noting flat-out contradictions in your opponents' arguments is a pretty persuasive tactic, even in the slop that passes for American thinking.

D. Christ and Culture Model(s):

1. The *Christ Of Culture*—given that Kant thinks we can *reason out the entire moral law* on our own, there should be *no tension* between the secular world's moral standards (when carefully reasoned according to the CI) and Christianity's revealed ones. This is the main model applicable to Kant, I think; Kant tends towards interpreting Christian claims to fit what reason tells us is true.
2. *Christ Above Culture*—Kant also does think reason requires us to suppose that *God exists* and that He will *judge us in a justly ordered afterlife*. This doesn't change the moral law, or even our reasons for obeying it (we must do our duty just because it's right because it protects autonomy), but we do then have an additional level (the afterlife) to our moral experience, described by Christian revelation. So some Above folks may feel comfortable with Kant. For instance, Martin Luther King, Jr., who often took an Above approach, quoted Kant approvingly.

E. Relation between Individual and Society:

1. *Individuals are priceless*—given Kant's exalted view of human nature and its *rational autonomy*, it follows that individuals are priceless and the primary subjects of morality's and justice's protections.
2. *Society's benefit is* not *paramount*—society is "for" the individuals, not the other way around. The interests of "society as a whole" or the majority of members can *never justify subjecting any individuals to treatment as mere means*. The implication is that Kantian ethics leans strongly toward the *Libertarian* axis. The Left vs. Right is less clear. For example some Kantians may emphasize equality of opportunity for resources that enable autonomy, like education, which then leans Left, since it requires redistribution of resources to support. Other Kantians may emphasize the individual's right to property as part of autonomy—in fact, I've heard the Libertarian political party, which clearly leans to the Right, described as "Kantianism plus property rights."

III. Upshot:

A. **Keywords in Public Debate:** *Autonomy*. Anytime you hear autonomy discussed as a value to be protected politically—esp. if that value is considered overriding—you know you're in Kantian territory. The *appeal is often made inconsistently*, though—e.g. arguing for legalizing (assisted) suicide because it honors individual autonomy (Kant would vehemently object because suicide itself treats an individual, oneself, as a means, say, to limiting suffering). So look sharp when autonomy pops up. Other ideas big with Kantians include *ensuring a level playing field* (which gives each person equal opportunity to use their autonomy—this is big regarding topics like the financial markets and equal-opportunity hiring), and *human rights* (Kant's view provides the most rigorous basis for absolute rights—Amnesty International often uses Kantian arguments).

B. **Contemporary Representative:** *John Rawls*. One of Kant's strongest influences on current public debates is exerted through the justice-theory of John Rawls, an avowed neo-Kantian. Rawls is extremely influential (for a while, freshman Congressional Representatives came to Washington with Rawls' book in hand!), and when he argued (he recently died), Kant smiled and nodded.

Wyma's Briefing on Divine Command Theory [DCT] Ethics

by Keith Wyma

I. DCT's Position: DCT is exactly what it sounds like, an ethical theory that bases right and wrong, good and evil, upon God's revealed commands. It's an easily understood position, and one that many believers of many religions hold. It offers a conception of ethics that makes our obligations objective and potentially universal, so it can be very attractive. However, it also has some significant difficulties in public debate.

A. Focus: DCT, like Kantian ethics, looks primarily at *actions* (and therefore at the *rules* and *motives* behind our actions). God issues commands, our *rules*, and our job is to carry them out, to *act* in obedience to them. DCT cares about character, too, but as it relates to the DC's. For example, Christians are commanded in Scripture to become Christ-like, to be loving, meek, etc.. DCT doesn't focus on results or consequences because those are in God's hands; in this (as in many other respects), DCT differs greatly from utilitarianism.

B. God's Commands: The foundational element of DCT is the body of commands God has given us through *special* revelation. DCT claims that right and wrong simply *don't exist* apart from God's laying down rules. It's like Dostoevsky said, "If there is no God, nothing is forbidden." Let's face it, there's nothing about my issuing a demand that makes you *obligated* to follow it (let's try it: "Vote for me for Most Influential Professor!" No? Oh well, maybe I just don't have enough influence…). And why should that change if we substitute another human—or even a society—as the commander? People or governments may scare and coerce us into submission, but that's not the same as obligating us. God, on the other hand, is not simply *all-powerful and all-knowing* (which would enable Him only to deeply frighten and bully us), but also is the absolute *Creator* and *Sustainer* of our lives. And for Christians, He's our *gracious Savior* as well. In short, *we owe God*; we wouldn't be here at all or have any hope in life if it weren't for Him, and that obligates our obedience to Him. Because we owe God—who, as theologian Karl Barth put it, has definitively shown Himself in Christ to be "God-*for*-us"—when He commands an action, that *makes* the action right (and good), and when He forbids some action, that *makes* the action wrong (and evil). And those obligations are *objective*, that is, they're not subject to our decisions as to whether they bind us.

C. Actions neither commanded nor forbidden: Obviously, God hasn't issued explicit commands about every aspect of human life or about every possible human action (although, if you've ever been stuck in Leviticus it may seem like it; "…and it shall be made of fine-twined linen…" is a phrase I could do without hearing for a while). What

do we do, then, about the actions not specifically covered? God never says anything in the Bible about marijuana, so does that mean it's OK to "smoke the chronic" (heads up, Libertarians!)? No, actually (sorry, Libertarians!). For while God hasn't revealed any commands about weed, He has spoken quite disapprovingly about drunkenness. Therefore, *by interpretation, we extend the DC's* forbidding drunkenness to forbidding getting high as well. Similarly, we extend commands against theft of physical property to forbidding theft of intellectual property—hence our College's plagiarism rules. Or again, God never told us to give money to UNICEF, but given His commands about helping orphaned and poor children, we can infer that He would want us to contribute (or at least, to some similarly-purposed organization).

D. Absolute universality of the DC: Sometimes God issues commands about specific, limited occasions. For example, "Samson, never cut your hair!" Thus *not every DC is taken for a universal moral directive*. However, given that God has similar authority over us all, *God can issue commands that apply to everybody, everywhere, every-when*. For example, "Love the LORD your God with all your strength and mind and heart!" The DC is therefore capable of yielding *universal moral rules that are also absolute, or exceptionless.*

E. Arationality of the DC: DCT, for reasons of logical implication that I'm going to spare you right now, is committed to the *a*rationality of the DC's. Now, that's not saying that the DC's are *ir*rational, or contrary to reason, but rather that the DC's are *without reason* or (if we're feeling charitable) at least *beyond reason.* DC Theorists not only don't appeal to reasons behind the DC's to justify them, DCT's position is actually committed to there *being* no discernible reason for God's commands. Barth goes as far as saying that the standard practice of *ethics*, as the search for the reasons for being moral, is *identical* with *sin*! He attributes the DC's to the *mysteries of God's grace*. So just as there is no discernible reason why God should have graciously chosen to save me (as I'm sure all you who know me will readily agree…), there is no discernible reason for the mystery of why God has graciously told me how to live. Now, this point may be the most honest and humble and God-fearing attitude to take with respect to the DC's, but as we shall soon see, it has some devastating effects on DCT's persuasiveness in public debate.

II. Connections to Recurrent Themes:

A. **Epistemological Commitments:** Obviously, given the last point, DCT's primary epistemological approach is *authoritarianism*. The DC's come to us through special revelation from God; we don't have our moral rules because we understand how or why they work, but because God, the authority, has told us what to do.

1. That's not to say that DCT never employs the other epistemological strategies. *Intuitionism* comes into play in the *interpretation* of the DC's. If we have to build

our morality from God's Biblical commands—especially if we're *sola Scriptura* Protestants—we need *inspiration* to understand them.

2. Also, both *empiricism* and *innatism* are used in extending the DC's to new situations. Empiricism tells us that the psychological and behavioral results of getting high bear striking resemblances to getting drunk, and innate reason tells us that if one is forbidden the other should be too.
3. The key, though, is that the *other three approaches aren't to be used or trusted on their own, but only in light of, and in service to, authoritarian revelation*.

B. Conception of Human Nature:

1. *Constrained*—one of the principal motivators frequently behind acceptance of DCT is an assumption of human fallen-ness (esp. regarding the wider, non-believing culture). That is, we are sinful, corrupted in our desires and in our reasoning. Therefore, the only trustworthy means of understanding our obligations, is for God to tell us. And again, no sinful and flawed human can ever be a legitimate moral authority over us, so we need the DC's even to *have* moral obligations. Sometimes this constrained view gets modified (perhaps inconsistently) about the saved: there's a higher trust in believers' decision-making since it's supposed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit. That's what allows believers to trustworthily interpret and extend the DC's.
2. *Uniquely valuable in nature*—Christian and Jewish and Muslim DCT normally follows the traditional religious conceptions of humans as uniquely special to God: for Christians and Muslims, in humans being *immortal* (by reason of possessing *souls*) and for Christians and Jews in humans being *free-willed* (hence God's command which obligates us without physically/psychologically coercing us).

C. **Grounds for Public Argument:** DCT has such severe problems, here, that even religious believers who accept DCT as true may want to construe their public arguments in terms of other ethical bases, when possible (I know I do).

1. *Problem of Interpretation*—even when arguing to other believers, a DCT supporter may find that the audience's *interpretation of the DC's differs.* This is especially problematic for the *sola Scriptura* folks. What happens when the Scriptural command means different things to various groups? The Westboro Baptist Church of Kansas, for instance, interprets the command to love one's neighbor (in conjunction with numerous OT commands) as directing them to *picket* homosexuals with signs like "God Hates Fags," as they did at Matthew Sheppard's *funeral* (you can find their "ministry of love" at godhatesfags.com). *Because there's no rationale available for the DC's, there's no possibility of rationally sorting out opposing interpretations or of prioritizing the DC's.*
2. *Problem of Plurality*—obviously, we live in a society where not all members share the same religious beliefs. And *the DCT has no power to provide moral*

support for any claim made to someone of a differing religious faith. "God says don't do that!" "Oh, yeah? Whose God? Yours? I don't believe in that! So take off!" Just think of the dismissive response, "Don't try to push your religious beliefs on me," that so often meets abortion protesters carrying signs with Bible verses about how God knew us before we were knit together in our mothers' wombs. This problem is devastating for DCT's ability to support political argument.

3. *Problem of Arationality*—unfortunately, the prior difficulty is compounded by DCT's *total inability to offer reasons for its moral rules.* So even with a religiously sympathetic audience, you can still wind up unable to persuade. "God says do this!" "Why?" "Well, because…um…I got nothin' here."

D. Christ and Culture Model(s): Basically, *any of the approaches, EXCEPT for Christ OF Culture or Christ ABOVE Culture*, will work for DCT. "Of culture" won't fit because of its denigrating special revelation; it won't buy into scriptural commands that culture doesn't agree to. All the other models value special revelation and have a higher suspicion of human sinfulness, which fits the DCT. But Above also still values reason and experience (i.e. general revelation) enough to think they can find ethical truths, which won't fit with DCT since God's commands don't have reasons behind them in the first place. In the Against and Paradox models, DCT becomes the morality of the believing community, which is not expected to be shared with, or listened to by, the godless surrounding culture. In the Transforming model, DCT guides the believers' attempts to claim culture for Christ, which culture may accept as Christ's grace transforms it.

E. **Relation between Individual and Society:** DCT doesn't have any position that's required here. God gives commands to individuals, but God also gives commands to nations, like Israel in the OT. So God may command us primarily as individuals sometimes, and other times primarily as corporate groups. In Christian DCT, there may be a leaning towards the importance of the individual, since most Christians conceive of Christ's atonement as covering the actual, particular sins of individuals—i.e. Christ died for us as individuals, not simply for society or humanity, generally. As a result, DCT may change its Authoritarian vs. Libertarian and Right vs. Left orientations, based on a perception of how much of society accepts the DC's. Some Christians might want to make the gov't's values more in line with those of the DC's, trusting enough of the American people to support this. Attempts to define legal marriage according Biblical principles reflect this Authoritarian bent. But for Christians who see society as more aggressively godless, their DCT approach leans Libertarian, in an attempt to ensure at least tolerance of their practices, if not social acceptance of them. For instance, consider arguments for exceptions to having to provide employee insurance that covers procedures like abortion, based on religious conscience. Similarly, some DCT groups lean Right, wanting to keep church resources out of state control. But given Christian commands to

aid the poor, some DCT adherents lean Left and advocate redistribution of resources for welfare programs, etc.

III. Upshot:

C. **Keyword:** *"Scripture says…"* anytime you find political argument based on reference to Scripture, particularly to Scripture in its "*plain reading,"* you know you're in DCT country. Because the U.S., in spite of its pluralism, still has a majority who regard themselves as Christians, DCT actually is fairly common in political argument. It has all the problems mentioned above, but there still are a lot of folks capable of being moved by invocations of divine authority, so the DCT can motivate a substantial voting block (oh, say, the Christian Right, for instance). DCT is also *extremely* powerful in Muslim communities and societies, as for instance in Sharia law codes based upon interpretation of the Koran.

D. **Contemporary Representatives:** Too many to list, but you know the prominent ones—the Southern Baptists, (the late) Osama Bin Laden, the Dalai Lama, etc. Some are Christian and some aren't, but they all base their political stances directly on divine revelation.

Wyma's Briefing on Natural Law Ethics

by Keith Wyma

I. **Natural Law's Position:** As usual, I'm going to hit a few key points regarding natural law [hereafter, NL], and then make connections to our themes, and to the previous ethics outlines. Also, let me note up front that although my interpretations of NL are Thomistic, Thomas Aquinas is by no means the only influential NL theorist. Advocates of NL include Aristotle, Cicero, the Stoics (so you can see that it's not just a Christian idea, but was recognized prior to and externally to Christianity's formulations), Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, many of the American founders ("We consider these truths to be self-evident…"), and C.S. Lewis (who calls the NL "the Dao"). The basic idea of NL is this: *questions of right and wrong have an objectively-factual basis in the natural parameters of human life—a moral law built into nature,* as it were. Also, NL understands those parameters as *what's required for the flourishing of human community,* and is committed to their being *rationally and experientially knowable.*

A. **Focus:** Like DCT and Kantian ethics, NL looks primarily at *actions* (and therefore at the *rules* and *motives* behind our actions*)*. Yet, while NL doesn't *principally* focus on results or *consequences*—you don't simply make ethical decisions based on results, the process of achieving those results is crucial—it *does* consider them. After all, how can we know what's good for human community, except by some accounting of actions' consequences for us? And those effects are especially crucial as they affect the lives of people, of *agents.* So given this focus, NL will share some points with Kantianism and some with Utilitarianism (which is why NL positions sometimes sound like both the other approaches), but will also have its own distinctions. It will also share some aspects with virtue ethics, but we won't get to those until Unit III.

B. **Purpose in Nature:** When something has a purpose or function, once that function is known, you can rationally figure out what the thing must be like in order to function well. Engineers do this all the time: they get assigned a project with function *X* ("Make an office chair that's sturdy and comfortable!"), and they rationally and experimentally work out how it needs to be made to do *X* ("*Voila,* the Herman Miller Aeron!" "Now make it cheap!" "Well, crud, back to the drawing board…"). That's what NL does for humanity: reason and experience (general revelation) point out functions of our nature, and NL rationally works out how we must shape community life in order to achieve them.

1. *Christian* versions of NL, like Aquinas', base it in *God's law for all of creation*. God has purposes for all His creatures and a rational plan—His Law—for how all His creatures can fulfill their natural purposes; and NL is part of that plan with respect to humans. So NL is really God's law, built into nature, but which (unlike the rest of nature's laws in the sciences) we have a choice whether to obey. Because we're special images of God, we get the privilege of free will.

2. *Secular* versions of NL depend on *metaphysical characterizations of human nature as purposeful and constant.* That is, NL presumes that humanity's nature is the same across cultures, times, races, genders, etc. Moreover, it presumes that there are purposive functions built into human nature, e.g. that we are meant to be (or at least innately desire to be) rational, to live in community, etc. Thus, some actions will be better for humans, naturally speaking, and some will be worse; some actions will help us become what we're meant (or innately desire) to be, some will hinder that. Aristotle traced NL back to human nature's *entelechy* (its form or essence, to use a CORE 250 word—which also reminds me of a fine P-Funk song, "Funkentelechy," that you should all listen to as soon as possible), the Stoics trace it the *logos* that governs the universe, and so on. Thus even if it's in metaphysics rather than theology, there's usually a "quasi-religious" aspect to NL (*but not always*).

C. **Human Flourishing in Community:** As I just mentioned, one of the purposes of our nature is that we're meant to live in community. We are, as Aristotle observed, "political animals"—we naturally congregate into groups and we operate best in groups. Given that, it's clear that we need some rules in order to peaceably live in community. For example, we know that human community requires honesty, so not only should we act to tell the truth, we also should gain the virtue of honesty to become the kind of people who can be counted on to tell the truth. Our community won't last long, if we're all allowed to lie—or take whatever anyone else has, or kill them—whenever we want, under any circumstances ("Hey, those pomegranates were *mine*! I'm going to take your car the next time I see your keys! Wait, where'd you get that knife?"). But if community falls apart, our own individual lives suffer because we lack an essential component of our well-being and natural fulfillment. So *the goal of NL is to promote the flourishing of human community*. But that goal is actually twofold, since "human community" isn't really a thing with interests and goals of its own; rather *human community is made up of individual humans, so the flourishing of human community depends on the flourishing of the individuals who make up the community*. Thus NL promotes human community *by* promoting individual flourishing. This has crucial implications for the individual-society relation, as we shall see.

D. **Universality and Flexibility**: NL *can* be universal and even exceptionless, as it is with regard to the basic necessities for human community (the "primary level" of NL, according to Aquinas). For example, no human community could survive without nurturing and educating its children, so NL tells us there's a universal and absolute requirement to nurture and educate children. However, it's also true that because of the variety of environmental conditions of human life—some communities form in deserts, some in rainy areas, etc.—*some NL's will NOT be universal, let alone exceptionless*. It would violate NL to grow a big grassy yard by watering it constantly, if one lived in the Sahara; NL would dictate very restricted water use for such a community. On the other

hand, living on the shores of Lake Superior, one would not violate NL with the same action; the NL about water use is much less restrictive under such circumstances. Thus, the NL can be universal, but it also can *respect diversity and be flexible* in many areas (the "secondary level," in Aquinas' characterization).

E. **Rationality:** Whether Christian or not, every version of NL is committed to its being *evident to reason and experience (i.e. by appealing to general revelation) what will benefit human community.* Some things will be obvious at first glance, like the points about caring for children, or about disallowing murder, and so on. Some things may take investigation and experimentation, like constructing a welfare state—we really didn't know many of the deleterious effects, like damage to families, the welfare system would have; our rational assessment of the welfare system's value to society is now more informed than it was. Some things will take new discoveries to able to be rationally understood as required. After the discovery of polio vaccines, we saw that human flourishing would be helped by them, and so (for societies who have access) we became required to administer them. In short, NL theory doesn't claim that every NL is rationally obvious, but it is committed *to every NL being rationally justifiable as beneficial to human community*. That makes a nice transition to our concern with epistemological approaches, so let's move on.

II. Connections to Recurrent Themes:

A. Epistemological Commitments:

As is probably clear already, NL's primary epistemological approaches are *innatism* and *empiricism*. The recognition of self-evident moral principles is an innatist strength, and investigating the results of activities on the human condition is the work of empiricism.

1. *Intuitionism* is *problematic* for NL, because of its rationally un-arguable and uniquely personal basis. If you can't point to a rational argument connected to human flourishing, you can't call it NL.
2. *Authoritarianism* doesn't fit into the NL as such, but can be *bonded on top*. Aquinas' Christ Above Culture approach synthesizes NL with God's explicit specially revealed commands, which extend and complete human flourishing beyond what reason alone could figure out (e.g. by specially revealing the Golden Rule, beyond NL's Silver Rule).

B. Conception of Human Nature:

1. *Unconstrained*—NL displays significant confidence in humanity's ability to reason out what's good for it. That's an unconstrained vision, at least about our rationality if not our ability to put it into practice.
2. *Uniquely valuable in nature*—NL normally sees humans as unique in that of all creatures we observe, only we are *rational and free-willed*. That's why we can formulate laws for our behavior, rather than blindly acting according to instinctual drives. So the NL applies only to us, and humans have a distinctly superior moral

status to animals. For instance, I've seen NL arguments that discuss protecting the environment and other animals' habitats, only as, and only to the extent that, such protections would benefit human community.

C. Grounds for Public Argument:

1. *Appeal to rational and experiential evidence*—NL operates on evidence that is available for scrutiny in the public sphere. No disputed special revelation, no unquestionable personal intuitions—NL's grounds are similar to Kantianism's and utilitarianism's in their appeals to reason, science, etc. Thus, NL has a strong foundation for argument, since its claims are backed by logic and empirical data.
2. *The good of each member of society*—NL's version of the community-good differs significantly from utilitarianism's in that it doesn't depend merely on what satisfies the majority, but rather on what promotes the *flourishing of EACH community member*. This is the "no child left behind" version of community flourishing. Therefore, the kind of abuse of the minority, which utilitarianism might allow, is excluded from NL (Take that, Singer, you punk!—Yes, it's true, Wyma may have a wee axe to grind against utilitarianism.). Moreover, "fulfillment of natural function" is different from "preference satisfaction;" the former has a ground independent of what we might happen to like, the latter doesn't. Thus, NL does not swing in the breeze of public whim, as utilitarianism seems to. So benefiting the community for NL requires meeting its real needs, while utilitarianism may settle for satisfying its—perhaps misdirected—wants (Yeah, and here's another, Petey boy!).
    a. Now, to be fair, utilitarian opponents would claim two weaknesses about this point. First, they would *object that working for the good of every member of society is unrealistic.* When I first wrote the "no child left behind" reference, above, I saw it as showing how NL looks out for the voiceless and forgotten in society. But many Education students have since pointed out to me how unworkable the Act of that name is. That's exactly what a utilitarian would jump on: "NL has a lofty goal, but it's unrealizable in practice, so stick with the pragmatically realistic goal of utilitarianism." Honestly, I think this is one of NL's tougher problems.
    b. Second, working for an *objective good, that's independent of people's desires/preferences, may be a weakness* in a utilitarian's eyes. We're very suspicious, after all, of anyone who tells us they know what's good for us, as NL does. But doesn't every ethical theory end up doing that—doesn't even utilitarianism assume that satisfying our preferences is good for us? So the difference is simply that NL commits to a "set" good, as opposed to a "malleable" one, which may limit corruption of the NL's directives by selfish or malicious desires.

3. *Deep roots in American thought*—as mentioned above, NL was a big influence on the American founders, and has continued to influence American jurisprudence. Moreover, NL has historically been a prominent platform to support civil disobedience and civil reform; Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, appealed to NL in his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Thus NL arguments, in American politics at least, "resonate" with the ideals of the system, making them more persuasive.

D. Christ and Culture Model(s): *Christ OF Culture and Christ ABOVE culture* are the best fits here. Both sufficiently validate unaided human reason (the general revelation side) to affirm the possibility of recognizing NL. NL is thus an excellent unifier for any audience that includes believers—and even quasi-believers—of different stripes: as long as they agree on some basic functionalities of human life and reason's trustworthiness to investigate those, they can work together in an NL framework. The other strategies, *AGAINST, PARADOX AND TRANSFORMER, have too much emphasis on the fallenness of humanity to comfortably appeal to NL*. If reason is corrupted by sin, it won't recognize what's good for us ("Somebody's head is getting a mite swollen, don't you think, Mr. Aquinas?"). Calvin and Luther, for instance, both claimed belief in NL, but their overall theories, and the traditions descended from them, have largely ignored that. And this may be a weakness of NL to many contemporary Christians: namely, that it's too optimistic about humanity's ability to find the true and the good.

E. Relation between Individual and Society: As mentioned above, NL bases the community's flourishing on the flourishing of its individual members. So NL values individuals in a way that prohibits society from "using them up" for benefits to the majority. However, *since each individual finds his/her fulfillment, at least in part, through being a member of the community, NL does allow society to place burdens on or demand sacrifices from its members.* The implication is that NL leans both Libertarian and Left, politically: individual rights are important, but obligations, especially economic ones, can be imposed for the common good. Again, though, since the individual's purpose extends beyond merely being a community-member (this is especially emphasized in religious versions of NL), NL reiterates that *the state cannot demand more than can be understood to still be in the individual's best interests*. Thus, society can draft soldiers into an army for defending the nation—it's good for citizens to make sacrifices for the community and even to face dangers because it helps them grow in virtue—but it cannot send them into suicide missions without their voluntary consent.

III. Upshot:

A. **Keyword:** *"We all recognize that…"* or *"Everyone would admit that…"* or *"Nations all over the world have agreed that…*." NL proponents (called "natural lawyers"—cool, huh?) constantly appeal to presumed agreement, at some basic level, among the political players. NL looks for the underlying common ground and begins to build its case from

there. In a sense, both Kantians and utilitarians can look like natural lawyers, since they take their basic values of autonomy and well-being as self-evident (and vice versa—natural lawyers talk about valuing both autonomy and community well-being, since they're both part of human flourishing). In fact, *any* attempt to characterize ethics as objective and rationally defensible—as both Kantians and utilitarians do—may *presume* something along the lines of NL (that's C.S. Lewis' position, but that's an argument for another time).

B. **Contemporary Representatives:** Their names might be obscure to the general public, but NL is actually having quite a resurgence in political philosophy, for instance Robert George, at Princeton (and Kamesh swells with alumni pride…). Moreover, the Supreme Court has referred to NL (and even quoted Aquinas! Go, Justice Scalia!) in the recent past.

Private and Public Spheres

(See Blackboard)

A Primer on Policy Making

by Michael K. Le Roy, revised by Michael Artime

Policies and Public Policies: A Definition

A **policy** is a general plan of action adopted by any institution (government, school, business, church, etc.) to solve a problem, counter a threat, or make use of an opportunity. Therefore, a **public policy** is a plan of action that is made by a government (instead of a school, business, or church). Public policies such as property taxation, traffic laws, or environmental regulation seek to influence the behavior of a wide range of citizens rather than the members of a single specific group. Governmental approaches to solving problems can be divided into four broad types:

Policy Type	Examples
Policies that **prohibit** behaviors that endanger society.	State laws that restrict cell phone use while driving. Criminal law that prohibits murder, theft, assault, etc.
Policies that **protect** activities, business markets, or special groups of citizens.	Security and Exchange Commission's laws and regulations that require accurate accounting and financial disclosure for company investors in the stock market. The Family Medical Leave Act that protects the jobs and health benefits of employees who needed to take extended leave (12 weeks) from their jobs to care for a newborn or adopted child, or a sick family member.
Policies that **promote** social activities that are important to the government.	The Hope Scholarship tax credit of up to $2,500 a year granted for the first four years of college promotes social value of education to all U.S. citizens and their families. In Sweden, newborn children are required to have regular health examinations by the state-provided health care system to insure the health and safety of all children through age 16.
Policies that can **provide** benefits directly to citizens.	In 2011 and 2012 the Social Security system in America taxes 12.4% of a person's income (6.2% from you and 6.2% from your employer) and redistributes those funds to the elderly, the disabled, and the orphaned.

When policy makers are considering new policy options, they carefully consider the impact of each of these four approaches on those most affected by them.

The Policy Making Process

The process of policy making usually proceeds through five stages:

1. **Agenda Setting:** This is the part of the process during which problems get defined as political issues. Citizens, the media, and other social groups usually play a prominent role in setting the policy agenda.
2. **Policy Formulation** is the stage of the policy making process when formal policy proposals are developed and debated. The forum for these debates may be in the media, among groups of citizens, or even in the legislature.
3. **Decision-making** is the stage that governments determine the most appropriate policy option. This is often the focus of headline news as the media reports on the process and outcomes of a specific policy decision.
4. **Implementation** is the process by which policies are carried out.
5. **Policy evaluation** is the analysis of public policy to see how well the problem has been addressed. Evaluation can be ***pragmatic*** (e.g. is student aid increasing educational opportunities for citizens?), or ***normative*** (e.g. is it just to give taxpayer money to support undergraduate financial aid?). In short, evaluation provides feedback to policy makers on a policy's performance.

So far, this description of policy making might sound very mechanical, and fairly straightforward. But I am also sure that you are thinking that policy making is a much messier process than the one described so far. If that's what you are thinking, then you are right! The factors that make public policy messy are those forces that pull a government in different directions and make problem solving less coherent. In the United States and many other countries ***fragmentation*** of policy is the natural consequence of the design of the government system. In the U.S., power is divided between three different branches of government (known as the ***separation of powers***) and ***federalism***. The three branches of government, the Congress, the Presidency and the Federal Judiciary can have different opinions at all stages of the policy making process. These differences reduce the coherence and increase the fragmentation of public policy throughout the policy making process. Federalism, the division of powers between national government and State governments is also a feature of the U.S. system that adds even more complexity. The governments of the 50 different States and the U.S. government frequently disagree or have different agendas in the policymaking process for any given policy.

In countries without the separation of powers and federalism (like Sweden or the United Kingdom) policies tend to be more uniform and coherent. This can be an advantage for policy makers who are seeking to solve very specific problems. One disadvantage of the lack of fragmentation is that some policies may not be well adapted to local and regional differences in a country. Secondly, fragmentation also produces a wider variety of policy options as states experiment with alternative policy approaches to common problems.

Actors & Interests in the Policy Making Process

by Michael K. Le Roy, revised by Michael Artime

Formal or Informal?

Whether you think your company parking policy should change, your salary should be increased, or your church should adopt a policy that requires background checks for Sunday school teachers, eventually you will have to contend with the following question: "Who rules?" When this question was posed in the 1950s, teachers trotted out charts of the U.S. system of government with its three branches: "Laws are made by Congress, administered by the President, and reviewed by the Judiciary." In other words, the traditional understanding of power in policy making used to emphasize **formal institutions**. Formal institutions are those entities that are recognized by the law as the legitimate decision makers in matters of public policy, but they are not always the whole story in the attempt to understand policy making. Since the 1950s social scientists of many stripes have documented the robust participation of a myriad of **informal groups and institutions** that also act to shape decisions made by governments (see text box for examples).

Formal Institutions

Congress
President
Judiciary
City Council
State Legislature
Republican Party
Democratic Party

Informal Institutions

Public opinion
Corporations
Labor Unions
Interest groups (pressure groups)
- Greenpeace
- Energy Interests

Think tanks
- The Cato Institute
- Brookings
- Heritage Foundation
- Worldwatch Institute

Two Views of Interests: Pluralism v. Elitism

In fact, Plato's *Republic*, Hobbes *Leviathan,* and many writings by Karl Marx all document the role that specific groups or factions can play in group decision making. Some thinkers have concluded that the competing interests that these groups represent are good for society. These thinkers are usually referred to as **pluralists. Elitists,** on the other hand, believe that some interests will inevitably have more power and wealth than other interests, and that this imbalance of power will corrupt the political order.

Pluralists generally have a fairly positive view of the competition of interests in society. In the Federalist Paper 10 James Madison acknowledges that any society will have groups of citizens that combine to lobby government because they have an interest in common. However, Madison

argues that there are so many interests (or factions) that they serve to neutralize one another in a republic as large as the United States. In the 1960s, noted political scientists Robert Dahl distilled pluralist thinking to three basic propositions:

1. Because one center of power is set against another, power itself will be tamed, civilized, controlled, and limited to decent human purposes, while coercion, the most evil form of power, will be reduced to a minimum.
2. Because even minorities are provided with opportunities to veto solutions they strongly object to, the consent of all will be won in the long run.
3. Because constant negotiations among different centers of power are necessary in order to make decisions, citizens and leaders will perfect the precious art of dealing peacefully with their conflicts, and not merely to the benefit of one partisan but to the mutual benefit of all the parties to a conflict.[4]

This form of pluralism (also known as **laissez-faire pluralism**) makes two important assumptions which make it very vulnerable to the criticisms of elitists. The first assumption is that the competition of interests produces a cacophony of noise about such a wide range of issues that no single interest can dominate the decision making process. The second assumption is that every single interest or faction is equal in its capacity to participate. At least in U.S. politics, laissez-faire pluralism seems a bit vulnerable to the criticisms of **elitists**.

Elitists argue that the assumptions that form the basis for pluralism are fatally flawed. First of all, the competition of interests does not "neutralize" the effectiveness of all groups. According to elitist theory, all groups do not compete equally. Some interests are going to be more effectively organized and well connected than others. Some interests are going to have the wealth and other resources that decision makers need to influence the political process. Poor people, wildlife, and children are not going to have the same kinds of resources to participate in decision making as do corporations. Most early elite theorists from Karl Marx to Charles Beard argued that the inequality of political power was the direct result of inequality in material wealth. These inequalities then give disproportionate influence to interests that have the money and power to access the political system.

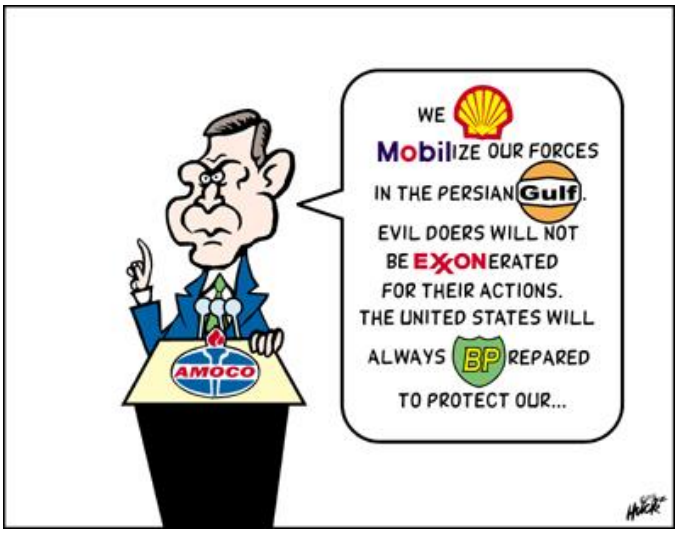
Elite theorists can use evidence from the Federal Election Commission, and other sources that link wealth and politics, to support their point. One such source, OpenSecrets.org, is a helpful tool that can provide the voting public with information about where candidates and parties receive their financial support. For example, using OpenSecrets.org created by the Center for Responsive Politics, one could discover that energy related interest groups contributed over $68 million to members of Congress in 2011-2012. Of that $68 million, 65% went to the Republican

[4] Robert Dahl, *Pluralist Democracy in the United States.* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967) p. 24.

Party. Likewise, labor groups contributed over $58 million with approximately 59% of that money going to the Democratic Party.[5]

While the overall contributions from lobbyists to Congress decreased in 2011, the Center for Responsive Politics suggests that this decrease was related to the inability for Congress to move past partisan gridlock. However, Sheila Krumholz, executive director of the Center for Responsive Politics cautions that "Nevertheless, special interest groups, from the tech industry to public sector unions, continue to hire lobbyists to give them a megaphone in Washington, as well as first-class access and connections."[6]

The Supreme Court's 5-4 decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* in 2010 caused uproar amongst those fearful of the role of business and special interest groups in American politics. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional for the government to place limits on electoral contributions from corporations. For some this ruling was an important victory for freedom of speech and an end to unfairly restrictive government regulations. However, others fear that this ruling will further bolster the role of the wealthy, elite interests in American politics at the expense of the less powerful or the "voiceless" (to use a term that you will hear throughout Core 350).



In spite of this mountain of evidence that the elitists trot out in favor of their view, pluralists claim that the sheer volume of money in the system and number of different industries will serve as check to the power of any one industry. While the oil companies may seek to use the system to enhance profits, manufacturers are bound to be lobbying on the other side to keep energy costs down.

In recent years the debate between elitists and pluralists has reached some form of a mild consensus. Both theorists tend to agree that power has become more concentrated in the hands of the few, and that economic resources (wealth) are strongly correlated with political resources (power). Surprisingly enough, the social scientists who once viewed differences in economic power as a threat to democratic participation now believe that there is a new divide:

[5] Center for Responsive Politics, http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/mems.php.
[6] Center for Responsive Politics,"Lobbying Expenditures Slump in 2011," http://www.opensecrets.org/news/about-the-center/press-releases/ (January 26, 2012)

between those who have a high level of civic education and those who do not. They argue that politics and policy require such specialized knowledge, that education can be the key factor that differentiates between the political "haves" and the political "have-nots". This is particularly true given that new media, such as the Internet, make it easier than ever for those who are interested in politics to become more politically knowledgeable while, at the same time, affording those who are uninterested in politics the ability to pay attention exclusively to the content that they find entertaining rather than consuming information about politics.[7] In other words, why read the *New York Times* when there are so many excellent videos of cats making funny faces on YouTube?

[7] Marcus Prior. 2005. "News v. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens the Gap in Political Knowledge and Turnout."

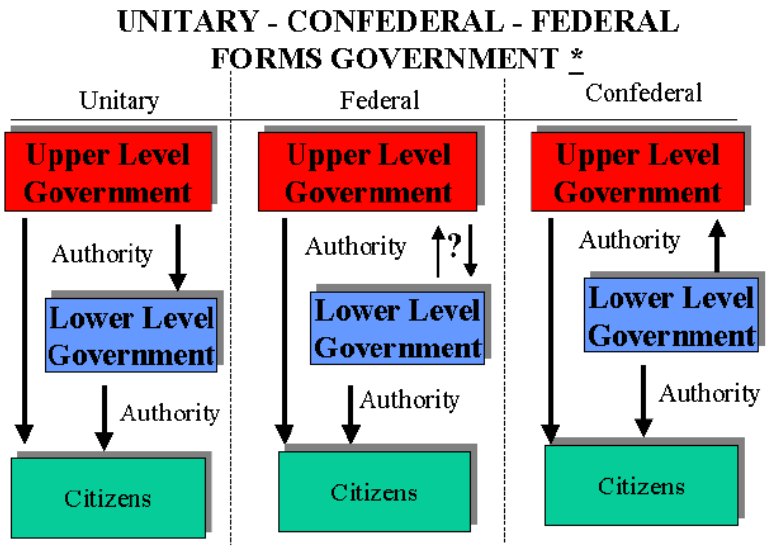
Arenas for Action: Government and Civil Society

by Michael Le Roy

So far, we have learned about how to frame and understand problems, the types of public policies that might respond to different problems, how we come to know and understand particular problems (epistemology), the metaphysics and politics that support our views of particular problems, and the political actors and interests that engage over given problems (whew!). But once we have identified a particular problem, how do we know where we should start to address it? Some of the hottest policy debates in our time have more to do with the ***arena*** for a given policy. The ***policy arena*** is the forum where policies are debated, decided, and administered. Examples of some policy arenas include the city council, the state legislature, the Supreme Court, or the United Nations.

On almost every policy issue, participants in the debate usually have to decide which arena is most capable of handling their policy concern. Sometimes individuals and groups prefer to pursue a policy in a local arena if they are concerned about customizing a policy to differing regional and cultural contexts. At other times, there might be a good reason for centralization of a policy. For example, the building of interstate highways couldn't be done on a local or state level so the U.S. government had to be involved. In the same way, States are ill equipped to provide for the national defense, so policy decisions about defense spending never appear in State legislatures.

Federalism, Confederalism, Unitarism and Policy Fragmentation



If you remember the first briefing, you will know that policy fragmentation is a problem caused by too many jurisdictions of government overlapping on a given set of issues. In the United States this problem is the direct result of the U.S. system of **federalism.** Federalism is a

constitutional design for any government that seeks to share power between the national and regional levels of authority (see figure 1). In countries with **unitary** systems like Great Britain the upper level of government has all the power and authority in the system. It may grant power to the lower level of government, but that lower level usually just carries out the will of the upper level and usually has very little autonomy. The most unusual form of government is the **confederal** arrangement. In a confederal system, **sovereignty,** or supreme lawful control and authority, is granted to the lower level of government (like granting supreme authority to the States), and allows the central government to remain a weak coordinating body. The States then vest authority in the upper level of government. In this system the upper level of government is dependent on the lower level for everything - especially money, but also troops, and any other needs. The U.S. had a confederal system of governance from the declaration of independence in 1776 until the founders redesigned the Constitution in 1789. This system was inherently weak in the strong nation-state system that was developing in the 18th century in Europe. For this reason and many others the United States became a federal system.

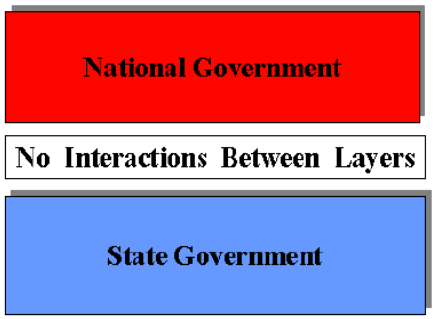
Federalism is an integral part of the constitutions of many countries that share the problems of vast size and a relatively high level of cultural and ethnic diversity. Federalism is not limited to the United States, but can be found in Australia, Canada, Germany, India, Switzerland, and Mexico. In all of these examples the federal level of government retains absolute sovereignty of all of the territory under its jurisdiction. This means that in any dispute between the State level of government and the federal level that cannot be settled by the Constitution, the will of the federal level of government will prevail.

Separation of Powers: Time for Cake!

In most cases, the constitution of the federal country specifies the powers granted to each level of government. In the U.S. Constitution a few powers are granted to States (see *enumerated powers* below), but these powers are never specified. Instead, the founders specified the powers granted to the federal level of government. There is a relatively long list of these so-called *exclusive* powers that are granted to the federal government including the right to coin money, regulate interstate commerce (business transactions between states), provide for the national defense, etc. What is a bit more complicated is the task of comprehending the State powers because so few of them are expressly granted by the constitution. The table on the next page sorts out the powers granted to States.

State Powers & Limitations	Definition	Examples
Enumerated Powers	These are powers granted to the States and are listed by the constitution.	Define voting rights for citizens Ratify Constitutional amendments
Reserved Powers	Reserved powers are powers that are not granted to the States by the Constitution, nor are they prohibited. As a result these powers are independently exercised by the 50 state governments and oftentimes further delegated to 3000+ county governments and/or tens of thousands of municipal and social-district governments.	(a) Public order (b) Public morality (c) Public health (d) Public safety (e) Public education (f) Public transportation (g) Public welfare (h) Public elections & suffrage (i) Land use
Concurrent Powers	Powers granted to both the Federal and State governments by the Constitution and can be exercised independently at either level.	Power to tax and spend, and the power to adjudicate and enforce laws.
Prohibited Powers	These are activities that are not allowed by the States either by an original Constitutional prohibition, or a subsequent amendment.	Amendments Prohibiting States (1) 13th (1865) - slavery (2) 14th (1868) - denial of individual rights by states without due process and equal protection (3) 15th (1870) - racial discrimination suffrage (4) 19th (1920) - gender discrimination in suffrage (5) 24th (1964) - poll tax (6) 26th (1971) - 18-year-old vote

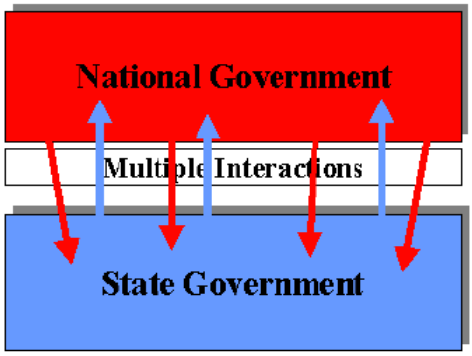
LAYER CAKE FEDERALISM *



This still left the question of State powers open to questions between 1789 and 1930. During this time the federal government and State governments in the United States operated on a relatively independent basis, but this independence was not without significant tensions. Political scientists like to talk about this period as the time in which American politics and government was characterized by a model of federalism called layer cake federalism (see figure 2). In the layer cake model of federalism the two governments operate as independent layers and have no interaction. Most of the major Supreme Court cases during this era were preoccupied with sorting out the powers granted to State and Federal governments. The conflict between the federal government and State governments reaches its high-water mark in 1860 at the outset of the civil war. By 1865 the 13th amendment to the Constitution is passed which outlaws slavery. In spite of the great interstate conflict during the civil war, it wasn't until 1930 that the roles of the federal and state governments began to blend.

With the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, American policy makers and activists began to draw attention to the problem of poverty nationwide. Some states had initiated programs to deal with the problem of poverty while others were incapable or unwilling to do so. By the time Franklin D. Roosevelt is elected President in 1932 the problem of poverty has been magnified nationwide, but the effects of this serious problem were actually quite uneven. In agricultural States like Oklahoma and Kansas populations were actually experiencing famine on a pretty severe scale. Mass migrations were occurring as citizens sought jobs in places like California. This only served to concentrate poverty in new locations and create a new class of economic refugees within the United States. It soon became clear that if the federal government did not step in to equalize economic opportunities across state boundaries that many State budgets were likely to experience a complete collapse.

MARBLE CAKE FEDERALISM *



Thus, in the 1930s the U.S. government became more deeply involved in the provision for public education, health, and welfare (which

was previously the sole responsibility of States). One of the reasons was to attempt to equalize the benefits that the government provides across state lines.

From the 1930s to the 1980s the Federal government remained very active in areas of policy that were previously the responsibility of States. Building on the cake metaphor, political scientists have characterized this era as the era of marble cake federalism. In the marble cake federalism metaphor there are two distinct layers but there is a higher degree of interaction between the two layers. One program that demonstrates this interpretation is the Medicaid and Medicare systems of health insurance for the poor and elderly respectively. In 2011 Medicare and Medicaid payments accounted for approximately 23% of the federal budget. Medicare is financed by a payroll tax levied, collected by the federal government, but administered by the states. On the other hand the cost of Medicaid, which is a health insurance program for the poor, is shared by the Federal and State systems. The federalization of health care for the elderly insures that every American above 65 has basic health care coverage. The coverage is basic, but this basic care is equal in its provision of benefits. The Medicaid program insures over 50 million U.S. citizens. But this program is funded at different levels from state to state. This means someone who qualifies for Medicaid in one state may not qualify for Medicaid in a different state. Because this program is the partial responsibility of the states, the benefits are less than equal across state lines.

In the 1980s President Reagan sought to roll back government involvement in the political arenas that were reserved for the states prior to 1930. Reagan introduced a number of reforms to get the federal government out of public education and a few other welfare programs, but the administration found that the system of interdependence between states and the federal government in the United States was far more entrenched than most policymakers initially realized. In addition, the level of economic inequality between states is still relatively unequal and has a strong regional pattern. The percentage of people living below the poverty level in states like Louisiana is at 18.7%, while the percentage of the population living in poverty in Minnesota is only 11.6%. Disparities like these cannot be easily explained in the context of a short briefing like this, but it is clear from an analysis of state policies that the policy arena in the State of Minnesota is less tolerant of poverty than the same arena in Louisiana.

Civil Society: A Rediscovery of an Old Policy Arena

Most political science textbooks end the lecture on policy arenas right here and then move on to other topics, but it would be a mistake to stop here given the new developments in public policy thinking in recent years. It was once the case that most problems related to public health, education and welfare was the exclusive domain of the institutions of civil society. Civil society consists of the groups and organizations, both formal and informal, which act independently of the state and market to promote diverse interests in society. Social capital, the informal relations and trust which bring people together to take action, is crucial to the success of any non-

governmental organization because it provides opportunities for participation and gives voice to those who may be locked out of more formal avenues to affect change.

Much of the recent policy research has suggested that non-profit organizations, church groups, and other institutions are more effective at the work of addressing some of the critical social and environmental problems that government cannot effectively address. This fits well with a traditional Catholic theory of organizational responsibility called subsidiary. The Catholic Church defines "subsidiary" as the principle that "a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.[8] "According to this point of view, all problems should be handled locally, unless the common good can be better served at a higher level. Now it is clear that some functions, like drug rehabilitation for addicts, are much better served by these "lower order" institutions like churches, and non-profit social agencies. This fact has led many Christians to cry out that the government should cancel all of its poverty programs and simply allow the church to minister to the poor.

This is a great idea and I am all for churches taking care of the poor, but my view of human nature, which is relatively constrained, tells me that no one but the most faithful and obedient would donate their time and treasure for such a program. This would leave an enormous gap in funding that would leave the poor even more destitute. This problem points back to one thing that governments have done well since the dawn of time: tax the public to generate revenue. Taxes on the general public ensure that the population bears a more equal responsibility for the poor than would be found under a voluntary system. This also illustrates the virtue of the notion of subsidiary. Government might collect the revenue for poverty programs, but allow non-profit social service agencies and churches to carry out this work.

You may have already figured out that something like this is already in the works. Charitable choice legislation passed in the 1990s allows government to delegate some responsibilities for social services to faith-based groups. President Bush was engaged in the promotion of his own "Faith Based Initiative" which would expand the gifting of tax money to non-profit groups for works of social service. The Bush era Faith-Based Initiative was further evaluated and revised under the Obama administration.

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[8] Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1883.

Policymaking Illustration: Poverty & Early Childhood Education

by Beck A. Taylor

(Please see BlackBoard)

Policy Instruments: What Can Governments Do?

by Michael Le Roy, revised by Michael Artime

The Changing Role of Government

Since the dawn of the 20th century the role of government in society expanded rather rapidly in most advanced industrial democracies. An analysis of economic data from the U.S., Germany, France, and Sweden during the 20th century would show you that government spending in all four of these economies increased at about the same pace for each of them in this period. Two world wars seem to have contributed the most to the expansion of government spending in these governments in spite of Sweden's neutrality. New programs like social security, medical insurance, and environmental protection also emerged as dominant government roles during this period. The fact that government has expanded in every single advanced industrial democracy tells us that there is something endemic to this system and the realities and challenges of modern living that make government more pervasive. Over the years, political scientists have advanced five different explanations for the puzzle of government expansion (See text box below).

At the crux of many of the most divisive controversies in American politics is the debate about the ideal size and scope of government. A January 2012 Gallup Poll suggested only 29% of people were happy with the size of the federal government. Likewise, in a July 2012 poll preceding President Obama's victory over Republican nominee Mitt Romney, 87% of Americans felt that it was very or extremely important for the next president to address the corruption that

Five possible reasons for the expansion of government:

1. As people become more prosperous, they may want more and more done for them and are willing to pay for it. Thus, as industrialization makes people more prosperous, the state naturally grows.

2. As governments have become cleverer at using "hidden taxes" such as excise taxes and payroll withholding of income taxes, they can get away with taxing people more heavily, and the state grows.

3. Electoral democracy results in "bidding up" of the state's operations as parties and candidates compete to see which can promise more services to the voters.

4. Once governmental bureaucracies are established, they develop internal pressures for expansion.

5. As world trade grows and states' economies become more and more subject to disruption by events in the international economy, their governments are less and less able to control what is happening in the country. The governments must then grow to compensate for the greater difficulty they find in functioning.

exists within Washington.[9] However, while these findings suggest that the American people are not happy with the current state of the federal government they do not necessarily indicate that they want the government out of the business of addressing problems which are important to the quality of life of American citizens. Indeed, the same July 2012 poll suggests that the public wants the next president to make education more available and affordable, to improve health care, and to protect the United States from potential terrorist attacks.[10] Current representatives are charged with reigning in the size of government while also ensuring that they are responsive to the policy concerns of their constituents. Clearly, these two values can come into conflict with one another.

It is one thing for citizens to demand that the government solve a given problem, but quite another to actually solve it. Most American citizens plan on the federal government providing them Social Security benefits during their retirement years. Indeed, an April 2012 Gallup Poll suggested that 33% of non-retirees envision Social Security being a major part of their retirement income. However, Social Security is paid for through payroll taxes on current workers and the fear is that in the next several decades the amount of money being put into the system will be insufficient to cover the growing number of individuals over the age of 65. While the American public is certainly in favor of making the Social Security system solvent for current and future retirees, solutions to the problem present political problems. For example, President Bush suggested a privatization plan which would allow people the freedom to expose their Social Security dollars to the market. However, while this plan would have potentially reaped financial benefits for recipients it also exposes them to potential losses through downturns in the market. Additionally, the federal government could raise the Social Security tax but that would mean raising taxes on income during a time of financial hardship for many—something which would certainly be politically unpopular. Other proposals, such as increasing the age of eligibility, face political opposition as well.

The Social Security dilemma raises the question that has to be asked in any policy debate. What can government do and how does it do it?

What do governments do?

What governments choose to do about a given problem often depends on a number of factors. Much of what it does depends on the ideological character and cultural values of the citizens who live in a state or country. For example, western states like Oregon and Hawaii have guaranteed that all citizens in those states have access to decent health care, but this has a lot to do with the Democratic Party controlled legislatures in these states and a public that is more demanding.

[9] Frank Newport. "Americans Anti-Big Business, Big Gov't," http://www.gallup.com/poll/152096/Americans-Anti-Big-Business-Big-Gov.aspx

[10] Jeffrey M. Jones. "Americans Want Next President to Prioritize Jobs, Corruption," http://www.gallup.com/poll/156347/Americans-Next-President-Prioritize-Jobs-Corruption.aspx

Countries like Sweden or Germany that place a strong emphasis on social equality have generous benefits from lifetime medical care for every citizen, to paid maternity leave for fathers and mothers. It is true that there are differences between most governments that are shaped by ideology and values, but no matter what the values, governments use four basic types of ***policy instruments*** to achieve social goals.

These instruments include a wide variety of specific approaches, but tend to conform to four basic types: transfer of resources, subsidies with strings attached, regulation, and development or administration. (See Table 1 on the next page.)

Which Instrument?

Choosing the right policy instrument for the problem at hand is usually very difficult and the source of considerable debate. At the very least, the choice that a government makes will depend upon normative or moral questions of *justice* and *efficiency*, but it will also depend upon empirical or pragmatic concerns. Does the policy work? Does it adequately address the problem? These kinds of considerations will always be a part of the process of policy interpretation and evaluation.

Table 1: Policy Instruments: Definitions and Examples

Policy Instrument	Definition	Policy Tools	Examples
Transfer of Resources	A government may take resources away from some people and give them to others with or without direction as to what the resources are to be used for.	Taxes, direct benefits.	**Social Security** which taxes employers and their workers, and gives the proceeds of the tax to retired people, the disabled, and the survivors of wage earners who have died young. **U.S. Transportation:** A gas tax of 18.4 cents per gallon helps pay for transportation infrastructure. However, the Highway Trust Fund has also used money from general tax revenue in order to continue providing services.
Subsidies with Strings Attached	The government may provide money to some of the people, but with the requirement that it be used in certain ways.	Taxes, tax credits, loans, expenditures and purchases with contracts.	**Chrysler bailout**: The U.S. government voted a series of subsidies in the 1980s to Chrysler Corporation with the requirement that it cut costs; hold down wage increases, etc. **U.S. Transportation**: In 2011 individuals in could receive tax credits for the purchase of plug-in electric drive vehicles in an effort to promote the use of more fuel-efficient cars.
Regulation	The government may also directly lay down rules telling people how to conduct their affairs. Traditional areas of regulation prohibit crimes such as murder, theft, or extortion. New areas of regulation include how food is prepared and packaged, how many pollutants can be emitted, and access for the disabled.	Legislation, regulation, judicial rulings, lawsuits, enforcement	**Drinking age:** In 1984 Congress and the Reagan administration added a regulation to the administration of federal highway funds that required states to raise the drinking age to 21 if the states wished to receive federal highway funds. **U.S. Transportation:** The CAFÉ standards which regulate gas mileage are set by Congressional and administration regulation.
Development and Administration	The government is not restricted to merely supervising how other people conduct their affairs, but may step in and do the job itself. A second facet of this approach is that government may subcontract some of its functions out to private companies.	Nationalization, management, administration, direct purchase.	**National Defense:** Governments usually manage their own national defense and do not oversee defense matters by other actors. **U.S. Transportation:** The United States' national passenger rail system was purchased by the U.S. government in 1971. For more than 40 years the government has owned and operated AMTRAK as the sole national rail transporter for passengers.

Policy Evaluation and Interpretation

by Michael K. Le Roy

Introduction to Policy Evaluation

The controversy over a policy doesn't stop once a policy decision has been made and implemented. Every policy that is implemented needs to be assessed to discover if it is really feasible, if it is working to achieve the desired outcome, and if the costs of the policy outweigh the benefits. Evaluation of most policies is a constant activity by managers and decision makers alike. When you conduct your research papers most of you will probably evaluate a policy that is already in place. In a few instances you might identify a problem for which there is no policy yet, but most of you will probably analyze policies that have existed for some time. In either case your evaluation projects will probably be **empirical** and **normative**. **Empirical policy evaluation** tends to focus on observable behaviors, data and outcomes. Empirical evaluation usually asks the question: "Does it work?" or "Does the policy yield the desired results?" This approach is important because empirical evaluation helps us to see whether or not the policy is achieving what policy makers hoped that it would achieve. **Normative policy evaluation** is based upon values and moral or ethical principles. This type of evaluation tends to be based upon specific moral principles and asks the question "Is the policy good (according to some set of values)?" All policy evaluation can't help but be somewhat subjective, but normative policy evaluation is going to be much more subjective because it is often based upon belief systems that are not widely shared.

Empirical Policy Evaluation

Policy evaluation can be confusing if you are not clear on what you are out to evaluate. This section explains different goals and types of empirical policy evaluation. Scholars in policy research have identified four specific types of policy evaluations. First there is what is known as **process evaluation**. Process evaluation focuses on the means by which a program or policy is delivered to clients, or the way in which a program is implemented. This type of evaluation focuses on assessment of program activities and client satisfaction with the services. Basically, these evaluations attempt to uncover management problems or assume that none are occurring. Process evaluations ask such questions as "are the contractual obligations being met?" and "How could this service be provided more efficiently?" Most of these types of evaluations look at the management and delivery of services and are useful where there is a high degree of human contact in the delivery of services. So, this would be a common approach in social service agencies or agencies that have a high level of interaction with businesses on a contract basis.

The second type of evaluation is **impact evaluation**. This evaluation is concerned with the end results of a particular program. For example, such evaluations are focused on whether the program's policy objectives have been met in terms of outputs. That is, did the program or policy produce the intended result on the target population? Suppose for example, that the government institutes a policy that increases the gasoline tax in an effort to reduce consumption and increase the amount of available revenue for improving transportation infrastructure. Following the implementation of such a policy individuals evaluating the impact would ask: "How much gasoline was saved?" "How many cars have been taken off the road in the daily commute?" "How many high-occupancy vehicles are on the road compared to single passenger vehicles?" This type of evaluation is more narrow and straightforward so it is easier to assess than process evaluation. In addition to these quantifiable questions, an impact evaluation might want to know if the program is cost effective or what would have happened if the program was not implemented.

A third type of evaluation is **policy evaluation**. This type of evaluation is concerned with the impact of the policy or program on the original problem to which it was addressed. That is, has the problem (e.g. poverty, illiteracy, pollution) been reduced as a result of the policy or program. You might wonder what the difference is between policy evaluation and impact evaluation. Impact evaluation is not concerned with comparing the results of a policy to the policy goal, but tends to ask more focused questions about the effects of the policy. Policy evaluation always compares results to the goal of a given policy.

A fourth type of evaluation is **metaevaluation**. These evaluations are syntheses of evaluation research findings. They look for commonalities among results, measures, and trends in the literature. Metaevaluations are very similar to literature reviews in that they are concerned with the findings across numerous evaluations. For example, in higher education researchers have conducted metaevaluation to see how grading influenced student evaluations of faculty members. Educators have long suspected that faculty who are "easy graders" get better student evaluations than faculty who are demanding graders. Metaevaluation conducted by researchers across several universities compared student evaluations scores to the overall GPA for a class. It concluded that easy graders did have a marginal advantage over demanding graders when it came to student evaluations, but that the most important factors had to do with the personal charisma of a lecturer and the faculty members' ability to remember student names.

Unanticipated Policy Consequences

Every policy should yield some outcomes that are expected, but it also yields results that are not often anticipated by policy makers. A good example of side effects or unanticipated consequences of a policy come from something that affects us all: the social security system. In this system a worker's salary is taxed at the rate of 12.4% with half of that percentage being paid

by the employee and half by the employer (this is only the case for the first $113,700 of an employee's salary). From the proceeds of this tax, pensions are paid to people of age sixty-five and above who have retired; also, support payments are paid to disabled workers and to children of workers who have died young. The direct purpose of the program is to provide a national system of pensions and catastrophe insurance. Among the many side effects of the program, some good and some bad, are the following:

1. People with lower salaries are taxed relatively more heavily than people with higher salaries. Thus, the distribution of incomes in the country is made less equal.
2. Retired people have been made less dependent economically on their families. This has surely been a good thing for them, but it may also have helped to lessen the ties of the extended family, which are already weak in our society.
3. The age of retirement has been made more or less standard in our society.
4. Because people are encouraged to retire at 65 rather than at a later age, the overall production of goods and services has been reduced for the country and all the people are economically somewhat less well off than they would otherwise be.
5. But conversely, the policy has allowed many who wish to stop working at age 65 to do so without being forced by economic need to work on beyond that age.

As this example shows, even a fairly simple program like social security has many effects beyond those for which the policy was originally designed. Some of these were not anticipated by the designers of the policy and some have still probably not been discovered.

Normative Policy Evaluation

There seems to be ***at least*** two values that everyone seems to uphold in policy making: first, the policies should be ***fair***—that is, people in the country should be treated in the way that they deserve; and the policies should be ***efficient***, producing the greatest good at the least cost. The section that follows will discuss some of the criteria for the values of fairness and efficiency and attempt to show, in a cursory way, how values are used to evaluate policy.

Fairness and the Problem of Justice

What do we mean by "fairness," by the notion that people should be treated "as they deserve"? One important element of fairness is one's idea about *justice*, the idea that people should be treated *justly*. But what does this mean? One's notion of fairness or justice is clearly shaped by one's religious and ethical commitments but these can vary tremendously from person to person. For example, let's pretend that you study these readings very carefully every day, take the mid-term and end up with an A average. Meanwhile a few other students don't do the readings and cheat while they take the mid-term and they also get an A average. This will probably offend your notion of justice because you believe that rewards should be dispensed on the basis of

contributions. Because students contributed different amounts of time and energy in their readings and preparation, justice seems to require that the students be rewarded accordingly.

A rather different consideration appears when we think about the timing of a mid-term. Let's say that there is a student in the class who has dyslexia, and that it takes this student a long time to read anything. Equal treatment should require that this student be treated the same as everyone else in spite of his disability. But doesn't justice require that this student's special circumstances be considered in the assessment of his work? In this case, justice would seem to require that the person who *needs* extra time should get special treatment.

Should justice, then, be based solely on the weight of contributions or solely on needs? Neither can probably provide a sufficient basis for justice, but both are clearly part of the picture. There are many problems with the weight of contributions. People's contributions are frequently as much a matter of luck as of virtue, and we are often a bit queasy when rewards are based upon such lucky contributions. To continue with the example of mid-terms, what if you prepared for two hours by reading and studying today's assignment, but a friend who happened to be very intelligent, skimmed the reading in 20 minutes, while drinking his third beer of the evening (off-campus, of course). He gets a higher score on the mid-term than you do. At the very least you would probably have mixed feelings about the justice of these grades. To follow this line of thought is it just that a baseball player like Alex Rodriguez is paid $20 million per year when schoolteachers are paid $30,000 per year? Is it just that an unemployed worker in rural Washington has so few opportunities to find work compared to a similar worker in Portland? Contribution alone then cannot provide a sufficient criterion for determining justice because it often involves elements of luck which makes us uncertain about how it should be rewarded. Furthermore, looking only at contributions leads us to ignore questions of need.

Similar problems arise if need alone is used as a criterion for justice. Like "contribution," "need," is a tricky thing, and we are not always sure that it should be rewarded. Should faculty be paid based upon the size of their families? This might seem just at first glance, but is it fair to single faculty who work just as hard at their jobs? Most of us would argue that this is not a just approach because it does not account for the fact that both faculty make equal contributions for the compensation that they receive. Getting back to the mid-term, what if I decided after you had all taken the mid-term that I would give a score of ten to everyone because some people needed a boost to their self-image? Would you favor this? You might…if you hadn't studied, but it probably would not feel very fair. Contribution and need are just two dimensions of the justice question. Others include whether governmental action is perceived as arbitrary or follows a due process; whether special basic rights are violated; and whether special overriding social needs are present.

To be sure, there are many other values that people use to evaluate policy; encouragement of moral behavior, maximization of freedom, maximization of equality, etc., but many of these values will be covered in subsequent units.

Efficiency

Many people will be surprised to see "efficiency" listed as a value. Most people see efficiency as a question for empirical evaluation because efficiency seems like it can be measured, but you will see that efficiency, while it is an important value, can be very difficult to measure. Moreover, efficiency as a value is often at odds with other values that are more important. An **efficient policy** is one that gives the people and the state the greatest benefits at the least cost. The problem is that neither the benefits nor the costs of a policy are easy to calculate.

Consider again the Social Security example. Most individuals would argue that the insolvency of the Social Security system would be a great cost to many Americans. Suppose the government were to raise the payroll tax in order to compensate for the shortfalls in the Social Security system. The benefits of the proposal would be to continue to allow American seniors to receive benefits from the program. However, there might be a lot of variance in terms of the individual cost. For example, increasing taxes on wages would likely lead to more financial hardship to those individuals who are currently working low-wage jobs. However, the cost may be less pronounced for those making a lot of money and who are, perhaps, more concerned with ensuring that the Social Security safety net is secure when they reach retirement age. Government can try to weigh the costs and benefits for its citizens, but this is always going to be difficult to do in a way that satisfies everyone.

Social Tensions:
Individual Good & Common Good

(Please see BlackBoard for articles by Garrett Hardin and Elinor Ostrom, *et al.*)

Introduction to the 'Faith & Culture' Tension

by Kamesh Sankaran

So far, the readings and lectures in CO 350 have addressed the implications of our worldviews on our responses to the world's problems. But we're still missing an important piece that shapes our varied responses. As author and pastor Timothy Keller says: "A worldview is not merely a set of philosophical bullet points, but a master narrative, a fundamental story about a) What human life in the world should be like?, b) What has knocked it off balance?, and c) What can be done to make it right?"[11]. For many, responses to those questions are significantly influenced by commitments that emanate from their religious faith. Croatian theologian, and the Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture, Miroslav Volf says that faith can inform one's responses to questions about engaging in any activity, such as: Why should I engage in the activity in the first place? What should I do and what can I leave undone? How do I succeed in it? How do I cope with failure in it?[12] Therefore, the focus of this segment of CO 350 is on the role that religious faith plays in responding to various problems we face in culture and the inevitable tensions that arise in the process.

As we will discuss in the lectures, one does not need to have a personal religious faith to still have an opinion on the role (if any) that the religious faith of *other people* should play in their response to the world's problems. The perspectives discussed here also transcend any specific religious faith, and are also not limited in their applicability to any specific society/culture.

The diversity of views among Christians on engagement in the civic process can be traced back to the mystery in Jesus's prayer to God the Father on behalf of his followers: "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." (John 17:15-18). This stated desire of Jesus that his followers go "into the world" but remain "not of the world" has been understood in myriad ways by the Christian church around the world over the last 2000 years. In the heyday of 'Christendom' in the U.S. in the early 20th century, several prominent authors descriptively and prescriptively tackled the question of how Christians engage (or ought to engage) their culture, given the enormous influence of the church on it at that time. Theologians like J. Gresham

[11] Timothy Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf, "Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work", Dutton, 2012.
[12] Miroslav Volf, "A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good", Brazos, 2011.

Machen[13] and H. Richard Niebuhr[14] (who stood at very different ends of the Reformed tradition) extensively addressed this matter in their well-known works. In the next briefing in this packet, you'll see an Anabaptist (Mennonite) perspective on the issue. In the last few decades, authors from a wide range of Christian backgrounds (Scottish Reformed, ecumenical Church of South India, Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, neo-Anabaptist …), such as Leslie Newbigin[15], Stanley Hauerwas[16], John Stott[17], Andy Crouch[18], James Davidson Hunter[19], and D.A. Carson[20] have tackled this difficult topic.

For the sake of pedagogical simplicity, we will use the *typology* created by Niebuhr. Given his own position on the Reformed spectrum, Niebuhr's categorization comes with implicit biases. As you read these briefings, please make mental connections between a given perspective on faith and civic engagement and the various epistemological and metaphysical and ideological commitments that we've already covered in this course.

Niebuhr's typology comes with an obvious limitation – an oversimplification of the complex, and sometimes contradictory, thinking among Christians (individuals and groups) into neat little boxes. But his work was never meant to be an exhaustive analysis of all the possible ways Christians might interact with the world; nor was it meant to imply that any Christian person or church would fit solely and neatly into one type. Niebuhr understood his typology as a *heuristic,* an analytical tool that's useful even though it is not fully accurate to the nuances of reality.

A more important limitation of Niebuhr's typologies comes from the fact that we're now "post-Christendom." Dominant society in much of the West, including the U.S., has left behind any serious identification with Christianity. Furthermore, while Niebuhr aligned his typologies along "denominational boxes", the landscape of Christianity in the U.S. has changed significantly such that denominations are now much less important in the thinking of contemporary Christians than they were during Niebuhr's days. How then can we characterize Christians now according to these *types*, which may have once aligned with denominational doctrinal statements that have lost their cultural impact?

To compound the challenge, the majority of the Christians in the world today live in non-Western cultures that have never had significant historical influences of these denominational structures. The global nature of the church also means that much of today's Christians are in

[13] J. Gresham Machen, "Christianity and Culture", *The Princeton Theological Review*, v. 11, 1913.
[14] H. Richard Niebuhr, "Christ and Culture", Harper & Row, 1951.
[15] Leslie Newbigin, "The Gospel in a Pluralist Society", Eerdmans, 1989.
[16] Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, "Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony", Abingdon, 1989.
[17] John Stott, "Human Rights and Human Wrongs: Major Issues for a New Century", Baker, 1999.
[18] Andy Crouch, "Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling", IVP Books, 2008.
[19] James Davidson Hunter, "To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World", Oxford, 2010.
[20] D. A. Carson, "Christ and Culture Revisited", Eerdmans, 2012.

places where they are religious minorities devoid of the cultural status that Niebuhr presumes, and therefore they have to find ways to engage their society to be salt and light in their communities without having much influence in the policymaking process.

Despite these serious concerns about the applicability of Niebuhr's typologies, we will still use them in this course because: (1) Niebuhr mapped out some of the *characteristic ways* that believers interact with the culture around them. He successfully identified some of the *patterns of interaction* (and theological interpretations connected to them) that we see repeated across time and cultures. Not only do these show up in repeatedly in historical and global Christianity, but in other faiths as well. And if you can recognize the patterns, you can piece together important parts of people's worldviews. (2) Even if contemporary Christianity doesn't fit those types very well, we can still identify these patterns of interaction as ***strategies*** used by Christians (and other believers). We appeal to different aspects of our theological commitments when we pursue different strategies. When we resort to different strategies in different situations, it may indicate some fragmentation in our own Christian life, and that it may contain some incoherence. But identifying the strategies we use, and when/where we invoke them, can help us learn where those fragmentations lie and perhaps help us see why and what to do about it. Maybe we can also identify where our hearts lie, which strategy most satisfies our sense of Christian commitment, allowing us to start integrating on that as the center. (3) As mentioned earlier, these typologies are broadly applicable across many religions. Thus Niebuhr's work is useful for believers and non-believers alike (for the latter will benefit, too, by better understanding both the religious attitudes of their neighbors and their own attitudes towards religious belief).

Let me offer a word of caution as you read the following briefings on the 'Faith & Culture' tension: they were written by four different authors, and therefore you will see an eclectic mix of personalities, writing styles, and teaching styles in these briefings. So please note that just because a given a position is mocked doesn't mean that it is discounted!

Finally, let me share my own biased opinion. I read the Bible as providing us an overarching narrative of God's relationship with humanity through the various stages of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation. Viewing these Christ and Culture positions/strategies from my framework, I think each one of them tends to overemphasize one aspect of this narrative at the expense of the others. I think that the 'Of' and 'Above' strategies overemphasize the creative aspect of humanity (which is created in the image of God) and have an exaggerated optimism about actual and achievable goodness, the 'Against' strategy overemphasizes the destructive effect of the fall, the 'Transforming' strategy overemphasizes the human ability to play a redemptive role, and the 'Paradox' strategy overemphasizes our need to patiently wait for consummation when God will eventually set all things right. But no worldview is ever completely free of intellectual or practical problems, and our hope here is to merely provide you with a framework to comprehend a complex reality.

"Christ Against Culture": A Mennonite Perspective

by John Yoder

Introduction

In his book Christ and Culture, H. Richard Niebuhr states, "The Mennonites have come to represent the attitude most purely, since they not only renounce all participation in politics and refuse to be drawn into military service, but follow their own distinctive customs and regulations in economics and education." (56). Both H. Richard Niebuhr and his more famous brother Reinhold have used Mennonites and their Amish cousins as examples of people who reject mainstream culture and both men regarded the Mennonite perspective as an important, but unrealistic position. Mennonites, they said, point to what God wants from human beings, but they offer little realistic guidance about how do deal with the complexities of life.

Having grow up in a tight-knit mid-western, Germanic, Mennonite community; having studied at Mennonite Seminary; and having served in Europe and Africa with Mennonite Central Committee, I may qualify as Whitworth expert's on the Christ Against Culture model. In any case, I would like to explain Niebuhrs' ideas by describing my own background and then by critiquing Niehbuhr from that perspective.

My Experiences: The "Christ Against Culture" Model in Action

The Mennonite society of my youth is captured fairly accurately by Niebuhr's model. As I think back on my church and parochial school experience, I recall many times when teachers, ministers, and community members emphasized the idea that Mennonites were among God's chosen few. Although Mennonites in the 1950s were not as distinctive as the Amish, separation from the world was a central tenet of Mennonite life and thought. Modesty in attire, the avoidance of liquor and tobacco, a rejection of "worldly" forms of entertainment (I saw my first movie when I was a senior in high school—and I felt guilty even though it was "The Ten Commandments"), a strong preference for attending Mennonite schools, and a very strong disapproval of marrying outside the faith (seen as being "unequally yoked") characterized Mennonites all over the United States. Sermons in my rural church stressed themes such as the following: nonconformity to the world, being in the world but not of it, Christians as pilgrims and strangers in the world, Christians as citizens of another world, God's desire that his followers be a peculiar people, the foolishness of the Gospel, the importance of living a morally distinctive life, the importance of plain clothing (including no ties for men—at least preachers—

and modest clothes for women—including long sleeves, high necklines, and a prayer veiling on the head). Divorce, drinking and smoking, wearing a military uniform (even a Boy Scout uniform), and playing cards were all to be avoided by Christians. Of course sexual propriety, referred to by the euphemism "purity" (the word sex was rarely uttered either in church or outside the church), was especially important.

Popular Mennonite theology emphasized apartness. In the 1950s and 1960s, one of the most widely read (at least by pastors) Mennonite books was J.C. Wenger's *Separated unto God: A Plea for Christian Simplicity of Life and for a Scriptural Nonconformity to the World.* (1951). Although the title speaks for itself, a survey of the index makes Niebuhr's theme of "Christ against culture" abundantly clear. The index featured the following: Adornment, Bodily; Adornment of the Christian Woman; Alcohol and Accidents; Alcohol and Man; Alcohol and Social Responsibility; Alcohol, Explored; Alcohol, You and; Alcoholic, beverages, The Church, and; Alcoholic Drinks, Tobacco; Alcohol, Effect of; Alcohol, Use of (for the sake of space I omitted eight other references to alcohol); Amusements, Questionable; Amusements, The Christian and; *As to Being Worldly*; Attire; Attire, Christian, Our Personal Responsibility; Beards, Wearing of; Bible Teachings on Nonconformity; Biblical and Practical Nonconformity; Body, Biblical Teachings on the; Bonnets; Boy Scouts; Card playing; Clergy, Distinctive dress of; Clothing; Cosmetics, Use of; Costume (nine separate entries); Dancing; Devotional Covering (prayer veiling); Devotional Head-Covering; Dress (eight separate entries); Drink; Drinking; Drunkenness; Excommunication; Fashion; Fashionable Attire; Fashions, the Christian and Worldly Fashions; Four-H Clubs (not quite as dangerous as Boy Scouts, but suspect); Freemasonry (eight references).

I'm just through "F" and won't go on to Gambling, High School Plays, Instrumental Music in Churches; and Worldly Amusements and Pleasures (all condemned), but you get the point. Mennonites had myriad ways of separating themselves from a fallen world.

As Mennonites, we were keenly aware that we were distinct from the world around us, a fallen world inhabited by Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Catholics, people we labeled as "the English" and people who paid far too little attention to the important topics listed in J.C. Wenger's book. Not only were Mennonites separate from those people spatially (their farms were generally located across the river or in another part of the county), we would also be spared their presence in eternity. When asked if people other than Mennonites would be able to enter heaven, one Mennonite minister responded somewhat sadly and hesitantly, "Yes, but not many."

Of course, the absolute pagans such as our hard-working neighbor Roger Mansfield, a man who never went to church, could not be expected to find their way into heaven. We even had questions about Mrs. Billy Graham because she cut her hair (a clear violation of I Cor. 11:6) and wore a wedding ring (breaking the scriptural injunction against jewelry).

To some extent, the above description is a caricature. Mennonites did, however, see themselves as a people set apart from the prevailing culture. While the external distinctions such as those listed in J.C. Wenger's book were regarded as important, Mennonites had a much more profound understanding of separation or "against culture." As Niebuhr rightly notes, Mennonites want to be a people guided exclusively by the example of Christ, not by the constraints of culture. Christ in the New Testament proclaimed himself a Lord of all of life and the voice of a new Kingdom God was already establishing on earth. According to Mennonites, Christians are expected to live their entire lives as followers of Jesus and as citizens of God's new kingdom. Christians are not to base their lives on what is practical or reasonable, only on what is faithful. Like the early Christians described by Niebuhr, Mennonites believe that faithfulness is linked to the admonition about love in I John. Show love to others because God is love and Christ's message is love. Because love is not the way of the world, showing God's love means renouncing the world.

As Niebuhr explains, the Christ Against Culture perspective is both prophetic and isolationist. According to this model, the Christian expresses and lives faithfulness by charting a very different course in life from that taken by the vast majority of people in society. In the practical and political realm, using Christ's love as the ultimate guide for life means that Mennonites are deeply suspicious of government. Instead of following the principles of love, government pursues and protects self-interest and power. Governments use force, governments use threat, governments punish, and governments listen to the strong rather than the weak. Furthermore, governments tend to exalt themselves and encourage people to develop deep sentiments of support that become idolatrous. Mennonites always fear that the call for loyalty to God and country is a way to enlist God as a partisan cheerleader for the nation. Because of their suspicion toward government, Mennonites have sometimes been reluctant to vote and they have consistently refused to swear an oath of allegiance, to fly flags in churches, or to serve in the military.

Because of their views about violence, power, and pride, Mennonites have sometimes refused to obey government. Mennonites are quick to distinguish between what is owed to Caesar and what is owed to God. Their refusal to participate in some of the most fundamental rites of citizenship has earned them the hostility of the state and of their fellow citizens. From early on in their history (which began during the Reformation when they broke from the Reformed movement), Mennonites have been imprisoned, tortured, expelled, and killed for their beliefs and practices. The stories of Mennonite martyrs have been compiled in *Martyr's Mirror,* a thousand-page volume that frequently sits on bookshelves in Mennonite homes. Until recent times, the book has been treasured because its tales resonated with the realities of life in Mennonite communities. For example, my own grandfathers were both attacked during World War II. My one grandfather, a man with four draft age sons who did not join the army, was hung in effigy on

the main street of Kalona, Iowa. My other grandfather, a prominent Mennonite pastor, was confronted by angry mobs who threatened to burn down his house and tar and feather him.
Analysis: A Philosophical, Theological, Cultural, and Political Examination of "Christ against Culture"

As practiced by Mennonites, and by most examples of the model, "Christ Against Culture" does not reject culture per se. Mennonites, at least, challenge the deepest assumptions of prevailing culture, not the concept or practice of culture. As Niebuhr says, it would be naïve to think that anyone could escape culture. That would be a bit like saying we as humans could escape our physical bodies. As anyone familiar with Mennonites knows, they celebrate culture, in fact they sustain their belief system by relying on a very tightly knit cultural system that at times has erred on the side of legalism. Wenger's *Separated unto God* exemplifies the importance of culture. Instead of rejecting culture, Mennonites believe Christ has given both the guidelines and the power to build a new community of faith. This new culture is then to become a beacon on a hill, salt and light, and leaven in the loaf. What sets Mennonites apart from people in the dominant culture is the fact that Mennonites believe that they can (with help and guidance from God) build a new Christ-centered culture. This is Christ-Against-Dominant-Culture, not Christ-Against-All-Culture. Mennonites argue that standing up against dominant culture is possible only with the support of an alternative culture. Any real criticism of culture will come from a cohesive community of like-minded people who sustain and support each other. Thus, sociology and theology are interdependent.

Mennonites also believe that the dominant culture which they stand against is deeply flawed. This negative conviction pertains to the politics, philosophy, ethics, and theology of dominant society. No part of prevailing culture is immune from the fall. All life and thought in unredeemed society is tainted by sin, especially sins resulting from the temptations of pride, power, greed, and lust. While the fundamentalists described by Dr. Wyma think of themselves as Christians against culture, in fact they support most of the practices and assumptions of dominant culture. While they may rail against the immorality of abortion and homosexuality, they uncritically accept the American economic and political systems. Mennonites, on the other hand, suspect that every political and economic system is built upon selfishness, inequality, and coercion. Such systems stand in opposition to the deepest values of the Kingdom which God is establishing on earth.

Philosophy

A philosopher concerned about epistemology would label Mennonites as people who find truth through authority, in this case the authority of Jesus and of scripture. Mennonites believe that in Jesus, human beings best see what God desires of his followers and in Jesus people best see who God is. All parts of the Bible are to be understood in the light of God's perfect and complete revelation in Jesus Christ. While Mennonites might agree that everyone has access to truth

through innate knowledge (intuition), reason (empiricism), or culture (authority of tradition or of trial and error), they are not optimistic that everyone will recognize or apply that truth. Left on their own, humans are likely to inject self-interest into their search for truth. Thus, "truth" apart from Christ's truth, is likely to be distorted and self-serving.

Mennonites tend to see people as unconstrained agents able to exercise free will. That free will enables people to choose to live as God intends, or at least choose to accept God's redemptive power enabling them to live as God intends. Of course, free will is often exercised selfishly and destructively.

Something that Niebuhr does not say, and may not understand, is the fact that Mennonites insist that any search for truth be conducted through the community, not by isolated individuals. While Christ and the Bible (especially the Gospels and the New Testament) are absolutely reliable, they can easily be misunderstood by human beings. The way to minimize that danger is to test any individual interpretation against the wisdom of the believing community. Thus, the culture of the community mediates the truth of the Gospel. Hopefully, a faithful community will recognize self-serving and unorthodox interpretations. A single individual, no matter how sincere or charismatic, cannot be trusted to explain the mind or will of God.

Theology

Although Niebuhr criticizes Christ Against Culture people for denying the complexity of God's nature as embodied in the doctrine of the Trinity (God as creator, ruler and judge as well as God as savior and redeemer), Mennonites argue that Niebuhr describes God's nature as many, not one. Does Niebuhr believe justice and love are antithetical? That the God who insists on justice is different from the God as revealed in Jesus? Mennonites would also worry that when talking of God as judge and ruler, Niebuhr looks to existing patterns of government for his main clues about what God wants. Niebuhr (who is sympathetic to the Lutheran and Calvinist perspectives) is too quick to say that we see the hand of God in secular government that provides order and structure for human life. Mennonites might agree that God is distantly evident in the affairs of this world, but would be unwilling to accept the existing structures and ideologies (even those of democratic America) as useful examples of what God truly wants. In other words, prevailing culture is not considered as a reliable source of revelation.

For Mennonites, as Christ Against Culture people, the resurrection consistently trumps the fall. While others may begin their theological journey by reminding everyone of the fall, of sin, and of evil, Mennonites would claim that all reality must be understood in the light of redemption and in the ultimate triumph symbolized in the resurrection. While others would say that in an evil world humans must choose between the lesser of two evils, Mennonites say Christians should always follow the example of Christ. True, evil is insidiously ever-present in human life.

But, the power of God's kingdom has demonstrated the ultimate failure of evil. Furthermore, the hope and promise of the resurrection and the power of the Holy Spirit enables followers of Christ to orient their lives around that kingdom. While humans will inevitably fail in that endeavor, they cannot take the easy way out by saying that since they can't live perfectly they should not even try. To be Christian is to live all of life as though God's Kingdom has already come.

Culture

If Mennonites are a good example of the Christ Against Culture model, it is obvious that such people do not reject culture per se. Mennonites have always devoted an enormous amount of energy to building their culture. To lean against the dominant culture of mainstream society requires the support and encouragement of a countervailing culture. Ideally, close-knit Mennonite culture provides social pressure, mutual help, and mutual discernment that enables otherwise weak or confused individuals to maintain communities that stand as a challenge to mainstream culture. Historically, Mennonite culture was strong, but not physically coercive. Even when Mennonites lived in very isolated frontier settlements (for example in the Chaco region of Paraguay) they did not resort to violence in order to preserve community and culture. Deviants were subject to ex-communication and social disapproval, not physical punishment. To return to the fold, they were required to make a public confession in church. But, they were not stripped of their wealth, exiled, imprisoned, executed, or tortured.

Public Policy

Until the 1950s, most Mennonites did not participate in politics and therefore had little influence on public policy. Although, along with Quakers and Brethren, in the 1930s and 1940s they lobbied the federal government to establish an alternative service for young men who were conscientious objectors to the military, Mennonites typically did not run for office, did not interact with elected officials, and did not vote. Politics, seen as dirty, was left to people regarded as outside of God's Kingdom.

A story, that I think is true, exemplifies this Christ Against Culture stance toward politics. Supposedly, in the 1940s a Mennonite in Illinois made a break from his apolitical culture and ran for election to the local school board. The fact that a Mennonite was now on the ballot caused Mennonites in the community to reassess their position about voting. After much soul searching, the previously politically inactive Mennonites turned out in large numbers to vote. But, they did not come to the polls in order to support a good Christian, a fellow Mennonite, who would bring integrity to political office. Rather, they rallied to vote against the man in order to save him from committing further sin by holding office! Although Mennonites now vote, participate in campaigns, and run for office, modern Mennonites still nurture a deep suspicion about politics.

Although Mennonites now engage in public policy-making, they continue to be influenced by their historic Christ Against Culture perspective. That perspective is perhaps best understood by comparing and contrasting it to the stance of American fundamentalists as described by Dr. Wyma. While fundamentalists (and many evangelicals) think of themselves as standing against American culture, they do so very selectively. They strongly oppose abortion, but equally strongly support capital punishment and nuclear weapons. They defend the family by condemning homosexuality, but do not seem concerned that corporations place stress on family life by demanding long hours of overtime or by relocating workers and executives in ways that are very disruptive to family life. From a Mennonite point of view, fundamentalists are especially blind to deeply rooted structural evils. Many Mennonites are strongly against abortion, but they are likely to be equally incensed by cuts in social programs that provide pre-natal care and good nutrition to expectant mothers when reductions to such programs mean that fewer unborn babies will survive and be healthy. Mennonites tend to suspect that fundamentalists' public concern about abortion, homosexuality, strong national defense, and the Ten Commandments reflects a longing to return to an idealized 1950s American culture. Thus, they see fundamentalists as uncritically aligned with American culture, albeit a culture of the mid-20th century.

As representatives of Christ Against Culture, Mennonites think of themselves as challenging all cultures by measuring all culture against the template of God's Kingdom. They strongly resist the argument that injustice, violence, and evil are simply a part of life and must be accepted. They deny that American culture is somehow more sacred or worthy than other cultures. Thus, they are unwilling to say that the downsides of capitalism (damage to the environment, the commercialization of sexuality, pressures to consume, dislocation of workers and businesses, chronic unemployment, vastly different levels of compensation for workers and managers, lack of essential services such as childcare, and the monetizing of access to health care) must be regarded as inevitable, acceptable, and even beneficial. Furthermore, they are unwilling to say that national security requires a commitment to massive military budgets, detention without access to legal counsel, or preemptive invasions. In other words, Mennonites refuse to accept the argument that we must put up with a system or political strategy simply because that is just the way things operate.

Principles of Policy Formulation (From a Mennonite Christ Against Culture Model)

Historically, the Mennonite Christ-Against-Culture perspective eschewed any policy making because making policy meant that one was part of the fallen political system. However, present-day Mennonites teach political science, run for office, serve as diplomats, and work as bureaucrats. While some might argue this change represents an abandonment of the Christ-Against position, I believe the shift represents a continuation of a Christ-Against witness which critiques the

foundation principles of modern society. While modern Mennonites may not separate themselves spatially, educationally, or professionally, they do set themselves apart intellectually and politically. Ideally, this means they,

1. Assume that a policy can be formulated that will be more Christlike (more help for the poor than the rich, more support for the weak than the powerful, more consideration to the marginal than the established and privileged, more attention to peace than force).
2. Assume that the policy of the status quo (no matter what the ideological bent) is based on selfishness and coercion. This would lead one to suspect that Republican trickle-down economics and tax cuts for the higher brackets may benefit the rich and hurt the poor, that Democratic social service policies may advantage entrenched bureaucrats and special interests more than the supposed recipients, that socialist systems may be put in place by people hoping to assert control and that capitalist systems may be defended by people tempted to deny their responsibility to others and to the common good.
3. Assume that a more just and Christlike policy can actually work better for everyone. In the end, status quo economic and political policies are destructive and counterproductive. In the end, "realist" military policies result in disaster.
4. Assume that nationalistic governments and political leaders seek the power and glory that are appropriate only for God. Governments tend to encourage idolatry, idolatry that exalts the state and its officials.
5. Assume that all ideologies, political parties, and policy statements are tainted with self-interest and are articulated with the expectation of self-advancement and self-promotion.
6. Above all, assume that references by politicians to God or absolute truth are generally attempts to uphold a partisan policy or give more legitimacy to an interest or group that can be justified by fairness and truth. That means that we should also be suspicious of attempts to demonize opponents, either domestic or international.

Christ Against Culture in Policymaking

by Keith Wyma

Set-up

John Yoder's briefing offers an excellent picture of what Christ Against Culture can look like, drawing on the Mennonite tradition as an extended example. I'm assuming you've read Yoder, so I'm going to treat the strategy more generally. We'll first see some examples of the Christ Against Culture strategy in contemporary politics. Then we'll make some quick connections between the Against-strategy and our course's epistemological, metaphysical, and ideological categories.

The Against-strategy in Action

In America, the Against-strategy appears in at least two widely different guises: first, in the tradition of "separation" most evident in the Amish but also in the Mennonites, and second, in the tradition of "prophetic warning" epitomized by Protestant fundamentalism. In the briefing, I'm going to concentrate on fundamentalism. Frankly, having spent most of my youth as a Baptist, I'm more acquainted with fundamentalism (and for some reason there just aren't many websites for the Amish). In addition, I think the fundamentalists are the more visible and vocal group in American politics. However, John Yoder's personal account and analysis is highly enlightening on the "separation" variety. John has some criticisms, too, of whether Protestant fundamentalists should count as Against. I think he makes some good points; but I also think they show that it's hard to see fundamentalists as truly the Against *type*. I'm confident you'll recognize how well Against, considered as a *strategy*, still fits fundamentalists.

So let's look at some fundamentalist arguments and what they reveal about the political outlook of the Christ Against Culture strategy. Not surprisingly, the issues that attract the most Against-strategy activism are moral ones. Fundamentalists take offense (and sometimes take to picketing), if anyone suggests that homosexual marriage should be legal, or that abortion should be solely a woman's choice, or that courtrooms shouldn't post the Ten Commandments, and so on. Many fundamentalist organizations, like Focus on the Family or the ACLJ, devote most of their efforts to such issues.

Now, because the Against-strategy sees itself as in a condemnatory relation with culture, much of its rhetoric is negative and takes on a prophetic tone. "Things are going to hell [literally!], and

here's why…." Jerry Falwell was, and Pat Robertson is, a prime example, here. They both made remarks about how 9/11 was punishment on the U.S. (and Robertson made similar comments about the Haiti earthquake). Also, the legalistic mindset attributed to the Against-type by Niebuhr frequently emerges in the stances taken by fundamentalists on moral questions. "Scripture clearly says ____ is wrong, and so _____ needs to be stopped immediately, and preferably punished really severely!" For an example that takes this to an extreme, consider the "ministry" of the Westboro Baptist Church (if our filters don't keep you out—thank you, Whitworth paternalism!—you can find them at godhatesfags.com), who picketed Matthew Sheppard's funeral, among other places. But I'm sure you're familiar with less extreme examples, too.

Further, fundamentalism seems to have an affinity for the Right's economic agenda. Perhaps it stems from a desire to preserve a "space" free from the government's—read: the culture's—control—and perhaps it stems from sympathy with past cultures—for example the American Founders'—that would oppose the present state of affairs. But in any case, fundamentalists love their property rights! If you check out the late Falwell's site (falwell.com—c'mon you knew it had to be there!), for instance, many of the links will take you to think tanks making defenses of private property (like the Claremont Institute and Rutherford Institute).

Sometimes, though, attitudes can be displayed as sharply in what people remain silent on, as in what they shout about. For example, search the Web on "Christian environmentalism" and you'll find numerous sites of Christian activists. Search the Web on "Christian *fundamentalist* environmentalism" and you'll find mostly comments *about* Christian fundamentalists on sites of their opponents. None of the fundamentalist think tanks I checked had anything substantive on environmental policy. In fact, what I did find was fundamentalist criticisms of the motivations of environmentalism. Multiple sites contained essays *attacking environmentalism as a new, rival (and of course, false) religion*. Environmentalism was characterized as depending on a kind of pantheistic belief in all life as being equally sacred, and as being the expression of the living Earth, itself, which is effectively worshiped under the name "Gaia." Thus, the aims of environmentalism must reflect a false worldview, and skewed priorities. As such environmentalism ought to be opposed, at least in its present form. Perhaps fundamentalism's attitude can best be summed up in this bumper sticker (supposedly seen in Boise and quoted on an opposition site): "Forget the environment and focus on the people! It's all going to burn—the question is, are YOU?" Niebuhr's thesis that the Against-type has a conviction of the nearness of judgment seems right on target here.

Now, sometimes fundamentalist declamations can seem narrow-minded (and even mean and stupid—yes, I mean you, Pat, for your 9/11 and Haiti comments—or even wicked—yes, that's you, WBC), but they're fueled by the conviction that only in Christ's revelation is truth found. The "in" perspective just sees things more clearly than the "out" does. And frankly, that may be

correct about some things (environmentalism-as-religion, for instance). In any case, whether the individual claims are mistaken or not, *fundamentalism—and more generally, the Against-strategy—offers a platform for critiquing society, for showing it another way; and that may well be very valuable, in itself, to society and the political process*.

Epistemology

Given that Niebuhr emphasizes the Against-type's commitment to Christ in opposition to culture's resources, it should come as no surprise that the type's primary epistemological approach is *authoritarian*. Truth comes from God, and hence knowledge is found in God's Word to us. Constant reference to Scripture, particularly if it should be forwarded as a contrast to science or to accepted cultural ideals, is a hallmark of fundamentalism's Against-strategy arguments.

Moreover, fundamentalists rely on *intuitionism*, in that conversion to Christ grants one a wholly new perspective on the world, one not sharable by those not in Christ. Indeed, in a "*sola Scriptura"* mode, interpretation of the Word must in turn be inspired so that the Word's meaning is clear to any believer who looks. That fits with Niebuhr's assertion that the Against-type regards itself as in possession of special knowledge that others cannot be expected to fully grasp even when told. This has implications for fundamentalists' ideology, as we'll see shortly.

To continue with epistemology, it's not that this strategy never appeals to the other epistemological approaches, it does. However, both *empiricism and innatism are problematic*. Innatism, for example, supposes that basic truths—especially moral ones—will be self-evident to everyone. But that can't be right, or fundamentalists wouldn't have nearly so much to complain about. Again, empiricism relies on sense experience, but God and the movements of the Spirit can't be sensed, and science keeps coming up with theories in contradiction to the "clear" witness of Scripture (I recently saw a t-shirt on campus: "Big Bang, you have got to be kidding! --God." I'd laugh at the scientists, but fundamentalists aren't too hot on philosophy, either…).

Metaphysics

Fundamentalists are usually hard-core *free-willers*. I'm not at all certain that has any direct connection with the Against-strategy. But it does carry implications when coupled with another metaphysical view that, according to Niebuhr, does coincide directly with the Against-mindset: an *unconstrained vision of human nature.* The commitment to humanity as unconstrained emerges in two major assumptions: (1) that *people can change their behavior* (there's the free-will connection), which then *justifies fundamentalist activism in the wider culture*. And (2) that the *community of true-believers has a perfected viewpoint and moral standard*. In spite of all they say about universal human sinfulness, for example, the Westboro Baptists seem to have no

grasp of "Let him who is without sin throw the first stone." The Against-strategy seems to have a two-tier view on this issue. On the lower tier, they treat the wider culture as constrained; it's highly untrustworthy and not able, as a whole, to change. And much of their rhetoric directed to the larger culture may sound constrained. However on the upper tier, the culture of believers is subject to unconstrained expectations of holiness and Christ-like behavior. And the very belief that someone can move from the lower tier to the upper is itself an unconstrained commitment, and that seems to dominate the view.

On the last metaphysical issue, fundamentalists—like most Christians—tend towards *dualism* and belief in human immortality through the immaterial soul. This creates an emphasis on human well-being in preference to that of other creatures, and further, on human *eternal* well-being in preference to *material* well-being. Again, this is not unique to the Against-strategy, but it is most prevalent there, because of the Against-mindset's conviction of the nearness of Judgment. So, for example, money and resources are going to be urged towards distinct human needs rather than environmental concerns (unless they can be shown to have adverse effects on humanity, but of course scientific research is suspect, so…), and it means that fundamentalist solutions to human problems will often focus on spiritual needs. "He doesn't need rehab, he just needs the love of Jesus to drop that demon rum!"

Ideology

Fundamentalists, and the Against-strategy in general, I believe, lean toward the *authoritarian* side of the political spectrum. They operate from God's authoritarian revelation, and want sinful society to change but don't expect it to agree—without a kick in the pants, anyway, which government can potentially perform. But this is a conflicted political position for the Against-strategy. After all, they oppose the larger culture, and government is a chief representative of that culture—so is it a good idea to give government more power? Sometimes this caveat goes unnoticed; fundamentalist supporters of school prayer never seem to consider the possibility that not all teacher-led class-prayers might be Christian. As far as I can tell, this tension may grow more or less, depending on how optimistic the Against-party is about getting government's ear regarding change. Pat Robertson wanted to *be* President. The Westboros, on the other hand, have a companion site, godhatesamerica.com.

One other factor that again tips American fundamentalists towards authoritarianism is tied to the Against-type's blind spots. Niebuhr points out *that in their on-principle opposition to culture, the Against-type doesn't seem to notice that its own understanding of Christianity is culturally conditioned*. Thus, as mentioned above, American fundamentalism often takes private property and capitalism as God's own preferences ("What would Jesus do? He'd use His foreknowledge and buy Himself some hot stocks!" For an example not far from this, check out the website or TV shows of the Rev. Creflo Dollar.). Conversely, fundamentalism basically regards the U.S.

Constitution—because it so perfectly embodies the values underlying American Christianity—as divinely inspired. And that's the nudge for authoritarianism: *this* government, at least in its original ideals and structure, is worthy to be an authority and wield power.

Parallels of the Against-type

Finally, just a few words about parallels in secular society and other religions. Many religions have fundamentalists—Islam and Hinduism, for example. *I believe the Christian Against-strategy can yield insights into parallel strategies in other religions*. Fundamentalist Islam is vigorously authoritarian, and often sees itself as an island of righteousness in an otherwise corrupt world, and so on. Thus, even in a Muslim country like Iraq, fundamentalist Shiites were glad to see the corrupt Hussein regime deposed, and now very much want to assume control of the country to lead it on the true path. Would Niebuhr be surprised? Not even remotely.

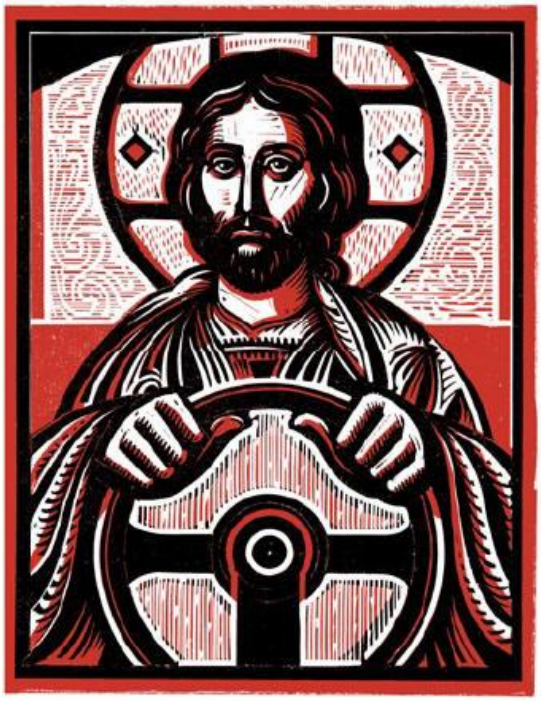
Moreover, *non-religious culture has its own parallels*. Take Richard Dawkins (Please!): he's an atheist and stout defender of Darwinian theory (you might have heard of his best-selling books, like *The Blind Watchmaker* and *The God Delusion*). But where some Darwinians try to reassure religious believers that their theory doesn't have any implications about religious belief, Dawkins quite boldly asserts that it does. Darwinism and Christianity are rival explanations about human origins; the former has empirical evidence, the latter does not; the former is rational and almost certainly true, the latter is irrational and almost certainly false. Moreover, if you question his empirical basis (with, say, persistently-unsolved Darwinian anomalies), you find he still clings to his theory, his authority that *must* have the answer in it somewhere. I submit that Dawkins' Darwinism functions for him as a "revelation," to be defended over the evil forces of traditional Christianity. Or put differently, Dawkins adopts the Christ Against Culture model, too, but from the *culture* side. Karl Marx, with his economic theory, provides another striking example.

The short of it is: I think that *if we keep our eyes open the Christ Against Culture strategy (including its parallels) will show us even more of the social and political landscape than we might have expected*.

Christ of Culture in Policymaking

by Michael K. Le Roy, Keith Wyma, and Kamesh Sankaran

The Christ of Culture perspective "hails Jesus as the Messiah of *their* society."[21] In Niebuhr's time this view was most commonly associated with theological liberals who viewed reason and cultural achievements like democracy, technology, industrial development, and scientific discovery as though they were contemporary manifestations of God's presence here on earth. The Christ of Culture view espoused by Ritschl, Jefferson, or Tennyson sees a free, democratic, socially cooperative, and peaceful society as the "Kingdom of God" here on earth. This would probably be a persuasive viewpoint if society were only characterized by these values behaviors in human community. This viewpoint also illustrates a compelling point that we should all heed: that it seems to be a deeply ingrained human tendency to associate human aspirations and achievements with God's purposes.



Aligning our desired social good with the purposes of Christ may not be inherently a bad thing, according to Niebuhr who states that the bearers of this viewpoint have been leaders in universalizing the gospel. According to Niebuhr, had Christianity remained in the hands of so-called radical Christians the faith may have remained the exclusive domain of a marginal little sect. So it is important that we don't dismiss this view because it accommodates culture. It may be very hard for us to see the relevance of this view today. We now live in a culture that is often considered to be at odds with Christian faith and belief, but 1950s American culture reflected a strong set of Protestant commitments and values. In that period, it would probably been harder for the average Whitworth student or faculty member to see the problems with associating Christ with culture.

Unfortunately, a society characterized by freedom, democracy, social cooperation, and peace is only a partial account of our social life together. It overlooks the extent to which political, social, and economic oppression, social conflict, and warfare are also a part of this life in human community. This is the Achilles heel of the *accomodationist* perspective. The Christ of Culture

[21] Niebuhr, p. 83. [Emphasis added].

viewpoint has also been responsible for all sorts of horrendous accommodations which have included: the violent imperial conquest of the Americas; the biblical justification of slavery in the United States; the racial separation of *apartheid* in South Africa; and German Christian support of Hitler's regime and subsequent genocide of the Holocaust. Though Christians are still capable of supporting such horrors, the Christ of Culture view can also continue to uncritically accept all sorts of values that may be antithetical to Christ. In the United States, materialism, waste, and greed are some of the values that we may accommodate all too easily.

Coming to grips with what it means to hold a Christ of Culture perspective is challenging because you have to try to disentangle your faith from your particular embrace of culture. This is difficult to do because the faith of most Christians has become deeply intertwined with the cultural assumptions and values that characterize social life in any era. But it may be easier to identify this viewpoint when Christ is closely associated with a particular viewpoint, social act, or political cause. There are plenty of very good examples from the right and the left in U.S. political history.

In recent times, conservatives have endorsed a particular view of American history that exalts the founders of the United States as though they were Old Testament heroes. The book *The Light and the Glory*, by Peter Marshall and David Manuel describes early American culture and society as though it is the New Jerusalem. The authors describe the founders as adherents to a strong Christian faith who regularly consulted the Lord in prayer for guidance and direction on everything from the writing of key letters and documents, to military maneuvers against the British. This book, and a later book, *The Light and the Glory for Children: Discovering God's Plan for America from Christopher Columbus to George Washington* by the same authors claims that there is a special covenant between God and American society that contemporary culture has neglected. The authors claim that this contemporary neglect of the special covenant will eventually lead to God's judgment and condemnation a return to the Christian roots of early American culture.[22]

One may be quick to point out the similarity of this view with the Christ against Culture view articulated in the last reading, and Niebuhr concurs that there are indeed a great many similarities between these viewpoints that are allegedly in the opposite ends of the Christ & Culture spectrum. Both of them make the claim that there exists a particular culture that can be relatively free of sin and has a corner on the truth. The only difference here is the choice of a culture that one claims to be aligned with God.

[22] The problems with this series of books are too numerous to discuss here, but they are important to mention because they are often a central part of home school and parochial curricula. If you are interested in the question of a Christian origin to America I would encourage you to read *The Search for a Christian America*, by Mark Noll, George Marsden, and Nathan Hatch.

In the process of integrating faith with the most pressing social problems of the day, many well-meaning, well-intentioned Christians will equate the virtues of Christ with a particular solution to a social problem. Liberals, who are likely to believe in the "liberating Christ," point to the oppression, slavery, and discrimination of the past and say that today's culture is a better reflection of the character of Christ. Conservatives are likely to focus on the "Christ of the final judgment" and point to the sexual permissiveness, gay marriage, abortion, and the lack of prayer in public schools and claim that Christ endorses the culture of a bygone era. Niebuhr's criticism is that Christ is way too complex to easily be appropriated for any particular cause, and that the Christ of Culture view has to offer too selective a view of the New Testament to be accurate.

It is important to remember that the key aspect of the Christ of Culture perspective is its tendency to associate human aspirations (especially that of a *specific* group, such as 'Americans') with God's own purposes. As discussed above, this tendency can be found in either end of the political spectrum. New York Times columnist and author Ross Douthat considers both "apocalyptic" conservatives and "messianic" liberals as simply two variants of the American *Of* perspective, and finds examples of political leaders of both major parties who fit in both variants of the *Of* perspective (for instance, presidents Woodrow Wilson, Lyndon Johnson, and George W. Bush are all classified as "messianic" *Of* types by Douthat)[23].

For the purpose of another illustration, let us consider how the *Of* shows up in Liberation Theology, in which Christ is identified primarily with the social group of the economically and politically oppressed. James Cone, the pioneer of Black Liberation Theology in the U.S., explicitly states that "Jesus is black."[24] He goes on to explain that "Christ's blackness is both literal and symbolic. … Indeed, if Christ is not *truly* black, then the historical Jesus lied. God did not anoint him "to preach good news to the poor" and neither did he send him "to proclaim release to the captives and recovering the sight to the blind to set at liberty those who are oppressed." If Christ is not black, the gospel is not good news to the oppressed, and Marx's observation is right: "Religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world … the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people.""[25] Furthermore, in addition to exclusively identifying the person of Christ with a specific group of people, Cone also exclusively associates the purposes of Christ with that group: "Any interpretation of the gospel in any historical period that fails to see Jesus as the Liberator of the oppressed is heretical. Any view of the gospel that fails to understand the Church as that community whose work and consciousness are defined by the community of the oppressed is not Christian and is thus heretical."[26] So strong is Cone's association of Christ's purposes with the aspirations of those

[23] Ross Douthat, "Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics", Free Press, 2013
[24] Cone, "God of the Oppressed", p. 133
[25] Ibid, pp. 136-137
[26] Ibid, p. 37

under earthly oppression that he declares: "Either God is identified with the oppressed to the point that their experience becomes God's experience, or God is a God of racism...."[27]

Another interesting example of the Christ of Culture view at work in the present day could be the "What would Jesus drive?" (WWJD) campaign sponsored by the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) that sends the message that Jesus would not be driving an SUV around as he does his ministry work. The campaign is provocative and it raises a very good question about consumption habits of American Christians. If we use Jesus as our spokesperson, it could be effective to drive the point home to endorse the purchase of a hybrid vehicle!

But there are a lot of theological risks and problems associated with using Jesus in this way that can't be overlooked. The first problem associated with making Jesus the Messiah for the environmental movement is that it risks ignoring the comprehensive nature of Christ's mission to humanity. As we do this, we reduce Jesus to a mere bumper sticker that can then be appropriated for any other cause by any other culture that finds some compatibility with their agenda. At the end of Niebuhr's chapter on the Christ of Culture Niebuhr reminds us that "It becomes more or less clear that it is not possible to confess that Jesus is the Christ of Culture unless one can confess much more than this."[28]

The second problem associated with making Christ the sponsor of the environmental movement (or any other movement) is that it associates Christ with the things that are good with this agenda (conservation, simplicity, and stewardship), but it can also imply that Christ is judging a whole host of other institutions: automakers, the petroleum industry, and road builders to name a few. The implication that Christ prefers some activities to others is defensible. Clearly he prefers sharing to hoarding, marital fidelity to infidelity, and humility to arrogance, but to extrapolate from the scriptures to judgments about institutions like oil companies is a challenging stretch for anyone to credibly make. Niebuhr's concern is that in the end we may find that those who judge oil executives may have judged correctly, but in the process they have also committed a terrible sin of pride and arrogance.

[27] Cone, "A Black Theology of Liberation", pp. 63-64
[28] Niebuhr, p. 115

Wyma's Briefing:
Christ Above Culture in Policymaking

by Keith Wyma

Set-up

We'll first see some examples of the Christ Above Culture strategy in contemporary politics. Then we'll make some quick connections between the Above-strategy and our course's epistemological and metaphysical categories.

Given that the Christ Above Culture strategy finds its greatest statement in Thomas Aquinas, who is the most influential theologian for Catholicism, it's no surprise that the Above-strategy shows most visibly today in political activity by Catholics and the Catholic Church. So that's where I'm going to focus in the briefing. It's important to note, however, that the Above-strategy is appropriated by Christians other than Catholics, and I'm going to deal with two examples of that, too.

The Above-strategy in Action

Catholics have many of the same political interests that Protestant Fundamentalists do: right to life issues, questions of morality and the law, and so on. However, Catholic activism also ranges over issues the Fundamentalists care less about, like the environment and lots of social justice aspects. Not surprisingly, then, Catholics have had a large presence in the U.S. civil rights movement. In Latin America, too, Catholicism's political impact has been huge: liberation theology, an approach that focuses on the rights of the poor, especially, and on social transformation of unjust institutions that keep the poor in their place, is intimately tied to the Catholic church. Some Catholic priests have even joined revolutionary groups or been assassinated by the powerful who feared their influence.

In looking at Catholic political actions, we can see several common elements that stem from thinking of the Above-strategy. First, Catholic argument has *no fear or suspicion of science, but rather utilizes it (unlike the Against-strategy).* For instance, the recent boom in Catholic environmental activism traces to pronouncements by scientists in the early '90's about the threat of global warming. Moreover, Catholic argument *emphasizes moral principles widely accepted in the political arena*. That is, it doesn't argue solely from revelation, but employs sophisticated ethical reasoning, as well. This tack is used for arguments about civil rights and the like. In a similar example of Above-strategy, Martin Luther King, Jr. (though not Catholic) appealed to

secular ethical ideas from Kant in defending the value of integration. And these attitudes fit with the Above-strategy's positive evaluation of *general revelation*—i.e. our ability to discover truth in reason and through experience and reason. We'll come back to this point in a minute, when we get to epistemological connections.

A second common element is an *ecumenical approach that includes both Protestants and non-Christians.* It's not that Catholicism is leaving behind its distinctive doctrines, but rather that it's constantly seeking for *common ground* with other Christians, with other religions, and with secular society. Such an attitude very much represents the Above-strategy, because this approach regards the unique, transcendent dogmas of Christianity (or of the true Church) as *consistent* with basic truths known by other religions and secularists. That is, in the Above-strategy mindset, *Christ's special revelation stacks on top of general revelation*, truths available to everybody. So while you can't expect all to agree that Christ is God, you can expect all to agree on the priceless value of human life, on basic human rights, etc. Thus, during the civil rights demonstrations, Catholics often joined in with Protestants and Jews to support the cause.

Third, Catholic argument *does not unquestioningly accept the agenda of the surrounding culture (one of the Of-strategy's problems).* Catholic activists make no bones about their civil rights efforts being spurred by respect for God's creation and, more importantly, charity and respect for fellow human beings as commanded by Christ. This puts the Above-strategy in the position of being able to offer "course adjustments" to society. Again, I think this is symbolic of the Above-strategy's mentality: while it looks for common ground with culture, it is not tied solely to culture's ideals and values, but rather gets its foundational guidance from transcendent revelation. It affirms the natural, but not in preference to the supernatural.

A fourth common element connects to one of Niebuhr's criticisms of the Above-type. Niebuhr claimed (and as a neo-Thomist I was highly dismayed by this) that a *true Above-type no longer exists.* Niebuhr argued that, in a sense, the Above-strategy worked for one shining moment in Aquinas' time when culture and Christianity lined up well. Yet culture has since changed enough that Above-strategy arguments tend to be *against present culture by defending a past culture*—namely, Medieval Catholicism. So the strategy devolves into the Of-strategy, just of a past culture. Here's an example from environmental issues: an environmentalist exposition of the *Catechism* for Catholic educators notes, "A comparison between a cathedral built in the Middle Ages and nearly any church built in the last forty or fifty years should be sufficient to tell which civilization is really superior."

Now, let me conclude this section with a quick example of non-Catholic, Above-strategy thinking. Steve Meyer, a former Whitworth philosopher who now works for the Discovery Institute, used to teach a popular course called "Reasons for Faith." Meyer's whole outlook is that science, when it finds the truth, will always be consistent with, and provide support for, the

Christian faith. So Meyer's class didn't just give philosophical arguments for God (although he used those, too), but also ranged over scientific discoveries—like the Big Bang, which ends up seeming very much like the moment of creation-from-nothing—that confirm belief in God. Moreover, Meyer carries his beliefs into the political arena; he's been on radio, TV and testified before government committees on why it should be legal to teach "Intelligent Design" theory—a rival account of evolution to Darwinism's that substantiates the intelligent design of living creatures—in public schools. Meyer, along with others like Philip Johnson, argues that ID theory is simply good science suitable for public education. I'm neither affirming nor denying their claims about ID (that would be for another class). But their approach is very much in line with Above-strategy thinking, which expects science and investigation of nature to point to God.

Epistemology

Looking at Catholic social activism, we can easily see that the Above-strategy centrally utilizes both *empiricism* and *innatism*. The confidence in general revelation demands support for the knowledge tools available to everyone—namely, reason and experience. However, the Above-strategy also crucially depends upon *authoritarianism*, in its acceptance of Christian special revelation (which authoritarianism may be particularly clear in the Catholic model—"Yes, your infallibleness, I'd be glad to crawl through the streets on my bare knees as penance!" [the fate of a medieval king]). As a more relevant example, MLK appealed not only to philosophy and political precedents, but to scripture in defending integration. In fact, the Above-strategy utilizes *intuitionism* as well; King used vivid imagery—an intuitive approach—in his "I Have a Dream" speech. In short, the Above-strategy, because of its support for both general and special revelation, is normally very optimistic about the possibilities of human knowledge, by any of our categorized channels.

Metaphysics

Catholic theology staunchly *defends free will and human immortality*. As such, it's not surprising that they also defend political liberty, and that their social concerns are shaped by the priceless value of human life. But those are not particularly distinguishing from other Christian-types. What is characteristic is the way in which the Above-strategy is *caught between the constrained and unconstrained visions of human nature*. That is, the Above-strategy emphasizes human limitations and sinfulness in a way that the Of-strategy, with its wholehearted endorsement of the unconstrained vision, does not. That's part of the reason why we *need* special revelation in Christ, and not just general revelation in culture. That sounds constrained. Yet, the Above-strategy also crucially depends on *agreement* with secular culture on all sorts of basic moral and theological points (since reason clearly shows that God exists, among other truths). That optimism about secular culture's ability to find truth, or at least agree to it when shown, sounds very *un*constrained. Remember, as I mentioned above, how much value-

agreement MLK presumed the wider society would have with his moral argument. Thus one of Niebuhr's most serious criticisms of this strategy is that it doesn't seem to consistently act on its own assumptions of human sinfulness.

Upshot

Finally, let me note two things: (1*) The Above-strategy is exceedingly well suited to political argument*—it utilizes all the epistemological approaches, and can work well with other belief systems. (2) Even if the Above-type no longer exists as a *global* perspective, it's still *alive and kicking in individual issues*—that is, Christians can and do still pursue common ground with culture on particular issues ("So there, H. Richard!" says the neo-Thomist).

Christ Transforming Culture in Policymaking

by Keith Wyma and Kamesh Sankaran

Set-up

We'll first see some examples of the Christ Transforming Culture strategy in contemporary politics. Then we'll make some quick connections between the Transformer-strategy and our course's epistemological and metaphysical categories.

Given that the Christ Transforming Culture strategy finds its greatest statement in Augustine, who was the most influential theologian for Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin, it is not surprising that the Transformer-motif shows up all over Catholic and Protestant thinking in varying degrees. For example, while addressing an audience of Christian leaders from 150 nations, the acclaimed 20th century Anglican cleric John Stott echoed this principle in calling Christians from these diverse corners of the world to engage with the culture around them through "*churches deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture. Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture. Because men and women are God's creatures, some of their culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because they are fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic. The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture … The Church must be in the world; the world must not be in the Church.*"[29] Simply put, this Christ Transforming Culture strategy is truly global. However the most consistent Transformer perspective is found in the heirs of Calvin, the Reformed and Presbyterian traditions (cf. Abraham Kuyper); therefore many of our examples for this strategy will come from them.

The Transformer-type in Action

These three things are representative of the Transformer approach. First, Presbyterian and Reformed Transformers emphasize *finding truth both by reason and by faith, but especially as each tool has been redeemed by Christ*. That is, Calvinists believe in "total depravity"—the notion that no part of the human person is free from sin's corruptive influence. So they have little trust in rational argument, simply as such (like Cicero said, there's no position so stupid that no philosopher has taken it). Nor do they think the leadings of the human heart are particularly accurate (we all tend towards hating God and neighbor, after all). Yet under Christ's

[29] John Stott, "The Lausanne Covenant", 1974.

transforming guidance, reason and faith become powerful means of finding truth. So Transformers have buzzwords like, "*right* reason"—or *"correct* reason" or "*sound* reason" or *"sound* theology" or *"sound* science" or *"sound* moral reasoning" or *"sound* environmental stewardship." And that's not simply rhetorical flourish, but indicates the emphasis on reason, in science or moral argument, and on faith, in revelation and interpretation, *transformed by Christ.*

Thus Calvinist activism often appeals to science. For instance, here's an example from an issue area with a heavy science component: The Reformed Church of America's (RCA) environmental statement references scientifically diagnosed problems of polluted groundwater, soil conservation, and acid rain. Yet science is often critiqued, too. Not from the reason-hating vantage of the Against-strategy ("I don't care 'bout no geology; the Earth just ain't that old!"), but by *using* reason to point out limitations of scientific findings. For example, the "Cornwall Declaration" (which was ecumenical, but very Transforming in language) criticized some so-called environmental problems, like global warming, because the science underlying them was shaky: "speculative" "global" projections with "largely hypothetical risks" and "dubious benefits." Note that as the scientific evidence for a problem grows, such critiques may have to be revised, and Transformers are OK with that. Faith, too is critiqued. For instance, naturalism and pantheism, two rival worldviews/faiths at work in environmentalist ideology, were criticized in the Declaration as being inadequate to offer a basis for an innate value in nature that ought to be protected (naturalism's problem) or to vindicate the special value of human life and justify environmental corrections (pantheism's problems). Christianity, on the other hand, was argued to possess all the needed justifications for a strong environmental stand: "…as Christians, we have a responsibility to the earth that exceeds that of unredeemed people. We are the only ones who are rightly related to the Creator. We should be showing others the way to environmental responsibility."

That last statement brings up a second characteristic of the Transformer-strategy: *political activism is seen as legitimate and perhaps even mandatory.* How can Christ transform culture except in the efforts of his church? Grassroots efforts are often recommended. One Reformed article proclaims: "…a vibrant faith will certainly contribute meaningfully to the political world…The Church commits no error when it throws itself into political action…." But this strategy is wary of falling into the ideologies of the secular culture, of committing "political heresy;" it has to be the transformative perspective of Christ that the church carries into the public arena.

And that brings up the third characteristic: the *activism is seen as participating in God's work of restoring the original goodness of His creation*. Humans bear the image of God and "participate in God's creative activity." A statement by the PC USA (a non-exclusive partner denomination of Whitworth) says, we're called "to carry on the holy work of transforming brokenness in wholeness…Restoring creation is God's work in our time…The Creator-Redeemer calls faithful

people to become engaged with God in keeping and healing the creation, human and nonhuman." In addition, the church statements stress the goodness of human nature (which is admittedly fallen, but fallen from a good beginning), society, etc. So the Transformers' political work is not simply to restrain the evil of secular culture, but to introduce positive changes to the system to make it more as God would desire—i.e. more just, etc.

Thus, the Transformer-strategy's political approach is somewhat similar to the Above-strategy's, laced with influence from the Against-strategy. That is, the Transformers' approach employs all the cultural tools—moral reasoning, science, governmental regulation, etc.—that the Above-strategy does. But it does so with the very deep-set belief that the culture's values and methods have to be *corrected*, they can't simply be "stacked onto," as the Above-strategy supposes. That cultural criticism is the Against-strategy influence. All in all, it makes for a powerful political position: engaged, utilizing common ground with the culture, working for positive rather than negative change, but always guided by the goal of being salt and light to the world, so that culture may be criticized too.

Epistemology

Epistemologically, the Transformer-strategy is broad-based. As the previous section illustrated, Transformers utilize *empiricism* (e.g. scientific evidence), *innatism* (moral reasoning), and *authoritarianism* (Scriptural revelation). They also employ *intuitionism*; in fact, there's even a "school" of "Reformed epistemologists," like renowned Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga, who advocate an intuitionist knowledge of God's existence (Calvin called it the "*sensus divinitatus*"). However, the *key is always whether the epistemological strategy is being employed within Christ's redemptive transformation of sinful humanity or without*. In other words, Transformers may utilize or criticize any epistemological approach, depending on whether the approach, in that case, is under the lordship of Christ.

Metaphysics

Calvinists are not actually that big on free will. Oh, they claim to support it, but by and large they do so in a way that *links freedom to determinism, in this case from God's sovereignty*. Given the Transformer-strategy's emphasis on God's active role in redeeming the world, this Calvinist de-emphasis on freedom may well be representative of the strategy. I've already made clear my disdain for such "compatibilist" positions, so for now I'll let it go and merely note that implications of this view may emerge in Transformer-strategy ideology. Also, Calvinists tend to be *dualists* (but that isn't necessitated) and therefore to have the priorities focused on the eternal, characteristic of many of the strategies. That might be a contributor to why Niebuhr thinks Calvinism falls short of the full Transformer-perspective, since full redemption of life is left to heaven.

Calvinists (and the Transformer-strategy, generally) are also committed to a *constrained vision of human nature.* And this puts them in *tension*. For, on the one hand, with their belief in total depravity, Calvinists admit to ineradicable evil in human beings. The Transforming approach would never expect that just because, say, segregation has been made illegal, that the problem would be corrected. Transformers would look for people to both resist the law and to look for ways around it. (Sadly, Transformers are rarely surprised by human behavior…) That kind of expectation, that restrictive laws won't make people good but will simply prompt more creative attempts at evil, is right-on with the constrained view. On the other hand, the Transformational ideal seems obviously to imply the possibility of improvement in human behavior and institutions. But the hope of improvement sounds *un*constrained. Perhaps the best (only?) response the Calvinists (and other Transformers) can make is that *what's impossible for human effort is possible by God's grace.* So we prepare for the worst, yet hope—in God—for the best.

Ideology

Calvinism (and the Transformer-strategy, generally) tends to lean towards *economic right* and *authoritarianism*. The "law and order Republicans" would feel right at home with Calvinists. These tendencies can be traced to some of the metaphysics and theology. From the de-emphasis on human freedom and the extra-emphasis on God's sovereignty, the outcome is authoritarian leanings. God pushes us all along on His plan, anyway, and can use even bad secular rulers to do so. We're sinful enough that we won't reliably do the good without compulsion, and that leads to more authority for government. However, that sinfulness is present in government, too. Even the transformational efforts of Christians will still be fraught with sin-based flaws. So governmental powers need to be limited, too, and that's where the Right-leaning comes from. With strong protection of private property—and the private life of family, etc., that goes with it—the possibility of sinful government oppression is at least somewhat alleviated. Of course, then you need an authoritarian source to make folks toe the line in their private lives, too, but that's what you've got the Church for, right?

Upshot

Obviously, the Transformer-strategy has strengths and weaknesses like all the others. Still, though, if you believe it's a thoroughly fallen world (as all right-thinking people do), Transformation may be a very good choice. Above and Of are too optimistic about culture and likely to be corrupted by it. Against and Paradox are too pessimistic and can't sufficiently engage it. What's left, except to prepare for the worst while hoping for the best?

Christ and Culture in Paradox: Can we be good without God?

by Keith Wyma and Kamesh Sankaran

The Christ and Culture in Paradox perspective may be harder to understand than the others presented earlier. There are two reasons for it. First, unlike the 'Christ Above Culture' view that is closely associated with the Catholic Church, there are no obvious examples of institutions that are easily identified to adhere with this perspective. Second, as its name indicates, this perspective is more nuanced than the other four because it struggles with internal tensions, and hence does not offer a clear unequivocal strategy for shaping public policy. Yet, in the matters of civic engagement (which is much broader than political engagement), it is an influential theme or *motif* for many Christian believers. The critical themes that we will explore with this view are the tensions between sin and redemption, between God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

Human Sin

According to adherents to the Christ and Culture in Paradox perspective the answer to the question, "Can we be good without God?" would be an emphatic *NO!* This view assumes that all humans and all human cultural institutions including the church are predisposed toward evil. The proposition that none is good does not merely mean that none is perfect. It also means that all are persistently and deeply inclined toward evil. All are sinful. In a few sin is perhaps effectively suppressed that it appears to have been destroyed. But this is owing to God's grace, not to human goodness. Even with God's intimate involvement in a Christian's life, human beings are still predisposed to sin.

Yet, Christians are not to ignore social institutions and authorities, even in their sinful state. James Davison Hunter, a prominent sociologist of religion in America, says:

> "… at this point one finds a paradox, for even in their fallen state, the powers function to maintain order in society. In this task the powers have their own mandate that still operates within God's permissive will. The powers do give unity and direction to individual and social life, yet in this unity and direction, they also separate people from God. For example, in the context of the fallen world, the ends of government become distorted and its authority corrupted. The result is an institution that has become an end in itself and thus an idol that both seduces and enslaves through its power. In its claims to freedom, peace, and justice, it promulgates a false theology of redemption to the world. It is false not only because it offers itself and its best ideals as a substitute for God but also because its ideals can only be realized through force and the appeal to force. And yet God

> still permits human government to exist and, in existing, it functions to restrain human evil."[30]

This tension between an acute awareness of the sinful nature of earthly institutions vs. the call to work with them is the defining characteristic of this position.

H. Richard Niebuhr describes the *Paradox* perspective in a fairly tragic tone, especially compared to *Above* and *Transforming* perspectives. In the *Paradox* perspective, even good things like good government, marriage, or the church are the gifts of God designed to constrain human tendencies and behavior. To make his point about the pessimistic nature of this position, Niebuhr cites Paul when he says that marriage is given "'because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.' The governing authorities are servants of God 'to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer.' The function of laws, culture, and custom is usually to restrain and expose sin rather than to guide people to divine righteousness."

Both Apostle Paul and Martin Luther are cited as the leading examples of this view by Niebuhr, but they were also people who had spent time in deep reflection about their own motivations. The inevitability of human sin is not just relevant to the individual, but to all of creation. So this means that church, government, art, culture, architecture, and all other cultural achievements are "great towers built on the fault line of human sin." Glenn Tinder, a contemporary political philosopher who works with the *Paradox* theme in his scholarly writing believes that the

> "political value of the doctrine of original sin lies in its recognition that our evil tendencies are not in the nature of a problem that we can rationally comprehend and deliberately solve. To say that the source of sin is sin is to say that sin is underivable and inexplicable. A sinful society is not like a malfunctioning machine, something to be checked and quickly repaired."[31]

So statements like the "poor will always be with us" can be made not because of empirically verifiable research, but because of the belief that sin is the underlying force of every social and cultural evil, including poverty, and that the causes of poverty will not change until Christ comes again.

So where is the hope?

This perspective is pretty bleak if you merely emphasize sin and human evil, but the adherents to this perspective aren't merely dour pessimists. According to this perspective, good still enters the world in the form of God's grace. The Christian's duty therefore is to throw oneself at the mercy of Christ for their sinfulness, and then try to "do a Christian's duty" where one is planted. Though this may sound as some form of call to action, the *Paradox* view is very skeptical about

[30] James Davidson Hunter, "To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World", Oxford, 2010, p.157.
[31] Glenn Tinder, "Can We Be Good Without God?" *The Atlantic Monthly.* (December, 1989), p.68-85.

"calls to action" because of its awareness that any active effort to use power will inevitably result in the corruption of the wielders of power.

Reinhold Niebuhr, the older brother of H. Richard Niebuhr, did a lot of thinking about the role that power plays in relationship to the cause of justice. He was very aware that people of good will who care about justice are also very good at rationalizing all kinds of evil acts in pursuit of justice. He observed and feared that political action for the cause of justice can end up being destructive for all parties involved. He observed that all too often oppressed and oppressor merely reverse roles, and that even a relatively just peace can often sacrifice important values. Thus, we inevitably see the essence of the fall played out in every human and institutional decision. Moreover, Reinhold Niebuhr's realism made it painfully clear that people of genuine good will, whether religious or not, sometimes have to employ distinctly unloving means in the service of love and justice. Thus, according to this perspective, we cannot escape the world (in contrast to *Against*), nor can we escape the reality of sin in our own or our community's life and work (in contrast to *Of* and *Above*) – hence the *paradox*. The anti-Christian spirit could not be evaded by separation from society, nor can it be avoided by so many Christian practices and rituals. According to the *Paradox* perspective there is no hiding place from the realities of sin.

So it seems that there are at least two courses of action that adherents to the paradox perspective can pursue. These actions are *cautious and critical action,* or *patient opportunism* (more about these approaches later). But both require important preconditions to action because 'good fruit can only come from good trees.' This important precondition is the process of *sanctification*. Sanctification is the life-long journey whereby an individual accepts God's grace by faith and allows the Holy Spirit to transform the soul of that person over time so that they might have a better understanding of Christian living, duty, and action. Over time, the sanctified person learns to refrain from human actions and customs that are faithless, hopeless, loveless, and godless. However, the Christian ethic in this new life remains weak and susceptible to temptations of all sorts. This explains why God institutes human institutions like government, the church, and culture among us. These institutions hold us accountable and give us the laws and practices that even sanctified sinners need to keep us in check.

Christian Strategies of Christ and Culture in Paradox

Cautious and Critical Activism

The first approach to action in culture from this perspective is paradoxical in its description (true to the name of this perspective). It involves acting to do justice with the explicit recognition that sins will be committed in the pursuit of justice. This, "action as necessary evil," perspective assumes that there are many situations in which we find ourselves where there is no good alternative, so we therefore must act in a way that is always self-aware and self-critical. We act sparingly, cautiously, and conservatively in all situations because we wish to do as little harm as possible. Consider Dietrich Bonheoffer, who found himself in a situation when he contemplated

the assassination of Adolf Hitler. He accepted the fact that the killing of another human being, even Adolf Hitler, could never be anything other than a sin, but that the human condition often put us in circumstances that called on us to use unloving means to achieve justice.[32] Or consider a discussion of environmental concerns, in which you might see this perspective manifest in a view that holds there is no such thing as a harmless environmental regulation. "*Sure, you can regulate forestry in the U.S. but by doing this you lose U.S. jobs, export these jobs abroad, and cause deforestation to occur in places where it will not come back."* If someone from this perspective finally concedes that environmental protection is needed they do so reluctantly and to try to do the least harm to all parties possible in the process of regulation. Note that this strategy or approach seeks the least harm possible and believes that many sins are committed on all sides of the problem of deforestation.

However, Hunter points out that out that such a cautious and critical evaluation of one's own motivation for and method of civic engagement is necessary. Analyzing how both the Christian Left and Christian Right groups in the U.S. used '*Of*', '*Above*', and '*Against*' strategies in various political engagements over the last century, he finds that any bold "call to action" – either by the Christian Left (on issues like Civil Rights) or the Christian Right (on Pro-Life issues) – invariably leads to severe unintended consequences. Ironically, both the Christian Left and the Christian Right sought the same end goal – a civic religion of their own vision; for the Christian Right it was a "clear desire and ambition for dominance or controlling influence in American politics and culture"[33], and for the Christian Left it was "the realization of the kingdom of heaven, where justice, peace, equality, and community exist in their ultimate state of perfection – that is the abiding ideal. … The problem, of course, is that Amos, Micah, Isaiah, and the other prophets were living in a Jewish theocratic setting. The only way that [the Christian Left] can make these strong statements is to confuse America with Israel and the political dynamics of modern American democracy with the divine laws mandated for ancient Israel."[34] Furthermore, in addition to leading to the same (unwanted) end, Hunter notes that they also use common means – conflating the 'public' with the 'political': "Instead of the political realm being seen as one part of public life, all of public life tends to be reduced to the political. The realm of politics has become, in our imagination, the dominant – and for some the only adequate – expression of our collective life. … When one boils it all down, politicization means that the final arbiter within most of social life is the coercive power of the state." Therefore, Hunter argues that a cautious and limited civic engagement is preferable to a bold political engagement.

Patient Opportunism

For the abovementioned reasons, this perspective tends to be less active in political engagement than the other four. Its adherents tend to emphasize God's action in history, and believe that God

[32] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "What it meant by 'Telling the truth'?" in "Ethics", v.6, Fortress Press, 2008.
[33] Hunter, p. 124
[34] Hunter, p.147

can work to help people to collectively acquire a new spirit or understanding of an issue or problem, and then corporately work together for good. So the Christian's job is to seek the spirit needed for continuing the work of social transformation and for rendering good order and equal justice fruitful. The Christian seeks this spirit by training to wait for God. To begin with, this perspective requires an acknowledgment of spiritual poverty, which as an incapacity for group action, is political poverty. We do not have, and cannot supply *ourselves* with the spirit we need in order to fulfill our political purposes. But this waiting also requires hope. Hope and watchfulness for the needed spirit to arrive and take hold of the situation. Patient opportunism will wait and watch for the Holy Spirit to transform people's understanding and to allow the scales fall from eyes of those who are not infused by the spirit.

You might imagine someone in the energy/private transportation policy area from this perspective becoming convicted about using less energy. They would pray and reflect about proper stewardship patterns, may even buy a hybrid car for their own use, but they would not really try to fight the cultural impulses of high-energy consumption and individualist transportation. These issues are just too big to use political power to try to curtail. So, this person waits and prays for the Holy Spirit to work in society. Someday we might actually see that the cost of gasoline just gets too high, so people begin to think about changing their patterns of transportation behavior. This person is then present to encourage these changes and help them along where possible, but only once there is a "right spirit" in the culture.

Downsides of the Paradox Perspective?

Niebuhr believes that antinomianism and cultural conservatism are two downsides of the *Paradox* perspective. Antinomianism pertains to surrendering to the sinful condition of the world. Antinomians would argue that if "we are going to sin, we might as well sin boldly." This perspective is a reaction to the inescapable reality of sin and a deliberate turn from God, but it can happen in a situation where every action can be analyzed as sinful. In policy, this can lead to a deep cynicism about all policies and actions, and actors can begin to justify the use of power to achieve any purpose. Cultural conservatism may involve tolerance all forms of injustice to maintain the *status quo*. In history, the view that culture is the bearer of God's work in history has served to justify unjust wars, slavery, oppression, and other forms of social and cultural evil. This is what many German Christians fell victim to under Nazism as their lack of resistance to a genocidal regime made them complicit in massacre of millions.

While acknowledging these downsides, Hunter sees the value of the *Paradox* perspective because "Christians, at their best, will neither create a perfect world nor one that is altogether new; but by enacting shalom and seeking it on behalf of all others through the practice of faithful presence, it is possible, just possible, that they will help to make the world a little bit better."[35]

[35] Hunter, p.286.

Social Tensions:
Coping with Past Social Injustice

by John Yoder

Introduction:

The modern political philosopher Hannah Arendt noted that two principles are essential for society to exist. The one is justice, the other tolerance/forgiveness. An overriding concern of Core 350 has been justice. We have looked at how to make policy so that justice can be done. We have asked if humans (constrained or unconstrained) can actually do justice. We have asked how can we know justice (from culture? from an authority? from innate reason? from intuition?). We have asked what is justice? Is it seeking the greatest happiness for the greatest number? (utilitarianism) Is it assigning unassailable value to each human being? (Kant). Is it giving equal respect to the perspectives and values of others? (post-modernism). In all of our conversations we have assumed that justice is some type of fairness and that we have an obligation to work toward making justice more present in the world.

The concern for justice is not new. From Hammurabi, Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas to Kant, Bentham, and Rawls political thinkers have recognized that society cannot function without justice. Justice is the foundation for predictability, reliability, accountability, consistency, and security. When justice breaks down, disorder follows. In the most extreme cases, such a break-down allows humans to be trafficked, slaughtered, or forced to serve as child soldiers. In our own history, segregation and racial discrimination are examples of how some social groups manipulated legal contracts (the Constitution and state law) to deny fundamental human rights ("inalienable rights" contracted by Providence). In the case of environmental degradation, present generations may be breaking an implied contract with future generations who have a right to expect that we will not use more than our share of the globe's resources.

Although Core 350 has not given much explicit attention to the issue, one aspect of justice is punishment. Although ideally everyone would pursue justice because they recognize it is morally right to do so, because they accept the intrinsic value of all human beings, or because they believe we will all be happier in the long run, in fact people often break social and legal contracts (explicit or implicit). Either to encourage people to uphold justice or to right the balance, society imposes punishments (your failure to abide by a contract has caused me pain, therefore I--or the courts--will right the balance by causing you to suffer equal pain).

While the concept of punishment as a component of justice seems logical and emotionally satisfying, there are serious problems in real life. First, it is not always possible to determine who is at fault, to apprehend those we know are at fault, or to make the situation right after a social

contract has been broken. For example, in Rwanda, who was truly at fault? Could all those at fault be apprehended? Does justice require that the perpetrators suffer equal pain by being hacked to death with machetes? In spite of the horrific nature of the Rwandan genocide, do Tutsis bear some responsibility for what happened (it can be argued that years of arrogant oppression by the Tutsis was a factor in the Hutu fury)? Second, and this is the greatest problem, what may appear to one individual to be justice can quickly degenerate into revenge and an endless cycle of retribution and retaliation. In other words, the pursuit of justice through the application of punishment can destroy the very society it sets out to protect. As Hannah Arendt, a secular Jewish intellectual, and many more religiously oriented thinkers have concluded, for society to exist, humans must find some way to avoid the destructive consequences of pursuing justice. Human beings will always make inadvertent mistakes, human beings will always act in malicious and destructive ways, human beings may commit great evil against others. Thus, there must be some mechanism, ideology, strategy, or religious practice that enables people to live with past injustice and get on with life in the present and future. Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists talk about the concept of forgiveness. Popular culture uses terms such as "let by-gones be by-gones" or "let sleeping dogs lie" to express a related concept.

The film Hotel Rwanda provides us with a window on some of the greatest injustices of the modern world. What is especially problematic about the injustice in Rwanda was that it was inflicted by fellow countrymen, by neighbors, by people of the same religion (Catholics and Protestants), by co-workers, by people in positions of trust (teachers, pastors, and priests), and even by family members. How does society come to terms with past evils of such magnitude, and evils that are so intensely personal? The perpetrators are not members of a foreign invading army who will retreat. Rather, they are people who will continue to live in the same small country and in the same face-to-face communities. Assuming that the "justice" of punishment is not appropriate or possible, how can people deal with a horrendous past?

Option One: Suppressing

Many people deal with injustice by simply suppressing the memory (or at least not referencing the memory). I observed this in Liberia, where the process is called "forgetting." From 1989 until 2003, the small West African country of Liberia experienced a devastating civil war. The war was marked by massive numbers of refugees, atrocities committed by child soldiers, plunder by war lords, the destruction of villages, and wanton human rights abuses. The following, a story told to me by a friend, is but one of many examples of what took place.

> In 1992 I lived in SKT, where I had a chicken farm. When Charles Taylor's child soldiers took over the area, the town chief confiscated my rice and chickens since he was responsible to provide supplies to the soldiers. On December 24, 1992, the

> soldiers arrested me. They stepped on my head and flogged me until the skin was lifted from my back. In 1994 I was arrested again because Taylor's soldiers thought I knew where a safe stolen from a relief agency had been hidden. The soldiers put me in jail, stripped me to my underwear, suspended me from the ceiling by my feet, and began to beat me. As they whipped me they forced me to sing Taylor songs. They planned to kill me that night, but I was freed because a man who knew the commander intervened on my behalf.
>
> In June of 1995 I fled from Liberia to Ivory Coast, where I lived in the refugee camp. One day the soldier who had tortured me arrived in the camp. Apparently, he had had some kind of falling out with the army and was forced to flee. I had not seen him since the day he beat me. He was from SKT, and since I was the only other person in the camp from SKT he came to me and asked if he could stay with me. I allowed him to stay. We never once mentioned the time when he tortured me.
>
> The general who ordered the soldiers to torture me also had grown up with me in the village of SKT. We had been close friends when we were young boys. Today when I am in SKT or Gbarnga I sometimes see him or the other men who tortured me. I speak to them as if nothing had ever happened.

Both this anecdote and broader statistical evidence indicate overwhelmingly that the Liberian way of dealing with injustice and undeserved injury is to suppress the incident. Of 36 Cuttington University students who responded to a survey about the civil war, 85 percent said they "forgot"or "accepted" the past. Only three students openly expressed a desire for revenge or said they were unable to put the past behind them. These numbers correlate closely with the data compiled by a more extensive scientific survey of hundreds of people conducted by a newspaper, *The First National Poll.*

The Liberian response to the injustices and evils of war is consistent with the way the Liberian people have long dealt with pain. Maintaining the network of relationships that sustain the community, and by extension the individual, is of central importance. Recalling and revenging past injury interferes with the smooth functioning of the larger group. For the sake of essential harmony, people are willing to "forget" in a way that may appear cowardly and unhealthy to people in other cultures.

While, in part, Liberians suppress bitter memories and "forget" because that allows everyone to return to the necessary and ordinary rhythms of life, in part they suppress the past because of fear. Although the man who hosted his former torturer vowed that he did not keep the enemy in his house because he feared refusing someone with power, he eventually admitted, "Deep down I knew I had to be careful." He also said that Liberians want to keep close to dangerous people so that the individuals can be watched and known. A driver-mechanic whose family died during the war said people suppress their anger because wrongdoers are still in power or have access to people in power. "Don't let people see that you are angry," he said. "Never say publicly that so-and-so did something bad, or they will take revenge later. Treat your former enemies as respectable and worthy of friendship. Showing resentment could lead to future mistreatment by a soldier or even to accusations of witchcraft." In addition to reducing the risk of overt conflict, suppressing the past also preserves social stability by protecting the honor of people who have been injured or insulted. By choosing not to confront a former enemy, the victim avoids the risk of being defeated yet another time. By averting further humiliation, an individual or group makes sure that social position is not jeopardized afresh. And for Liberians, the fear of losing respect and position may be even greater than the fear of actual physical harm.

Option Two: Memorializing

Other societies deal with violence, treachery, injustice, hatred, dehumanization, and sorrow by remembering the injustices and sufferings of the past. For example, in Rwanda the genocide memorials are intended to remind both citizens and outside visitors of the barbarity of ethnic cleansing. One such memorial, at Gikongoro, near Butare, preserves hundreds of desiccated human bodies. These bodies are displayed in the former classrooms of a parochial school where many thousands of people fled, thinking they would be safe. Some bodies have crushed skulls, others have hands or feet chopped off. The posture of several victims suggests that the deceased persons' final act was to throw up their hands in defense. The corpses of some adolescents still are dressed in blue school uniforms; several adult bodies clutch slaughtered infants. While most classrooms contain bodies, a few are filled with racks of skulls, femurs, and other bones. Still other rooms contain clothing taken from the victims. The walls of classrooms where people huddled for security are covered with mathematical exercises; with drawings of rabbits, cows, and houses; and with religious expressions. Some of the drawing and writing were made to pass the time and amuse children. Some of the phases such as "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy," "Jesus saves," and "The cross is our flag" reflect the fearful premonitions of the rooms' terrified occupants. Like the Holocaust memorials in Europe, Gikongoro leaves an indelible impression of human depravity and evil.

Visitors to such memorials tend to come away with a powerful resolve to seek "justice" and do what they can to prevent such brutality from reoccurring. Punishment for the perpetrators, compensation for the victims, and systems for stopping similar injustices in the future are essential elements in achieving those goals. While many people consider the "equal measure" approach necessary, even good and cathartic, a vigorous confrontation of injustice does not guarantee either

justice or deterrence. Instead, "an eye for an eye" can lead to a never-ending cycle of recrimination, revenge, and retaliation. Certainly, visitors to places such as Gikongoro are encouraged to develop a Manichean vision suggesting that one group of people were utterly innocent victims and the other group unmitigated villains. This perception permits, even fosters, future violence.

Option Three: Separation

In an attempt to interrupt the cycle of violent retaliation, a number of societies have adopted constitutional solutions intended to ensure civil order. Federalism, confederation, proportional representation for ethnic or religious groups, special legal protection for minorities, and local or regional self-determination are some of the most common strategies. China's political and economic policies for Hong Kong and the Special Economic Zones; South Africa's now-abandoned system of apartheid and separate development; Lebanon's power-sharing arrangements balancing Muslims, Christians, and Druse; Nigeria's numerous constitutional efforts to accommodate the aspirations of Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, and minority peoples; and Sudan's various constitutional schemes for dealing with the north-south, Christian-Muslim, and Arab-African dichotomies are some of the many plans that have been proposed or implemented in modern times. Although generally acclaimed at the time of their implementation as lasting solutions to long-standing problems, such political arrangements often break down. Changing or contested demographic figures, shifting power configurations, a lack of a consensus within the competing camps, and endemic corruption are a few of the factors that have doomed such schemes to failure. Tragically, as Rwandans discovered in April 1994, the very act of agreeing to an "equitable" power-sharing arrangement may touch off a violent conflict. Almost inevitably, global political schemes appear unfair to parties that are out of power and threatening to those in command. In the end, if people fear for their very survival, as opposed to fearing the loss of property or status, no political and constitutional arrangement will be enough to ensure peace.

Option Four: Truth Telling and Amnesty/Forgiveness

With the establishment and implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), South Africans chose an entirely different way from the Rwandan "equal measure" approach or the constitutional balancing acts described in the previous paragraph. South Africa's path was rooted in religion and theology. The TRC's mandate was to hear the truth by listening to stories of the victims and to confessions of the perpetrators. Although the perpetrators could expect amnesty, and thus escape legal prosecution, and the victims could hope for compensation—pitiably small in terms of money—the real goal was exposing the past. Denounced by some as offering an easy escape for the culprits and criticized by others as a potentially dangerous path leading to acrimony and recrimination, the TRC was an experiment in national awareness, forgiveness and healing.

Antjie Krog, a reporter for South African Broadcasting Corporation, wrote a gripping account of the TRC. Her book, *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa*, is a testimony that "the truth will make you free."[36] According to Krog, the victims who were able to tell their stories became free. The privileged people who benefited from apartheid gained a degree of freedom in learning how that privilege had been purchased. Those who inflicted the evil found freedom in unburdening their consciences. In Krog's view, only people whose position and public image prevented them from expressing sorrow or complicity remained locked in their self-imposed shackles of pride and fear.

[36] Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa* (New York: Random House, 1998).

Social Tensions: Autonomy & Control

by Lindy Scott

¨Give me liberty or give me death¨
Patrick Henry

¨…with liberty and justice for all…¨
U.S. Pledge of Allegiance

¨…the land of the free…
The Star Spangled Banner

¨Liberty¨ and ¨freedom¨ are concepts enshrined in our national heart, soul, and psyche. Most of us have a general idea about what these words mean for us, but as we navigate public policies, we find that we disagree, sometimes vigorously, on the relationship between freedoms and control in our society. We have already seen earlier in the course some of the tensions that exist between seeking one´s individual good versus seeking the good of the community (remember the Tragedy of the Commons). Whereas individual good and the good of the community deal with the end goals we are seeking, ¨autonomy and control¨ refer more to the ¨means¨ utilized to achieve these goals. Clearly, there is a strong connection between them, but it is important to maintain the distinction between ends and means.

It is useful to situate ourselves as a culture on the continuum regarding individual autonomy and societal controls. Western civilization has been at the forefront of individual freedoms. The United States is one of the most individualistic cultures the world has ever known. This "hyper-individualism" certainly has some strengths (I believe that self-determination is a core component of what makes us truly human). Nevertheless, we should be very aware of this tilt towards individualism and some of the negative aspects of this tendency (for example, when does individualism slide into egotistical selfishness or when does the good of the society trump individual freedom?)

The use of controls is complex. They can range from local interventions, up through state and national policies, and even up to international levels. Cultural, religious, and economic convictions and preferences also play a role. On one end of the spectrum would be those who argue for the need for much greater centralized control so that we don't destroy ourselves. As you remember, Garrett Hardin argued that the overpopulation of the earth was a dire problem

brought on by “the damage of innocent actions by individuals¨ inflicted upon the environment. In response, he urged governments to limit the number of children per family. China’s one-child policy begun in 1978 was an example of this kind of policy. (Was the formal phasing out of the policy in 2015 a sign of its failure or its success?). On the other end of the continuum are those who advocate individual autonomy with limited government controls. Sometimes they link their argument by appealing to the “invisible hand” of the free market. They assume that the market will ¨naturally¨ reward that which is good and just. Although I believe the market can be a good servant, it is a horrible master when it allows big money to distort morality and ethics (ex. human trafficking).

Let´s look at some of the ¨means¨ that we have used in the United States to balance autonomy and control. If we are honest with ourselves and our history, most of us would recognize that at times we have erred on the side of too much autonomy, and at other times, too much control. Let’s look at a classic example of a control policy that was not successful: Prohibition. Given the problems associated with alcoholism (accidents, fights, absenteeism at work, domestic abuse, etc.) groups in the US were able to legislate against the production, transportation, importation or sale of alcoholic beverages in the United States via the Eighteenth Amendment (1920). Although alcohol consumption was cut in half, millions of people still obtained liquor through bootleggers, stills, ¨medicinal¨ beer and whiskey purchases, and weak enforcement of prohibition legislation. Of course, acquisition of this illegal alcohol produced no tax revenues. The Great Depression highlighted the need for additional money to fund the New Deal. As a consequence, the Twenty-First Amendment repealed Prohibition in 1933. Prohibition has generally been interpreted as a policy failure (albeit with good intentions), although there are still some ¨dry¨ counties in the rural United States until the present.

The following example reveals the problem of too much ¨autonomy¨. For most of our history, the smoking of cigarettes was not only legal in the U.S., but frequently portrayed by Hollywood and others as glamorous and exciting. Smokers could not anticipate the health issues (ex. lung cancer) that awaited them decades later due to their habit. Nevertheless, as medical statistics increased, it became abundantly obvious, that smoking, as well as exposure to second-hand smoke, was a serious health risk to the common good. Although there has been resistance from the tobacco industry, most public places in the U.S. today are now ¨smoke-free¨ environments.

Debates regarding autonomy and control still abound in our contemporary setting. Here are just a few.

Drinking (and marijuana in some states) – Although adults have the ¨right¨ to consume alcohol, they do not have the right to infringe on the safety of the others by driving under the influence of alcohol. That is why DUI fines should be very high.

Abortion – Women have the right to make decisions regarding their own bodies. Are fetuses part of their bodies or are they beings with human rights of their own? When does a fetus acquire such protection? At conception, at viability, or at birth?

Gay marriage – Do individuals have the legally marry someone of their same sex? Do others whose religious convictions do not condone homosexuality have to acknowledge such marriages? Should a minister be forced to officiate a gay marriage if her/his convictions were opposed to such a marriage?

Guns – Do all citizens have the right to own and use a gun? If so, should it be similar to car ownership and use, that is, should people have to pass a test to own a gun? Should mental illness produce a restriction on who can own a gun? Are certain firearms, such as assault weapons, by definition excluded from an individual´s right to gun ownership?

Wyma's Briefing on Virtue Ethics

by Keith Wyma

I. Virtue Theory's Position: Virtue ethics is both old and new school. Its early representatives include your friend and Forrest Baird's, Plato, as well as Leonard Oakland's hero, Aristotle. It got huge play in the medieval era (largely due to Aristotle's pervasive influence) with top-line thinkers from all three major Western religions: e.g. Maimonides (Judaism), Aquinas (Christianity), and Averroes (Islam), to name just a few. In the East, Confucianism took a virtue approach. However, in the Modern world, virtue theory almost completely disappeared (though I've read a book that made a pretty compelling case that Adam Smith was a virtue ethicist), for reasons that I'll get to in a minute. Yet recently, in the last 50 years or so, virtue theory has had a tremendous resurgence. Turns out it has particular, though perhaps limited, relevance in a post-Modern world.

A. **Focus:** Virtue theory takes a different tack from the theories we've seen so far; it focuses principally on the *agent*, on the person who's the ethical actor. Virtue ethics asks, "What kind of life do you want to lead? What kind of person do you want to be?" The key to what's right and good is not *overall* consequences (like in utilitarianism), but rather the outcomes in one's own character, which is the key determinant of one's quality to life (this emphasis on flourishing individuals connects virtue theory to NL's concerns). Actions and motives are important, because they build one's character, but unlike in Kantianism or DCT or NL, it's not all about rules, especially absolute ones. What's virtuous has to be adaptable to circumstances; what it takes to be grateful to someone who just gave you a card is not the same as if someone just saved your life. It's not that virtue theory must be opposed to rules—there are some big overlaps with NL theory, as we'll see—but the central concern is with one's character and resultant life.

B. ***Eudaimonia*:** I hope you remember this Core 250 "buzzword." It's the Greek term for *happiness.* But it means more than having warm, fuzzy feelings; it indicates a *blessed* life that others would congratulate you on having. It comes from really having one's act together and functioning well as a human being, generally, and in one's specific roles. When virtue ethics asks what kind of life you want, the obvious answer is, "one that achieves *eudaimonia!*" Who doesn't want to be happy and operating in tip-top condition? *Eudaimonia* is the ultimate goal of being virtuous.

1. *Acting for one's own good*—an important implication of that goal is that acting ethically directly, intentionally includes and even corresponds to acting for one's own good. That's a big deal. Compare it to utilitarianism, which says you have to act for the greatest good possible, regardless of whether your own good fits with that action. Or to Kantianism which says the pure motive of moral action can't be tied to desires for your own happiness. A key part of why virtue ethics can draw us is that this theory shows us how *being good is good for us.*

2. *Dependence on virtue*—the reason for the statement, above, is that *eudemonia* can't be achieved unless one develops a virtuous character. To see why, let's turn to the next big point.

C. **Virtue as Functional Excellence:** Virtues aren't just nice qualities that others like, or that morality happens to praise. Instead, they're exactly those character traits that enable us to function well, and whose absence will make our lives suck. The opposed character traits, vices, mess up our ability to function in life. Think about the virtue of temperance, self-control regarding desires for physical pleasure: to be temperate is to be able enjoy (and desire) those kind of pleasures in a healthy way (and in a healthy perspective). A temperate person has an enjoyable life without letting the desire for pleasure push him/her into inappropriate actions. On the other hand, the viciously intemperate person goes too far for those pleasures. We have names for those kind of people: 'glutton,' 'addict,' 'adulterer,' etc. Now ask yourself, does, for example, the life of a drug addict seem attractive to you? Do you find yourself admiring the broken relationships, loss of self-respect, and so on? If not, then you recognize that temperance is a virtue because possessing it would make your life work better.

D. ***Telos*:** We saw this already with NL, but virtue theory absolutely needs a conception of a *telos*, a function or goal, in order to identify what traits are virtues and what traits aren't. Only when you know what something is supposed to do (its *telos*) can you figure out what it needs in order to work well. Plato's and Aristotle's versions tied the *telos* of human nature to Forms and *entelechies*. Religious versions of virtue theory, like Aquinas', took that further and linked the *telos* to God's purposes for things. For example, Aquinas argued that the human *telos* was *to know and love God.* Aquinas then linked virtue and NL ethics by arguing that following NL and God's specially revealed Divine Law (notice the DCT connection, too) is the way to fulfill our *telos* and achieve *eudaimonia.*

1. *Problem*—sadly for virtue theory, around the time of the Reformation the West lost any substantial public agreement about the human *telos*, including whether there even is one. When modern science displaced Aristotle's theory "whole-hog," out went all his views on the *telos*, too. The Reformation splintered agreement on Christian religious versions of the *telos*, as well. From that point on, trying to publicly argue based on some notion of the *telos* became a virtual non-starter. Virtue ethics pretty much disappeared.
2. *Functional Roles*—However, a cool thing happened in the mid 20th Century. Some philosophers realized that even if we don't agree what human life is "for," society is filled with *functional roles*, like physician, or banker or parent. Those roles' functions are easily identifiable, and we have lots of agreement about them. For instance, nobody objects if you say that doctors need to be able to identify various ailments. But that means those roles each have a *telos*, and we can rationally, objectively talk about what virtues are needed to become functionally

excellent in those roles. Doctors who lack compassion are clearly faulty in that respect (though they may be excellent in others, like diagnostic wisdom—as for example in *House* on TV). This realization about functional roles has fueled a continuing resurgence of virtue theory.

II. Connections to Recurrent Themes:

A. **Epistemological Commitments:** Virtue theory's basic commitments are to *empirical* and *innatist* epistemological approaches. Empirical study shows us how various character traits and actions shape human lives, e.g. whether devoting one's life to acquiring and smoking crack results in more self-respect, or less, better or worse friendships, and so on. Once we've identified such connections, and how those relate (or don't, as in the case of crack smoking) to a happy, optimally functioning life (or performance in a social role), we appeal to innate, self-evident value judgments about whether those activities ought to be pursued as part of the excellent life of virtue. Nobody sane would choose, for instance, to whore themselves on street-corners in order to get the money for crack. We take it as obvious that such a life is not the happy, well-functioning one we would want. So the activities of that life aren't virtuous and should be avoided. Additionally, though, virtue theory recognizes a need for *authoritarianism*. It's not that the justifications for virtues can't be found empirically and innately, but that many of us—especially when we're young—aren't in a position to be able to find or understand those justifications. In such circumstances, we need to take the word of someone older and wiser until we get to a point where we can see the justifications for ourselves. We need *role models*, who function as epistemological authorities for us, to put us on the path. *Intuitionism* isn't big for virtue theory; anybody with the requisite experience and knowledge and character should be able to see moral truths pretty equally.

B. Conception of Human Nature:

1. *Unconstrained*—Virtue theory tends to think of humans as capable of quite a bit of change, particularly from our starting points to the perfected-functioning of reaching the *telos*. So most virtue theorists lean toward the unconstrained view.
2. *(Not) Uniquely valuable in nature*—Virtue theory doesn't have any inherent leanings one way or another on this issue, or on the related issue of physicalism vs. dualism. Aristotle and his followers thought there was something special about humanity because of our rationality. But I've seen contemporary virtue arguments about animal rights that completely sidestep questions about the uniqueness or specialness of human nature.

C. **Grounds for Public Argument:** Virtue theory has several features that can make it effective in public debate, but the *telos* question can still be a big problem, depending on the context.

1. *Appeals to reason and experience*—as I noted above, in the epistemological section, virtue theory rests on evidence which should be able to be validated empirically and innately. And those bases are excellent for public debate.

2. *Appeal to one's own good*—as noted in the main theoretic points, virtue theory speaks to our desires for our own good in a direct way that none of the other theories do. That can provide powerful motivational leverage and a strong psychological appeal in argument.
3. *Appeal to excellence*—virtue theory presents a *"green-light morality;"* it directs us *towards* a goal that we obviously want. Rather than filling morality with the "red-light" "Thou shalt nots" of DCT or Kantianism, virtue theory encourages behavior that leads to excellence and happiness. This appeal can be particularly successful in subcultures or roles that heartily accept the goal of excellence. Professional athletes, for example, have no trouble talking in terms of excellence and failure about what they should do (interestingly, neither do gangs).
4. *Limitation*: *appeal to* telos—the need for an agreed upon *telos,* that virtue arguments can build from, limits the contexts in which virtue theory can get traction. For instance, within a profession in which there's agreement about the function of the profession, or within a religious denomination with close agreement about God's purposes for humanity, virtue arguments can be very compelling. Or if you're dealing with basic, obvious aspects of *eudaimonia*, you can run virtue arguments across religious, etc., boundaries—because everybody agrees about the importance of, say, friendship for a happy life, arguments about how friendship depends on virtue can be persuasive to all audiences. But the lack of general agreement about overall, human *telos* that goes with our post-Modern, pluralistic society means virtue is *not* going to get much traction in public policy.

D. Christ and Culture Model(s): The Christ *Of* Culture and *Above* Culture approaches fit quite comfortably with virtue ethics. Both positions are fairly optimistic about what human beings are capable of, and that fits with our striving towards the *telos*. The *Against, Transforming and Paradox* approaches will be more wary of virtue theory, *unless it's describing people receiving Christ's sanctifying grace.* That is, the Against, Transforming and Paradox strategies tend to stress the fallen-ness of humanity. Given that outlook, it's unlikely people will want to achieve moral perfection, or have available role models for it, or be able to make progress if they try. But in Christ, with the aid of the Spirit, that's a different story. Really, the process of sanctification looks a lot like the process of becoming virtuous. There's a perfect role model, too—think of the phrase "what would Jesus do?" C.S. Lewis talked about how God gives commands to us to form us into certain sorts of people; Lewis saw virtue at the heart of the Christian life. What's missing in these latter versions of virtue is any confidence that the *telos* can be found by experience, or that people will innately see its value. So the fit with virtue theory is cramped for Against, Transforming and Paradox.

E. Relation between Individual and Society: The virtue tradition doesn't have any set leanings here.

1. *Individuals are (not) primary*—On the one hand, the goal of ethics is *eudaimonia*, which is a state of an *individual*. On the other hand, Aristotle saw humans as *social* animals, who need society in order to function as individuals. Also, a number of contemporary virtue theorists (those focusing on virtues needed for social roles) argue that we have no definition as individuals apart from connection to society, with its roles that define us.
2. *Society's benefit is (not) paramount*—For the thinkers just mentioned, society is prior to individuals, and its benefit is more important than individual needs. But on the contrary, Aquinas' virtue theory fed into his NL ethics that demanded that society's good couldn't be conceived apart from the good of the individuals that make it up. You see, there's no canonical view on these points. As a result, there's no clear leaning to Left or Right, Authoritarian or Libertarian—which maybe doesn't matter, since virtue theory is dead in in that kind of large-scale policy argument, anyway.

III. Upshot: Virtue theory isn't big in policymaking; remember, it's not as rule-oriented as the other theories. Also, government doesn't generally make laws with the intention of making citizens into better people, and many would find it illegitimately intrusive if government did. If anywhere, virtue thinking might show up in promotive policies that use the subsidies-with-strings-attached instrument. If the government gives you a rebate for buying a hybrid car, that could be viewed as an attempt to form you into a more conservationally minded person. However, a virtue approach can be exceedingly valuable in *personal ethics*. For that reason, virtue ethics has a lot more to do with this course in the theme of personal *vocation—which could well be understood as an individualized* telos—than with regard to policy.

A. Keywords: The buzzwords for virtue theory have to do with *excellence* and *flourishing*. When you hear arguments about what character traits are needed to achieve excellence in some activity, you're in virtue territory. Not surprisingly this theme shows up everywhere from locker room pep talks to training manuals for stockbrokers. Virtue territory also includes arguments about living your best life, becoming your best self, and so on. So self-help books have a lot of virtue thinking (sadly, though, their notion of what passes for *eudaimonia* is often frighteningly impoverished or distorted…).

B. **Contemporary Representatives:** There are many current philosophical and political thinkers who appeal to virtue. They cover a wide range that include conservatives, feminist critics, capitalists, communitarians, talk-show hosts (e.g. Dr. Phil seems to lean this way) and Shaquille O'Neal (not kidding—you can probably find his "just call me 'the Big Aristotle'" speech somewhere on the Web). Also, in some interpretations, *care ethics* are understood as virtue-based, so that whole, emerging ethical approach has ties to virtue.

Social Tensions: Trust & Skepticism

by Elizabeth Campbell

"Trust involves the juxtaposition of people's loftiest hopes and aspirations with their deepest worries and fears" (Simpson, 2007, p. 264).

What is trust and skepticism?

Trust is the expectation that the world is predictable and reliable. Trust represents safety, comfort, and an opportunity to be our best. We encounter trust within ourselves, the environment, and most importantly, other people. Trust is the foundation of human connection. It governs all of our interactions, from casual encounters to intimate relationships. No one would leave their home or drive a car if we did not trust that other people would obey established rules and behave a certain way. We walk on sidewalks near busy roadways because we trust other people to drive their cars in established lanes. Cars and roads would not even exist without the massive trust network required to collaboratively build and supply them. We trust because our survival depends on it.

Skepticism denotes a suspicious and pessimistic view of the world. Although trust is essential for community, betrayals are constant and inevitable. People continuously make mistakes or intentional choices that undermine others' expectations. Skepticism is a natural reaction to such disruptions. It helps us shift our expectations and consider potential hazards. You likely can think of scenarios where someone might swerve their car onto a sidewalk. Skepticism helps us maintain a heightened awareness while walking near busy roads and especially at crosswalks and driveways. We abandon sidewalks completely when an area proves to be unsafe. Skepticism protects our survival.

How is trust versus skepticism a tension in community?

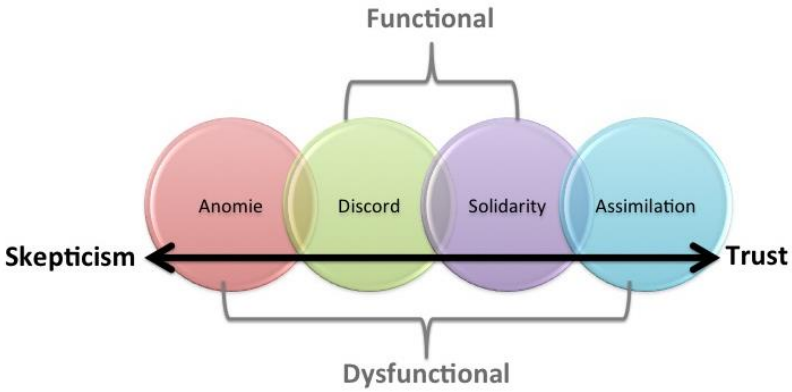
Trust and skepticism are both necessary, yet they represent opposing drives. We cannot trust people completely but our well-being requires that we choose to take calculated risks. This tension is constant and sometimes distressful. Unwelcome deviations from the expected can bring our entire view of the world into question. We all have felt the pain and fear that comes from relatively minor betrayals such as gossip, being ignored, lies, and rejection. Our reality can quickly shift from "I'm ok and others are too" to "I'm in danger and others will hurt me." The

consequence for an individual is either engagement or withdrawal from others, which collectively impacts our community's ability to function.

In addition to individual citizens, community leaders such as government officials have a powerful impact on public trust and skepticism. **Public trust in government** refers to community opinion about the extent to which government officials will reliably act in the public interest. Marked fluctuations of public trust over the years demonstrate that citizens often react as a community to the ebb and flow of government loyalties and betrayals (Jones, 2013). Public reactions to government do not represent a dichotomous tension but instead span a continuum between trust and skepticism.

What are the different types of trust/skepticism in a community?

The Campbell Assessment of Trust (CAT) is a way to conceptualize public trust in government, with four different possible types or levels:



1. **Anomie** is an extreme and dysfunctional level of skepticism, and represents a complete breakdown of trust in a society. Anomie results in chaos, paranoia, and fragmentation of social connections.
2. **Discord** is a moderate and functional level of skepticism, and represents a doubtful and questioning mistrust of a society. Trust is suspended and offered only tentatively when earned.
3. **Solidarity** is a moderate and functional level of trust, and represents an assumption of trust until given sufficient reason to believe otherwise.
4. **Assimilation** is an extreme and dysfunctional level of trust, and represents a society's complete integration and blind trust in the collective.

How can leadership foster trust in community?

Public trust in government is tenuous and particularly vulnerable to skepticism. Government officials must continually foster public trust for optimum community health and functioning.

Depending on a society's initial level of trust, different methods of persuasion are most effective for leadership to employ:

- **Central route to trust**: This method involves persuading people using reasoned arguments and highlighting the content of a trust-building message. Leaders provide comprehensive information about an issue for people to pore over. This method is effective for trustful types (solidarity and assimilation) because they are willing to listen to reason and are interested in the content of the message. If the message is strong and compelling, increased trust is likely.
- **Peripheral route to trust**: This method involves persuading people using indirect methods unrelated to and distracting from the content of a message. Leaders provide slogans, upbeat music, and happy cartoons while avoiding the primary issue for people to react on instinct rather than reason. This method is effective for skeptical types (anomie and discord) because they are unwilling to consider reasoned arguments. When skepticism clouds our ability to reason, leaders must rely on cursory cues that trigger automatic acceptance to increase trust.

Trust and skepticism are fundamental to life in community. While they represent a tension of opposites, the fluctuation of public trust ebbs and flows. The harsh sting of betrayal is more intense than the quiet contentment of trust, so skepticism often feels most present. Nevertheless, our trust rises and falls, and can be renewed again.

References

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Social Tensions: Review

(Please see BlackBoard.)

Glossary

by Elizabeth Abbey

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actors: the various individuals or groups who are involved in any stage of the policy-making process. They may include interest groups, but not all interest groups are necessarily actors (see *"interest groups"*).

arenas: the settings in which policies are enacted (see *"public policy"* and "*social policy*")

authoritarian: political ideology on the social scale of the contemporary political spectrum (positive y-axis); the belief that authority and tradition should be obeyed, usually giving government more control; can lead to "government in the bedroom"

authoritarianism: type of epistemology that claims that knowledge is gained from authorities—trustworthy external sources that have privileged access to the truth that the rest of us can't feasibly duplicate

autonomy: self-rule; a key tenet of Kantian ethics

Categorical Imperative: a key tenet of Kantian ethics that is defined as the moral law—it is considered a universal, unconditional command

Christ Above Culture: one of five viewpoints, as defined by Richard Niebuhr, of how Christians may respond to the world's culture, in this case by seeking common ground (through general revelation) with society and then using special revelation to *extend* society's understanding to refocus it on the bigger picture (i.e. Christ).

Christ Against Culture: one of five viewpoints, as defined by Richard Niebuhr, of how Christians may respond to the world's culture, in this case by separation and withdrawal from, or by condemnation of, society.

Christ and Culture in Paradox: one of five viewpoints, as defined by Richard Niebuhr, of how Christians may respond to the world's culture. This viewpoint is characterized by a deep awareness of sinfulness and a sense that any action will be morally tainted or flawed. The result is a view that both criticizes the "fallen" problems of policies and tends to settle for them for lack of a better option.

Christ of Culture: one of five viewpoints, as defined by Richard Niebuhr, of how Christians may respond to world's culture; in this case the Christians feel comfortable with how well culture aligns with the Gospel and freely intermingle the two.

Christ Transforming Culture: one of five viewpoints, as defined by Richard Niebuhr, of how Christians may respond to the world's culture, in this case by engaging, evaluating and then ennobling (transforming and redirecting) the culture; typically associated with Reformed thinking.

classical political spectrum: system of classifying different political positions (i.e. radical, liberal, moderate, conservative, and reactionary) on one linear axis, left to right

confederal system: form of government where sovereignty is granted to the lower level of government, keeping the upper level of government weak

constitution (in the context of human nature): the make-up of human beings; includes physicalism and dualism

constrained: the metaphysical idea that human nature is limited within certain boundaries regarding moral dispositions and cognitive capabilities—human nature is largely unchangeable (see *"malleability"*)

contemporary political spectrum: system of classifying different political positions with geometric quadrants from two axes—an economic scale (left to right) and a social scale (libertarian to authoritarian)—thus yielding the libertarian left, libertarian right, authoritarian left, and authoritarian right.

determinism: position in the free will debate; the metaphysical idea that every event (including human actions) has some prior causal chain that necessitates its happening just the way it does, leaving actions outside the agent's ability to change

development and administration: a policy instrument in which the government is not restricted to merely supervising how other people conduct their affairs, but may step in and do the job itself or subcontract other companies or groups to do it

Divine Command Theory: an ethical theory that bases right and wrong, good and evil, upon God's revealed commands (i.e. special revelation)

dualism (in the context of human nature): the metaphysical idea that in addition to the physical body, human composition includes an irreducibly non-material mind (e.g. a "spirit" or "soul")

economic scale: left to right axis of the political spectrum, measuring collective vs. private control of resources and property—i.e. whether there will be "government in the boardroom"

efficient policy: a policy that gives the people and the institution the greatest benefit at the least cost

elitism: the belief that some institutions will inevitably have more power and wealth than others, and that this imbalance of power will corrupt the political order

empirical (or pragmatic) evaluation: assessment of a policy that focuses on observable behaviors, data, and outcomes; asks the question, "Does it work?"

empiricism: type of epistemology that claims that knowledge comes from experience, particularly sense experience

entelechy: a Greek term that describes when something is completely realized and in its final form

epistemology: the study of knowledge—what knowledge is, how it is acquired, and how it is identified

ethic: a theory or system of moral explanations and guidelines

eudaimonia: a Greek term for "happiness" and living a blessed life; the ultimate goal of being virtuous

federalism: a constitutional design for any government that seeks to share power between the national and regional (e.g. state or provincial) levels of authority

formal institutions: entities that are recognized by the law as the legitimate decision-makers in matters of public policy (e.g. Congress, the President, the judiciary, political parties, etc.)

free will: the general metaphysical issue of whether people have control over their own actions—what is done and how it is done; also, the specific position that people *do* have such control and responsibility (also see *"determinism"*)

general revelation: God's commands and character that are known through reason and experience

ideology: see *"political ideology"*

impact evaluation: a type of empirical (or pragmatic) policy evaluation that focuses on the results of a particular program—whether the program's policy objectives and desired outcomes have been met

informal institutions: entities that are NOT recognized by the law as the legitimate decision-makers in matters of public policy but that still shape decisions made by governments (e.g. corporations, labor unions, interest groups, super PACs, think tanks, etc.)

innatism: type of epistemology that claims that knowledge comes from what is self-evident to every (functional adult) person's inborn reason

interest groups: those people involved in the policy-making process who care about the result but who don't have an official voice in the decision. They can influence policy indirectly. (see *"actors"*).

intuitionism: type of epistemology that claims that knowledge comes through flashes of insight, epiphanies, hunches, "sixth-sense perceptions", etc.; a deep, inexplicable, yet self-authenticating way a person suddenly connects with reality

Kantianism: ethical view that actions (the "means") and intentions are the most important subjects of morality

Kingdom of Ends: key tenet of Kantian ethics and the Categorical Imperative that people should act so as to harmonize their goals and values with those of all other rational beings, so that each person is treated as an "end"

laissez-faire pluralism: a form of pluralism that *assumes* that all institutions have equal opportunity to participate, and therefore serve to neutralize one another so that no single institution may or will dominate the decision-making process

layer cake federalism: model of government where national and regional governments operate independently of one another and have no interaction

libertarian: political ideology on the social scale of the contemporary political spectrum (negative y-axis); the belief that personal freedom should be maximized; can lead to "government out of the bedroom"

malleability: the metaphysical issue of whether human nature itself is changeable, particularly by societal influences (see also: *"constrained"* and *"unconstrained"*)

marble cake federalism: model of government where national and regional governments do interact with one another

meta-evaluation: a type of empirical (or pragmatic) policy evaluation that synthesizes the findings of evaluation research in the literature

metaphysics: the study of the basic make-up of reality, particularly of human beings (i.e. human nature)

mutual coercion: compelling people to act or think in a particular manner through means that are agreed upon by the majority of the people affected; part of Garrett Hardin's proposed solution to the Tragedy of the Commons

Natural Law: an ethical theory that there is a moral law (possibly from God) built into nature that shows how to optimize human flourishing and is rationally knowable by everyone through reason and experience (general revelation)

normative evaluation: assessment of a policy that is based on specific values and moral or ethical principles; asks the question, "Is the policy good (according to some set of values)?"

pluralism: the belief that the competing interests of different institutions or groups are good for society

policy: a general plan of action adopted by any institution to solve a problem, counter a threat, or make use of an opportunity

policy-making process: the five stages (agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation) that a plan of action must go through to be adopted by an institution

policy arenas: the "levels" where polices are debated, decided, and administered (e.g. national, local or civic)

policy evaluation: a type of empirical (or pragmatic) assessment that focuses on the impact of the policy or program on the original problem to which it was addressed

policy instruments: method that governments use to achieve social goals; includes transfer of resources, subsidies with strings attached, regulation, and development/administration

political ideology: a set of beliefs that shapes humans' understanding of people, power, and their reactions to it; expression of the world as it is and as it should/could be

political left: political ideology on the economic scale of the political spectrum (negative x-axis); emphasizes the redistribution of wealth, interventionist economic policy, fair trade and collectivism; "government in the boardroom"

political right: political ideology on the economic scale of the political spectrum (positive x-axis); emphasizes the free market, laissez-faire economic policy, and individualism; "government out of the boardroom"

political spectrum: system of classifying different political positions on one or more geometric axes that symbolize independent political dimensions

physicalism: the metaphysical idea that human beings are composed solely of matter and energy—humans do not have immortal souls

pragmatic evaluation: see *"empirical evaluation"*

Principle of Utility: foundational concept of utilitarianism that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness and are wrong as they tend to produce the opposite of happiness

process evaluation: a type of empirical (or pragmatic) policy evaluation that focuses on the means by which a program or policy is delivered to clients or voters, or the way in which a program is implemented

public policy: a plan of action that is made by a government

regulation: a policy instrument in which the government may directly lay down rules telling people how to conduct their affairs

separation of powers: the division of control between different branches of government (e.g. executive, legislative, and judicial)

social policy: a plan of action that is made non-government entities such as private schools, businesses, churches, etc.

social scale: libertarian to authoritarian axis of the contemporary political spectrum, measuring how much societal control there should be of individuals' behavior—whether there should be "government in the bedroom"

sovereignty: supreme lawful control and authority

special revelation: God's revealed commands and character

subsidies with strings attached: a policy instrument in which the government may provide money to some of the population, but with the requirement that it be used in certain ways

telos: Greek term for "end", "goal" or "purpose"; used in ethics to indicate the goals of human nature/life

Tragedy of the Commons: an economic/social problem described by Garrett Hardin that occurs when every individual in a group tries to get the greatest benefit from a given resource that is easily available to all individuals. As demand for the resource overwhelms supply, each individual who uses more of the resource directly harms others who can no longer enjoy its benefits.

transfer of resources: a policy instrument in which government may take resources away from some people and give them to others with or without direction as to what the resources will be used for

unconstrained: the metaphysical idea that human nature is NOT limited within certain boundaries regarding moral dispositions and cognitive capabilities—human nature is significantly changeable (see *"malleability"*)

unitary system: form of government where the upper level of government has all the power and authority

Universal Law: a key tenet of Kantian ethics and the Categorical Imperative that people should act only according to rules they could universalize (e.g. the golden rule). It asks the question, "would it be okay if everyone acted this way?"

utilitarianism: ethical view that the outcomes of action (the consequences or "ends") are the most important consideration; aims to provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people

Veil of Ignorance: in Kantian-style ethics, when one adopts principles of justice while "not knowing" what role one will have in society, and even assuming that one might be the weakest party; idea formulated by John Rawls

virtue ethics: ethical theory that emphasizes the outcomes in a person's character as the key determinants of one's quality of life