

to have a story with suffering and tragedy to fit it into life. Is some of Rahner's existentialism close to the "therapeutic subject" that Bellah finds destructively individualistic? If this is the case, this person added, is it fair to say that Rahner can be a danger in the United States? Buckley agreed with some of these criticisms, but he said that it was inaccurate to isolate the therapeutic moment in Rahner's work. Rahner was always against utilitarian individualism, and he has checks in his theology against excessive inwardness. Another suggested, however, that those who agree with Rahner tend to be apolitical.

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B. FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF AMERICAN RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY AND VATICAN II, *GAUDIUM ET SPES*

At the second session, moderated by Christine Gudorf, the presenters were John Farrelly and William Spohn, S.J. of the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley. Robert Bellah offered a response to these presentations and took part in the discussion.

Farrelly discussed the question from the perspective of the theological anthropology of Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, Part I, (henceforth, *GS*). He suggested that *GS*'s analysis of the current situation has much in common with that in *Habits*. An earlier draft of *GS* had a sentence, unfortunately later dropped, that stressed the individualism *Habits* described. It noted that: "Many adopt a passive attitude to the transformation [in society] they cannot control, and do not even try to understand it, seeking a refuge in the comforts and pleasures of life or in various forms of escapism."³ Part of *GS*'s response to this situation was to present a theological anthropology, dialoguing with modern men and women on the meaning of the human person and community. For this it relies on both Christian revelation and human experience and knowledge. It emphasizes the dignity of the human person—a dignity that finds its greatest fulfillment in God's call of the person to communion with himself. *Gaudium et Spes* underlines the fact that mankind is created and redeemed as a community and thus that there is an "interdependence between personal betterment and the improvement of society." Thus, "No one can allow himself to . . . wallow in the luxury of a merely individualistic morality" (*GS*, 25, 30). And it shows that human work and activity to master the world and shape history is in accord with God's plan, though such work is in fact deeply infected by sin, so that "the hierarchy of values is disordered, . . . every man and

³Charles Moeller, "Preface and Introductory Statement," in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. 5, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), p. 105.

every group is interested only in its own affairs, not in those of others. So it is that the earth has not yet become the scene of true brotherhood" (*GS*, 37).

Farrelly added that the theological anthropology of *GS* should be supplemented by a more specific dialogue with the autonomous individualism described by *Habits*—a dialogue on the question of the human good, and one conducted on the basis of human experience and philosophical reflection. Relying on an article he had written on this issue,⁴ he emphasized that to be human and to act in a way that is fully human we must acknowledge both the human dignity of another and our own human orientation to respect others' dignity as part of what may be called a "constitutive human good." He concluded by saying that it is essential that we renew the biblical tradition, but also essential that we renew something similar to what Bellah calls the "republican tradition."

William Spohn, the second presenter, proposed using three figures from American religious philosophy to examine the thesis of Bellah and others, that without genuine communities, serious moral commitments are impossible.

Spohn introduced Jonathan Edwards, Josiah Royce and H. Richard Niebuhr in terms of their approach to the issue of how a part relates to the whole; this issue, Spohn insisted, not only corresponds best to the individual/community question at hand, but is also more representative of American moral reflection than the means-to-end pragmatism usually highlighted.

Jonathan Edwards was a Puritan pastor of Northampton, Massachusetts, during the Great Awakening of 1740-1743. In *The Nature of True Virtue*,⁵ Edwards argued for two types of "consent," or appreciation and endorsement of some reality, one being truly virtuous, the other only appearing virtuous. In truly virtuous consent, the person or value is appreciated as a part of the whole universe of being, hence, ultimately in relation to God. We love the part properly only when we love the whole first. Counterfeit virtue, our natural preferences for family or fairness, for example, appear virtuous from a limited perspective, seen as connected to a limited range of reality. They are merely private affections, parochial loyalties which will inevitably come in conflict with the common good.

Josiah Royce, a hundred and fifty years later, lived at a time when the claims of community were losing ground in a culture fragmenting along the lines of private interest. Royce claimed that individuals do not band together to form communities; rather community and tradition are the prior realities that give birth to authentic human persons.⁶ The reality of the part is derived from the whole. The perspective of Royce, says Spohn, permeates the view of the authors of *Habits*, even though he is not cited.

H. Richard Niebuhr linked Royce and George Herbert Meade to describe the social constitution of the self. Niebuhr proposed in *The Responsible Self* that we each make sense of our lives through interpreting them in using the symbols and

⁴John Farrelly, "The Human Good and Moral Choice," in *God's Work in a Changing World* (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1985), pp. 108-60.

⁵J. Edwards, *The Nature of True Virtue* (1765).

⁶J. Royce, *The Problem of Christianity* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1963).

categories provided by our common traditions.⁷ The moral action, therefore, is not only what is "right," but what is "fitting," namely, the one action that fits most harmoniously into all these contexts of meaning. Niebuhr argued that the self achieves integrity through the imaginative unity of story, but that not all stories are equal to the task, since some reinforce an egoistic understanding of the self as in center stage.

These three American interlocutors pose three questions for the research of Bellah and associates: Do private interests naturally turn toward mutual opposition? Do we possess a common cause sufficient to move us to genuine community? And finally, are any nonbiblical stories adequate for the formulation of a responsible self?

Robert Bellah addressed many of the issues and questions raised by the presenters before moving on to answer questions from the floor. He agreed with Farrelly that *Habits* did agree very well with Catholic social teaching, and noted the fact that three of the five authors were from the Catholic tradition.⁸ However, he felt that the need for community was a modern problem afflicting Catholics too.

With regard to Farrelly's concluding comments about the need for renewing biblical tradition and republican traditions, Bellah reminded us that there are many biblical traditions, depending on one's interpretation, and that there are some more helpful in the communitarian task than others. The republican tradition is similarly ambiguous, and can be destructive, especially of outsiders.

In response to Spohn's question about opposition between private interests and the common good, Bellah said he had serious trouble with the Augustinian/Calvinist doctrine of corrupted human nature. The evil is not in self-interest, but in absolutizing self-interest.

In response to questions from the floor Bellah described how reactions to the book were influenced by widespread sensing of a problem with radical individualism—that it cannot be successfully lived. He volunteered that his approach to psychological development shared much with the work of Carol Gilligan in *In a Different Voice*.⁹ He added, in response to praise for *Habits'* affirmative treatment of family without familialism, that a common conservative response to the book is to insist on the necessary inequality of women as basic to family survival, and that he disagrees.

Bellah acknowledged that the book did relate to A. McIntyre's work, but that McIntyre is more pessimistic and reactionary, though rumor indicates McIntyre may be personally moving in a similar direction.

Lastly, with regard to Catholics and the question of authority, Bellah lamented that Catholics did not seem to be able to learn from the example of Protestants of the dangers in accepting the modern world and its individualism in reaction against

⁷H. R. Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

⁸Bellah is Episcopal Protestant; one of the five authors is Jewish, while the other three are in various degrees of association with Roman Catholicism.

⁹C. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

traditional authoritarianism. We need authority and community without individualism or authoritarianism.

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