A Review of Religion, Politics & Culture

Commonweal

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WAGING PEACE

Is just-war theory more trouble than it's worth?

Gerald Schlabach & Peter Steinfels

Anthony Annett on Market Idolatry

Rita Ferrone on a New Crop of Cardinals

Paul Griffiths on Leaving Duke

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LETTERS

Basic income, human nature, etc.

A SNACK BEFORE THE BANQUET

Thank you for George Scialabba's article, "The Free Banquet" (May 5, 2017). At the end of the article he asks "would there be enough money" to fund a universal income? He then mentions a variety of funding options but he leaves out a tax on wealth. Thomas Picketty, the author of *Capital* and others have suggested such a wealth tax and they have quantified the amount of personal net worth (PNW) by percentile in the World Wealth and Income Database (WID) to understand wealth distribution. It turns out that a household PNW of $5 million and above puts a person in the wealthiest 1 percent in the United States. Using WID data I estimate the wealth of the 1 percent is about $27 trillion in 2017 and growing, after the payment of all taxes and the expenditure of all that the 1 percent spend, at the rate of about $1.5 trillion per year. I suggest in my online petition the "People's Dividend" on the website Change.org that the U.S. government enact a wealth tax equal to that growth and distribute the $1.5 trillion as an annual universal income of $4,500 to every adult and child in the United States. This payment would be tax-free and additional to all other income and benefits.

The $4,500 would amount to only a partial universal basic income, because it is less than the poverty level. However, as the number of people in the family increases, it comes close. For a family of two adults and two children the payment would equal $18,000 a year which is about 75 percent of the poverty level for a family of four. Another $6,000 of annual income would raise the family above the poverty line. Eventually, perhaps in a decade or two, the wealth tax on the PNW of the 1 percent will become large enough to fund a complete universal basic income.

Taxing wealth is important, not only because it represents a potential new source of revenue, but because the amount of wealth owned by the top 1 percent represents the cumulative result of many economic and policy factors such as automation, globalization, trade agreements, tax laws, government budgets, and social programs. And taxing the PNW of the 1 percent is infinitely simpler than changing all those other factors. By using the tax on the 1 percent for a universal annual income payment, 99 percent of the voters would be financially better off, and that will make it easier to get a majority of voters to favor a universal income proposal. Finally, the unequal distribution of wealth in the United States is a problem in itself. It has destroyed people's livelihoods, reversed rising expectations and led to desperate and destructive political choices. A wealth tax on the 1 percent funding universal income is a simple way to correct this.

TOM CLARKSON
Vienna, Va.

EXPANDING THE REAL

Gary Gutting rightly lauds Roger Scruton's *On Human Nature* for its "accessible response to materialism that many regard as unavoidable in light of recent science" ("More than Animals," May 19). He notes as crucial Scruton's philosophical definition of the person as "an emergent entity rooted in the [biological] human being but belonging to another order of exploration than that explored by biology."

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LAST WORD

To the University, with Love 39 *Paul J. Griffiths*

Now, lest both the author and the reviewer be accused of engaging in a merely metaphysical sophistry, I would note that "emergence" as a real phenomenon finds strong support in the work of Robert B. Laughlin, a Stanford-based Nobel-Prize-winning physicist. In *A Different Universe: Reinventing Physics from the Bottom Down,* Laughlin asserts that cosmic evolution itself occurs as newness arises in and through the principle of emergence, nature's inbuilt ability to collectively organize otherwise chaotic properties into new emergent realities. These new realities somehow escape the pull of the very different fundamental laws from which they develop and, in themselves, remain literally unimaginable viewed from their previous non-collective phase of existence.

For example, at the most basic level of electromagnetic waves, particles would seem to be impossible or illusory just as, at the level of particles, the periodic table of atomic elements seems as likely as the tablets of the Ten Commandments. But, despite their unlikelihood, emergent realities are not illusions; they expand the boundaries of the real. Though at different phases of the continuum of reality, Laughlin affirms, different rules apply, at all levels of the evolutionary continuum, the whole is more than equal to the sum of its parts.

This "bottom down" perspective takes issue, then, with reductionist science that breaks down the world into smaller and smaller parts in order to gain predictive power over the laws of nature. Rather, by looking at the histories of "large systems," Laughlin claims that only collective phenomena can account for the big picture with which reality presents us. So when particles emerge from waves of non-matter, they cross an invisible, qualitative threshold becoming new, collective existents. This explains how quantum waves composed of nothing collectively emerge as the building blocks or particles of something, i.e., matter. The resulting material state cannot be predicted from its non-material matrix because these nano-particles then defy the laws of location and motion, interacting randomly and probabilistically, unchained, chaotic, and barely measurable. But collectively these particles emerge as atoms, the stuff of all stable and reproducible Newtonian phenomena.

It strikes this reader that Scruton's interpersonal world emerges as self-awareness continues to cross Laughlin's "invisible, qualitative threshold" beyond mere neural activity. Certainly Gutting's appreciation of the scope of *On Human Nature* might suggest that metaphysics and physics might once again enter into some fruitful dialogue.

PAUL E. DINTER
Ossining, N.Y.

COMPARE & CONTRAST

A candidate for the best editorial of the year appeared in the June 2 issue. You provide a photo of dark-suited Cardinal Cupich offering a rosary to a homeless man dressed in a red winter vest and, two pages later, a photo of Cardinal Burke in his red outfit including a twenty-five-foot watered silk train flowing down from his shoulders. What would Jesus think? Pope Francis has offered clues.

EDWARD VACEK, SJ
Loyola University
New Orleans, La.

UNITED, BODY & SOUL

Thank you for the March 10 issue! It is refreshing—and helpful— to see transgender issues discussed so thoughtfully ("The Church and Transgender Identity"). David Cloutier correctly identifies the social dimension of this issue as a conflict between existing preferences for a unified body-soul anthropology on the one hand and the fact of sex-gender incongruity among trans people like myself on the other. This conflict involves us in a lifelong struggle that we commonly try to repress or deny, even to run away from, but which in the long run proves inescapable. Ours is not a choice in any direct sense; all we can choose is whether or not to continue to dissemble as society would have us do, or to be authentic to our gendered souls, to choose our unchosen nature. We usually proceed with extreme caution, hesitating to make this choice, often for decades, out of deference to the human ecology in which we are embedded, should it come as a shock, even a scandal, to others. Yet in spite of the risk to every sort of social good and even to life itself, we feel compelled in good conscience to choose our true nature, to be before God who we were created to be. Male and female he created me. Many if not most of us believe at heart that we remain "deeply rooted in circumstances of birth such as those we recognize in intersex," as Luke Timothy Johnson suggests.

Johnson also makes clear that gender is neither a moral nor a religious category, but biological and social. It would however be more accurate to say that sex is a biological category, and gender a psychological and social one rooted partly in the soul (or psyche) and partly in social constructions. That is why the kind of body-soul incongruity that we experience is a source of deep distress (dysphoria) that we desperately are seeking to heal by becoming whole in body and soul. Ignoring the gendered soul in this equation produces the current positivist academic dogma that gender is entirely socially constructed—the "gender theory" to which Popes Benedict and Francis have so rightly objected.

As for the body modifications that scandalize so many, few voices were raised in all the years that intersex infants were hormonally and surgically "fixed" to comply with a simple but mistaken sexual dichotomy. Yet the same treatments continue to be contested for those of us who seek with all our soul to unify body and soul. In a more compassionate society it might be possible to tolerate body-soul incongruence (as Native Americans do of those that are "two-spirit"), but as things stand, body-soul congruence is the path to social recognition. Finding that despite all our dodges and all the hours spent on the psychiatrist's couch, our souls remain stubbornly gendered, is it so strange that we would want to tweak our bodies to obtain unity of body and soul, and with it social recognition? And to use that healed soul and social recognition together to serve the needs of others, contributing as whole persons to the social ecology, and to the body of Christ?

AMY COLBERT
Seattle, Wash.

With Intent to Suppress

Within weeks of the 2013 U.S. Supreme Court decision invalidating key parts of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, North Carolina Republicans enacted the most sweeping set of voter restrictions in the country. Among other things, the law eliminated government-employee and student IDs as valid forms of photo identification, scaled back early voting, and ended same-day voter registration. All of these measures disproportionately affected African Americans, who in 2008 and 2012 had registered and voted at a higher rate than whites for the first time in state history. Like dozens of Republican-controlled states that introduced similar restrictions in the years following Barack Obama's 2008 election, North Carolina cited widespread voter fraud as justification. But out of 21 million votes cast in the state between 2000 and 2012, there were only two cases of voter impersonation. The real motivation, as a federal appeals court confirmed in a 2016 decision declaring the law unconstitutional, was race. North Carolina had used racial data to craft its restrictions, targeting African Americans with what the court called "almost surgical precision."

On May 15, the Supreme Court declined to hear the state's appeal of that ruling, effectively killing the ID law. This was only one of the High Court's decisions on voting. On May 22, it ruled that North Carolina Republicans unconstitutionally used race to gerrymander two congressional districts, "packing" black voters into existing majority-minority districts and thus diluting the power of their vote. The state argued it was trying to comply with remaining VRA requirements on majority-minority districts, while also contending the redrawn districts were constitutional because political party, not race, had been the primary consideration. Justice Elena Kagan, writing for a five-three majority unexpectedly joined by Justice Clarence Thomas, pondered these claims and asked rhetorically whether the intent could simply have been "to suppress the electoral power of minority voters." Without explicitly answering the question, Kagan wrote that "the sorting of voters on the grounds of their race remains suspect even if race is meant to function as a proxy for other (including political) characteristics." In other words, race and party cannot be treated as separate things in states, like North Carolina, where African Americans overwhelmingly vote Democratic. The decision could have a significant impact on how states approach redistricting.

These decisions, though welcome, offer only fleeting reassurance. While media attention was focused on the firing of FBI Director James Comey, Donald Trump signed an executive order establishing the "Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity," a bumptious amplification of his false claim that millions of people cast ballots illegally in the 2016 election. The commission's vice chair is Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, for years the Republican ringmaster on voter fraud, whose antics have inspired GOP voting-restriction initiatives across the country. He has insisted, without producing evidence, that "illegal registration of alien voters has become pervasive" and that voter fraud occurs with "alarming regularity." He has also called for the purging of voting rolls and amending the National Voter Registration Act to require proof of citizenship for registration—that is, nationalizing the kind of suppressive measures his state and others have implemented since 2008. (A report from the nonpartisan General Accounting Office found that ID laws suppressed 2012 election turnout in Kansas by 1.9 percent.)

Nor do the recent rulings settle the matter. The Supreme Court normally doesn't comment on cases it declines to hear, but Chief Justice John Roberts nevertheless saw fit to issue an order explaining that the May 15 decision was not "an expression of opinion upon the merits of the case." (Taking the hint, North Carolina Republicans immediately promised to write another voter ID bill.) The court has also deferred a hearing on strict ID requirements in Texas, with Roberts claiming "the issues will be better suited" for review after lower courts have completed their work. Clearly he is preparing the way for a case on voter identification, and with the court's conservative majority restored by the arrival of the like-minded Neil Gorsuch, it's not hard to imagine where things could lead. "Without access to the ballot box, people are not in a position to protect any other rights that are important to them," Roberts dutifully stated when nominated for chief justice in 2005. He proceeded to demonstrate his regard for this bedrock principle of American democracy by leading the court's effort to dismantle the VRA. As long as Republicans are in control of state houses and the Supreme Court, equal access to the voting booth will remain in jeopardy. ■

Paul Baumann

The Catholic Imagination

THEN & NOW

I recently spoke, alongside my colleague Dominic Preziosi, at Fordham University's Lincoln Center Campus during a conference on "The Future of the Catholic Imagination." Joining us on our panel was *America* editor Matt Malone, and that magazine's executive editor Kerry Weber. Former *Commonweal* editor and longtime contributor Margaret O'Brien Steinfels was the moderator. Thanks to Angela O'Donnell, associate director of Fordham's Curran Center for American Catholic Studies, for inviting us to participate.

The conference was, at least in part, an extended response to the poet Dana Gioia's 2013 essay in *First Things* about what he characterized as the crisis of the contemporary Catholic writer and the relative absence of a Catholic literary presence in the larger secular culture. Gioia looked back to the immediate post–World War II years as the high-water mark for the visibility and influence of Catholic writers in America. Near the end of Gioia's essay he wrote: "The necessary work of writers matters very little unless it is recognized and supported by a community of critics, educators, journalists, and readers."

I certainly agree.

The historian Kevin Starr subsequently wrote a very interesting and informative essay, "The Lost World: American Catholic Non-fiction at Midcentury," in response to Gioia's article. It is published by Wiseblood Books in a small paperback volume. Starr agreed with Gioia, but added that "a strong component of the sustaining Catholic culture in that era that resulted in such notable fiction and poetry was an all-pervasive and equally productive non-fiction culture."

Starr goes on to describe the success of midcentury Catholic publishing houses such as Sheed and Ward, the significant number of non-academic theological books Catholics read, the plethora of Catholic publications, including *Commonweal, America*, and *National Review*—which he amusingly describes as a "lay-edited *Commonweal* in reverse"—and the remarkable growth of Catholic colleges and universities. The decades-long presence of Archbishop Fulton Sheen on radio and then on TV is also noted. All of this suggests, Starr writes, "that the 1950s American Catholicism so central to Dana Gioia's pioneering essay, while contemporaneous with a time of theological indecision and even confusion, was not devoid of multiple levels of commentary, ranging from the popular to the most profound, that created a force field for Catholic novelists and poets to absorb from their very environment the color, context, profundity, and dissonances of the American Catholic experience in the immediate post-World War II era."

So it seems that we are all agreed that a once-marginalized

Catholic community and culture reached a certain density, acceptance, and influence in the immediate post-war period. Whether that culture was as receptive and encouraging of the sort of literary ambition Gioia and Starr celebrate is less obvious, at least to me. I'm not sure what the circulation of *Commonweal* was in the 1950s, but I doubt it ever got much beyond twenty thousand (it reached its peak circulation numbers of forty thousand during the Second Vatican Council). The fact of the matter is that a magazine like *Commonweal*, which is not in any direct way a church publication, has never had a mass audience. There were of course several much more popular Catholic publications, but it is not my impression that they thought their purpose was in some way to support Catholic literary culture rather than Catholic mission and morality, especially morality. This was after all the era of the Legion of Decency pledge and the Index of Forbidden books. One of Gioia's Catholic literary exemplars is the great short story writer and novelist J. F. Powers. If you read Powers's letters (*Suitable Accommodations: An Autobiographical Story of Family Life*, edited by Katherine A. Powers), or Wilfrid Sheed's underappreciated novel *The Hack*, you will discover that the "force field" Starr refers to had some pretty big holes in it. How to make a living as a lay person writing for Catholic publications was one of them. Sheed's protagonist in *The Hack*, a young father of five undergoing a spiritual crisis, usually got this sort of an offer from the Catholic publications he wrote for: "3,000 words on your favorite saint. No payment." Or as the priest-editor of one magazine explains, no one in their right mind expects to actually make a living writing for the Catholic press.

In his letters, J. F. Powers writes with amusement and some exasperation about the reviews his first book, *Prince of Darkness*, a collection of stories, received in the Catholic

press. This was in 1947. "Fr. Egan, did I tell you, sent the review from the *Catholic World*.... One of the worst ones, on the *Sign* order [*Sign* was another Catholic magazine], but worse." Powers then quotes from the review. "With a few deft strokes he limns a character.... There is an economy of incident and word.... Simplicity of style and language does not conceal the telling phrase.... Interest is sustained and suspense is not lacking." Then comes the reviewer's literary assessment: "A priest will rightfully be moved to irritation instead of meditation by the ineptness of the surgery that hacks rather than cuts cleanly."

Powers then goes on. "In short, the whole Catholic works, or why we will never have a legitimate literary criticism. And who is the reviewer assigned to my book? He is the author of the forthcoming *Judicial Philosophy of Justice Cardozo*. God save us. I am seriously considering never appearing in a Catholic publication again. This is an extreme case of it, of course, but the *Commonweal* is only different in a degree. It is all contained in the evaluation of fiction. It is for women. Nonfiction, now, that is for men. Fiction is not taken seriously. We are still tied to the apron strings of all the old bores. Then too we are still in a ghetto, Catholics who write, or even read."

The *Sign* reviewer had also found Powers's depiction of the clergy—which would earn him the 1963 National Book Award for his wonderful comic novel *Morte d'Urban*—disturbing. "I would like to take Mr. Powers around and introduce him to some of the truly admirable priests that one has met," the review concluded.

In another letter, in a comment I've always cherished, Powers remarks on his favorite *Commonweal* writer. "He is the only one not so fair-minded that it makes you tired."

I will spare Matt Malone what Powers has to say about reviews in *America*!

In 1960, Powers writes scathingly in his journal after watching Archbishop Fulton Sheen's popular TV show, *Life Is Worth Living*. Sheen's topic was "Why the Gloom in Modern Literature?" "Appalling spectacle," Powers writes. "Obviously knows little and cares less about the subject. Down on Graham Greene...no Americans mentioned.... Only names to be mentioned favorably were Claudel and T. S. Eliot. They, he said, had their hands against the dike, holding back the tide of gloom. He is the personification of gloom himself, Sheen, and it depresses the hell out of me to think of his success, considering what he does to earn it. 'Ham what I am'—all the way."

Elsewhere Powers writes about going to a movie about Martin Luther and finding it "interesting." He can't imagine his co-religionists being able to pull that off. "If you would shake my faith," he writes, "let me see a movie made under Catholic auspices."

My point is rather simple. Back in the days of Fortress Catholicism, things—especially Catholic literary things—were not as good as many people seem to think, and things are not as bad today as people fear. If you are looking for what Gioia called a "community of critics, educators, journalists, and readers" interested in helping the Catholic imagination flourish today you need look no further than magazines like *Commonweal* and *America* as well as to the many other writers and editors participating in this conference. *Commonweal* regularly publishes serious literary criticism. Our 2016 fall books issue had two remarkable essays, one by Cassandra Nelson on Flannery O'Connor and another by Matthew Boudway on Cormac McCarthy. Our literary columnist, Tony Domestico, writes regularly on the relationship between faith and literature and has conducted a terrific series of interviews with writers such as George Saunders, Christian Wiman, and Elif Batuman. We also publish poetry and fiction, and even dedicate our July issue to the subject. The novelists Alice McDermott and Valerie Sayers are frequent contributors.

Thanks to the internet, *Commonweal* now typically reaches an audience of more than a hundred thousand every month, which is far more readers than the magazine had in the immediate post-war period that Gioia and Starr celebrate. Like most magazines established in the print era, we face financial challenges, but like all "little" magazines *Commonweal* has always been a precarious enterprise. It is no more precarious today than it has ever been, and in other ways it has never been more stable.

In short, if you are looking for the sort of engagement between Catholicism and the secular literary and cultural world that Gioia seems to search in vain for, you need look no further. Here we are.

In a somewhat more philosophical vein, I think the distinctive religious perspectives found in *Commonweal* and *America* can also help hold back the tide of gloom that has enveloped certain pockets of secular culture. The novelist Marilynne Robinson touches on this aspect of religion in her forthcoming book in an essay titled "Integrity and the Modern Intellectual Tradition." In that essay, Robinson warns about the dangers of what she calls a "constricted empiricism," of a reductionist and merely materialistic understanding of life and human consciousness. Humanity is "an extraordinary instance of a pervasive complexity," she argues. "Science has not proposed any way of accounting for this fact, not having been aware of it as a fact until quite recently. A theistic vision of the world is freer to see the world whole, as it is in itself, so to speak.... To speak as the theists did of lavishness, elegance, artfulness, is to introduce language capable of acknowledging that there is more to the world than its intricate economies of survival.... Classical religion brings assumptions of vastness and relation, and beauty, and wonder and humility before its subject, all very useful in giving reality its due."

Yes, all very useful. Amen to that. ■

Paul Baumann *is editor of* Commonweal. *This essay is an edited and slightly expanded version of remarks delivered at the Fordham conference.*

Rita Ferrone

Cardinal Virtues

WHY CHARACTER MATTERS TO FRANCIS AS MUCH AS GEOGRAPHY

When Pope Francis announced another five appointments to the College of Cardinals last month, journalists and other observers of the Vatican were quick to assert that his selection showed a preference for those "on the peripheries." This well-worn expression should be retired. It hides more than it reveals. These appointments are significant and interesting, but not so much because these cardinals-elect are "outsiders" to the traditional ecclesiastical power centers. What is interesting about them is their character.

Take for instance, cardinal-elect Louis-Marie Ling Mangkhanekhoun of Laos. Talk about "peripheries"—he doesn't even have a diocese. He is the apostolic vicar of Paske, a territory that includes a million inhabitants and only 14,500 Catholics. His mission is focused on evangelizing animists living in the mountains. As of 2015, when he gave an interview to *Asia News*, he had a total of six priests in his charge. Six! Yet he cheerfully shepherds along what he calls his "baby diocese."

> The positive thing is that we have married catechists who are true missionaries, who go to live in the villages and become the 'roots' of evangelization. They go, live, they begin to build bonds.... We offer this experience to the seminarians. Seminary students must study three years, then they must stop for at least a year, up to three years to mature in their decision, but also for pastoral experience as catechists, carrying medicines, aid, prayers for the people of the mountain. They integrate with the villagers, live as the villagers do in everything.

Pardon me while I pick myself up from the floor. The *married catechist*s put down the roots of evangelization? The seminarians *follow them* to gain pastoral experience as catechists? They do all this *before they are ordained*, during a gap year (or three)? They live *as the villagers do*? This sounds nothing like the hothouse environment seminaries typically strive to create in North America. Our bishops fear the corrupting influence of "non-priests" so much that their tender recruits are sequestered, not even allowed to share a classroom with lay catechists, much less learn from them or strive to integrate themselves with the people they will serve.

Or consider Bishop Anders Arborelius of Stockholm. Much has been made of his being the first Swedish-born Roman Catholic bishop since the Reformation. Catholics are about 1 percent of the population of Sweden, hence more talk of "peripheries" (this time the wilderness consists of secularized Lutherans). From the outside, it may seem like Arborelius's chief accomplishment is holding the Catholic fort. But a closer look reveals a different picture. David Michael reported on the situation for *Commonweal* last year:

> As debates about immigration and refugees have engulfed Swedish politics, resulting in the closure of Sweden's borders, the Catholic Church has come to be a major advocate for refugees. In Lund, a group of Catholics have banded together with the local Islamic Cultural Center, students, and a local Christian council to found Refugees Lund, which raises support and collects donations for refugees in Sweden and abroad. Not only can the Catholic Church in Sweden speak with the authority of a branch of the world's largest religion, but it also can speak in the voice of the marginalized because it is comprised of the marginalized. It is, in short, a missional church.

CNS PHOTO / MARIA GRAZIA PICCIARELLA, POOL

Arborelius seems to understand what Francis calls "the ecumenism of walking." He co-hosted the commemoration of the Reformation that the pope attended in Lund in 2016. He was also honest enough to go on television saying he informed the Vatican of SSPX Bishop Richard Williamson's anti-Semitic remarks *before* Pope Benedict lifted his excommunication, which embarrassed the Vatican and earned him the wrath of Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos. (Williamson was eventually ejected from the SSPX because of his views.)

Some of the talk about "peripheries" is economic. Francis has drawn cardinals from some of the poorest countries of the world. Archbishop Jean Zerbo of Mali, which ranks among the ten poorest nations on earth, is only the latest example (Francis earlier appointed cardinals from Burkina Faso and Haiti). But is this why Zerbo was chosen, or was it his role in the peace negotiations of 2012 when his country was torn apart by civil war, or his continuing work with Caritas Internationalis, a Rome-based Catholic organization committed to dignity, solidarity, and justice for the poor?

When Pope Francis appeared on the balcony on the night of his election he presented himself as one sought out from "the ends of the earth." As we got to know him, however, his character as a person emerged and this has made a difference. After all, not everyone from faraway places eschews luxury, stands with the poor, or witnesses to the truth as Francis does. Similarly, saying that these new cardinals are "from the peripheries" tells us a fact, but it's not enough. What matters in the end is character—that is where you find the gold. ■

Margaret Lough

No Refuge from Trump

LETTER FROM GREAT BRITAIN

At first glance, the Isle of Lewis is bleak. An hour's ride in a propeller plane from Edinburgh, this far northwest corner of the Outer Hebrides more resembles the moon than southern Scotland. A lunar landscape pounded by the Atlantic's unguarded waves and swept by punishing winds, Lewis allows sparse beauty but little warmth to a stranger. Even the man at the rental car desk, on hearing I was visiting for a weekend holiday, cracked back with, "Why on earth would you want to do that?"

Still, I was glad of the chance to see more of the United Kingdom, and to escape for a few moments the intensity of the news cycle that keeps London in thrall. Lewis, and its island partner, Harris, promised distance and air. Yet no sooner had I walked into Stornoway, the most populated town on the island and a place where most shops still close on Sunday, than I encountered a photographer, hired by a foreign media company. He had come to this tiny island because of its newfound part in the drama playing out overseas: Donald Trump's mother, Mary Anne MacLeod Trump, was born and raised on Lewis, before she joined the path of the immigrant and left Scotland in 1929, in search of work and a future in New York.

It seems you really can't leave American politics behind.

After spending the past few months in England, with visits to neighboring countries, I am reminded how fervently the world watches Washington. From the bus driver who asked about the implications of Comey's firing, to the dentist who philosophized on the future of the American political system, to dozens of others questioning the electoral college, American sexism and racism, voting rights and voting measures and voting rules—the minutiae of life in Georgia and Virginia and New York play out in detail in British newspapers, broadcasts, and social media. Even the BBC reporters seem to struggle to maintain their iron expressions when describing the latest from D.C.

I came to the United Kingdom to immerse myself in another country, and ended up learning more about my own.

Nothing sets your own country in sharper relief than seeing it through the eyes of another. Daily conversations with strangers remind me how much has changed in the past few years. When I traveled here as a teenager, during the George W. Bush years, my accent frequently met with anger, even blame or vitriol. I wondered what this new era might mean for those small interactions. In my experience so far, the response has been the opposite. Where once "your president" sounded like a condemnation, now it comes across in quiet or puzzled tones, fearful and sad, a question mark hanging at the end in disbelief.

Theresa May

CNS PHOTO / WILL OLIVER, EPA

Of course, Britain faces the burden of reordering its own world in the ongoing wake of 2016. When the prime minister called for a snap election in June, sending MPs rushing out of Parliament to build their party manifestos, most people greeted the news with more weariness than excitement, less than thrilled by the prospect of a third national vote in two years.

The election hinges on Brexit. Despite a barrage of other issues, among them the crippled National Health Service, education costs, and labor rules, last year's outcome forces Brexit to the center of the debate over Britain's future. With just a few weeks left until the vote, Theresa May's promise of a "strong and stable" future seems undeniably attractive in the polls to voters now faced with the reality of divorce from the European Union. Opposing parties have struggled to achieve that kind of simple and cohesive message.

While we now know better than to express absolute certainty in any political polling, May seems likely to get her Brexit mandate from voters. Her ability to negotiate with the European Union, though strengthened by Emmanuel Macron's victory in France, remains uncertain. The makeup of the United Kingdom itself may face the prospect of fracture, should future referendums on the fate of Scotland and Northern Ireland reflect disillusionment with a post-EU Britain.

I'll watch the election from across the Atlantic. I write this as I pack for home, collecting my impressions of England. Of

the many things the British find perplexing in American government, one of the most incomprehensible to those who are paying attention is our health-care system. Despite the many challenges of the UK's National Health Service—in funding, manning, managing, and now cybersecurity—the basic belief in finding a way to provide care without regard to income remains intact. The determination, not just to deny health care to the poorest and the sickest, but to actively strip it from them, offers a shockingly coldhearted contrast to that principle, and a grave moral collapse.

I spent most of my days in London walking. To walk in London is to move through the past and the future simultaneously. In a small spot at the center of the city, the remains of the London Wall still stand. Just a few miles long when built by the Romans in 200 AD, the few crumbling stones once encompassed the entirety of defensible London. That small footprint gave way long ago to metropolitan sprawl. A few feet from the Roman remains, groups of tourists and British citizens speaking a dozen languages flow past each other, the streets ringing with voices from every corner of the globe.

I've been in England long enough now to see the season change, to see a cold, dry March and April give way to the liquid green of May. The news from America, seen through the eyes of British correspondents and their viewers, grows ever more daunting.

A few weeks ago, I stopped by London's Royal Academy of Arts to see their new, prized exhibition: "America After the Fall." That grim title attempts to encompass the nearly fifty paintings that span the artistic response to the Great Depression. With winter just loosening its grip outside, tourists, locals, and critics alike struggled to loosen coats and scarves once crowded into the small gallery. We shuffled slowly around, peering at the lesser-known works of Hopper and O'Keefe among their lesser-known colleagues, the uneasy mix of styles and methods adding to the unsettling nature of the experience.

The show, a collaboration with the Art Institute of Chicago and the Musée de l'Orangerie in Paris, debuted in Chicago last September, soon after the Brexit vote and just before that disruptive U.S. election in November. The 1930s—here was an America in transition, its beliefs shaken, its economy and social injustice scars on a self-image of freedom, hard work, and hope. Economic failure raged and fascism loomed on the horizon. Anger and resentment stood beside uncertainty and fear.

A steady hum of conversation hung over the gallery, voices pulling that dark vision of the past to the strangeness of the present. They all seemed to ask the same question about where America would go from here. ■

May 19, 2017

Margaret Lough *is a graduate of the United States Military Academy and has completed two combat tours in Afghanistan. Her work has also appeared in the* Wall Street Journal.

NECK SCARVES

For P. E.

Paula, whenever I see you you're wearing that
same lousy scarf

Even in July I see it religiously wrapped to hide
the marks your father gave you

When I saw the picture of your house covered
in caution tape, I was on the other side of the
world in Japan for missions & when I told you
I was going you said, *Oh that religious work*

Why didn't I tell you I hate religion too—it's
funny how we always tell ourselves: next time

Remember, we used to bellydance in that
basement

The walls, bare except for that one framed picture
of Jesus

My father said only prostitutes shake their hips
like that & I was always jealous that your
father just watched us dance & smiled

Online, your sister said he cried *I'm sorry, I'm
sorry* while slitting her throat with those box
cutters—almost as if she were a box that
needed to be opened quickly

Sometimes when I'm driving on campus I see
you & want to wave but I don't

I know everyone wants to ask you questions but
you don't have to tell me anything

—Meg Eden

Meg Eden's work has been published in various magazines, including Rattle, Drunken Boat, Poet Lore, *and* Gargoyle. *She teaches at the University of Maryland. She has four poetry chapbooks, and her novel* Post-High School Reality Quest *will be published in June 2017 by California Coldblood, an imprint of Rare Bird Lit. Check out her work at: www.megedenbooks.com*

A young American girl, Jan Rose Kasmir, confronts the American National Guard outside the Pentagon during the 1967 anti-Vietnam march.

Just War?

Enough Already

Gerald W. Schlabach

A question for sports fans: What would you make of a coach who drills his team exclusively on last-minute desperation plays, while neglecting the basics? What would you make of players whose whole mindset was geared toward spectacular buzzer-beaters, but couldn't play sound defense? In much the same manner, a church whose members never train themselves in nonviolent social strategies for resisting injustice or protecting the vulnerable—while their leaders spend centuries focused mainly on "exceptional" last-resort situations of the kind envisioned in just-war doctrine—is way off its game. Or in the wrong game altogether.

Gerald W. Schlabach *is professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas, and is author of* Just Policing, Not War: An Alternative Response to World Violence *(Liturgical Press, 2007).*

A year ago I participated in the Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference, an historic event organized by Pax Christi International and co-sponsored by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in Rome. At its close, the conference issued an appeal to the Catholic Church, urging that it "re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence." The document reflected the consensus of eighty-some attendees from more than thirty countries—lay people, theologians, religious, and priests, including six bishops—that the church must abandon its reliance on "just-war" theory. By dedicating his 2017 World Day of Peace message to the theme, "Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace," Pope Francis has signaled that church leadership is listening.

What is so wrong with the just-war theory? The answer lies in the way it overlooks and even undermines alternative approaches. The critique that emerged at the meeting was that while many Christians have come to assume that Jesus'

nonviolent teachings are impractical in the face of violence, they know little about the practice, power, or effectiveness of those teachings. When Pope John Paul II looked back on the 1989 revolution that brought down the Soviet empire, he did not credit Ronald Reagan or Mikhail Gorbachev, but resolute nonviolent action by ordinary people. And rightly so. Political-science researchers Maria Stephan (a participant at the Rome conference) and Erica Chenoweth have extensively surveyed conflicts around the world since 1900 and found that nonviolent resistance campaigns have been twice as successful as violent struggles.

Why have we relied on militarism and so often ignored the power of nonviolence? Arguably, the church's centuries-old focus on "just war" bears great responsibility. In this view, just-war teaching has distracted Catholics from learning, developing, and practicing strategic nonviolence. At times it has excused them from even trying.

As an alternative, the conference called upon the Catholic Church to shift to a "Just Peace" framework for guiding its responses to war, violence, and injustice. Based in Gospel nonviolence, such an approach means much more than refraining from violence; in the words of the conference's appeal, it offers a positive and proactive "vision and an ethic to build peace as well as to prevent, defuse, and to heal the damage of violent conflict," even as it provides "specific criteria, virtues, and practices to guide our actions." The conference's request and great hope was that Pope Francis would issue an encyclical to call the church back to Jesus' teachings and to underscore the power of active nonviolence.

Prompting debate at the conference, and in the ensuing months, was a blunt statement in the final document asserting that "there is no 'just war'," together with a plea that the church "no longer use or teach 'just war theory.'" Some who read news reports assumed, from Vatican co-sponsorship of the conference, that this appeal represented an official shift in church teaching, or amounted to another Francis surprise—to the alarm of some and celebration of others. Such reactions were premature. The message of the conference was to the Vatican, not from the Vatican.

In a certain sense, though, the conference and its message said nothing new, even at their bluntest. Consider the witness of Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, the notorious and very conservative head of the Holy Office at the time of the Second Vatican Council. The conviction that war can never be just is one that Ottaviani would have seconded, not censured. Pastoral work during World War II had once led him to write that "bellum omnino interdicendum"—war is altogether to be forbidden. The price that the poor disproportionately pay even when a cause seems just had convinced him that modern war, at least, is always massively unjust. The cardinal may have resisted almost every change initiated at the council, but not its changing attitude toward war.

Ottaviani's successor, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, was also hardly known for left-leaning tendencies, yet he likewise said in a 2003 interview that the indiscriminate nature of modern weaponry means "we should be asking ourselves if it is still licit to admit the very existence of a 'just war.'" Later, as Pope Benedict XVI, he insisted in a February 2007 Angelus that Jesus' teaching on love of enemies constitutes the very "nucleus of the 'Christian revolution.'" And now, Pope Francis has welcomed the "positive contribution" of the April 2016 conference toward "revitalizing the tools of nonviolence," and has gone on to make his own contribution in his World Day of Peace 2017 message. In that message he sketched out both the biblical basis for a "politics of nonviolence" and the historical successes of active nonviolence at overcoming injustice.

The April 2016 conference thus represented a deepening discourse about a shift already long underway. Certainly it would be wrong to confuse the conference's final appeal with an authoritative pronouncement from the church's magisterium. The authority of its call to move from "just war" to "just peace" was the moral authority of grassroots peacebuilders from conflict zones around the world. But those two kinds of authority are now deeply and more publicly involved in a conversation.

For the sake of that conversation, it may help to clarify what conference participants were saying about just-war theory—and what they left unsaid. Historically, just-war teaching has addressed three overlapping audiences, according to three interlocking purposes.

1. *Pastoral counsel*. The just-war theory has long served to provide pastoral counsel to Christians in positions of civil authority. By the late third century, growth in the Christian community was spiking upward, and soon emperors beginning with Constantine abandoned their intermittent attempts to quash the movement. As their religion became legal, and then official, Christians started—as the hit musical *Hamilton* puts it—to be "in the room where it happens." To be sure, suspicion of just-war theory among Christian peace activists tracks closely with suspicion regarding this "Constantinian settlement." The "room where it happens," they suspect, is neither a conference room nor a confessional, but a room where Christians have gone to bed with worldly power.

Yet even the harshest critics of fourth-century developments in Christianity are wise to acknowledge this much: every social movement comes to a watershed if it actually wins, and its leaders must decide how to institute the changes they have called for. When Ambrose chastised the emperor Theodosius for a merciless massacre, or Augustine counseled high-ranking officials to temper their exercise of the sword, they were accepting a challenge all activists share. Today's antiwar activists must do something akin to what early just-war thinkers did, whenever they seek or gain the ear of policymakers—namely, they must appeal to the highest principles that policymakers are willing to accept, even if those principles fall short of Jesus' teachings. To take up the task of advocacy at all—to say nothing of international diplomacy—is to learn how to use other people's languages

to win what one knows may be partial gains. If "love your enemies" falls on deaf ears, even a Christian pacifist may insist that a given war fails to serve a just cause, or pursues a wrongful objective, or is disproportionate and indiscriminate, or has been launched prematurely before other options have been explored. The April conference in Rome on nonviolence and just peace did not denounce this tactical use of just-war theory.

2. *International law.* As the medieval gave way to the modern era, pastoral counsel was secularized and codified into the norms, treaties, conventions, and institutions that constitute the framework of international law. It is hardly an accident that such leading just-war theorists of the early-modern period as Francisco de Vitoria or Hugo Grotius were also among the founders of international law. Some critics today view international law as doing little more than providing a façade of respectability for powerful nations—nations that defy accountability when they themselves stand accused. Yet how many antiwar activists would like to do without recourse to Geneva Conventions in making their case? What resettlement agency wishes for a weaker rather than a stronger basis for winning legal status for refugees? Similarly, what human-rights lawyer would advocate dismantling the framework of international law simply because just-war theory has historically played a role in its formulation? Those gathered in Rome last April made no such suggestion.

3. *Forming the people of God?* Here is the problem, however: Neither of these first two kinds of just-war discourse will do much to curtail warfare or create conditions of peace when a populace is formed in habits of fear, seduced by nationalism, trained to rely on military actions for easy solutions, and easily swayed by false leaders or misleading popular passions. It is here that most participants in the Rome conference directed their prophetic critique from the trenches of conflict zones around the world. In their view, if just-war teaching is supposed to form the church as a whole in its sacramental vocation and evangelizing mission of peace—which Pope John Paul II in his 2000 World Day of Peace message insisted must be a "not secondary but essential" commitment for all the Catholic faithful—then it has been an abject failure.

I have seen this failure happen, again and again, whenever parishioners have the courage to touch the hot button of war, across the pew or over coffee. A predictable sequence of events ensues. Soon the church's tradition of teaching that "war can be just"—in exceptional circumstances and with careful discernment—has morphed into "the church does not say war is wrong." National leaders marshal political support for a war, and patriotic fervor pressures people to "rally 'round the flag" and "support our troops." Meanwhile, bishops underplay Vatican reservations about a given war and prominently assure us that "nations have a right to self-defense." By now, the statement that "war can be just" is more than halfway to becoming "loyal Catholics are loyal citizens who will support the war as a matter of course."

If the Catholic faithful were really trained in just-war theory and encouraged to practice it in parish and diocesan forums, they would know that a just cause alone does not a just war make. Other moral criteria must bear heavily on just-war discernment as well. If the criterion of just cause trumps all other considerations, then what we really have is holy war, a tradition that the church has discarded. And for good reason. To sacralize a cause is to make one's actions impervious to further scrutiny; by now, "war can be just" has become "win at all costs." Rationalizations then follow for torture, carpet bombing, perpetually hovering drones, and the threat of nuclear holocaust to terrorize entire populations into submission. What Augustine once authorized as "necessity" has become "you gotta do what you gotta do."

None of this is what careful moral theologians intend just-war teaching to do; their intention is to assist in minimizing the violence necessary to maintain a just order in a fallen world. But we must be honest about how just-war discourse has been manipulated again and again over the centuries, in war after war. In a system that claims to be so realistic, this too is a hard fact. Just-war theory cannot be counted as useful if it only works consistently among specialists, failing to mobilize stringent scrutiny of warfare in pews and populace. Even if just-war theorists find a few historical counter-examples to contest the claim of the Rome conference that "there is no 'just war'," they must recognize the theory's failure to help the people of God scrutinize and resist unjust wars.

If just-war theorists wish to maintain the option of exceptional recourse to the "just war," they should join in the call to encourage the teaching and training of active nonviolence within a robust framework of just peace. The logic of just-war theory itself, after all, implies that we can't really know if warfare is necessary in the last resort unless we first resort to other strategies. But we can't begin to claim to have done any first, second, or fifteenth resorting if our investment in those strategies is only a tiny fraction of our investment in military strategies. Nor can we make any such claim if churches are preoccupied with an option that was supposed to be exceptional.

The core, unassailable claim of the conference in Rome was that by focusing its teaching, pastoral counsel, chaplaincy, and advocacy on "just war," the church has paid a huge opportunity cost, to the detriment of its own nonviolent practice. When too many priests, bishops, and moral theologians continue to rely on a just-war framework, they crimp the creative imagination of the faithful and invite nationalistic manipulation of their sentiments. It was only one particularly egregious example of this failure when George Weigel used just-war teaching to justify the 2003 invasion of Iraq by demanding that Christians defer to the Bush administration's "charism of political discernment." Out of thin air Weigel had conjured a charism not shared by bishops or other religious leaders, let alone "public intellectuals" or individual Christians.

Though we seem stuck with a semantically negative term, active nonviolence is in fact a positive. Within a just-peace framework, it is certainly more than protest or civil resistance. It is creative diplomacy. It is behind-the-scenes conflict transformation of the sort that the Vatican and the Colombian church have brought to fruition in a breakthrough peace accord between guerrillas and the government. It is the training of local communities and regional leaders in processes of restorative justice, followed by the institutionalizing of those processes in legal systems. It is demilitarized police forces. It is trauma healing that diverts cycles of violence in devastated communities around the world, and supports veterans in deed, not merely with slogans.

Courageous Catholics and church leaders are already practicing many of these strategies, and the April 2016 conference brought their experiences to the fore. This commitment to the wider and deeper development of creative nonviolence is the growing edge of the Catholic tradition—and we must stop allowing reliance on just-war theory to blunt it. Curbing that reliance will be crucial if we are to deepen and improve our practice of the creative forms of nonviolent civil engagement that practitioners since Mahatma Gandhi have been teaching us.

As a global church, we can play a significant role in scaling up pilot projects for defending vulnerable peoples nonviolently, using models developed by groups such as Christian Peacemaker Teams and Nonviolent Peaceforce. Strengthening our own track record might even give the church the expertise and confidence needed to advocate for what Harvard's Gene Sharp has called "transarmament," whereby nation-states organize their citizenry in the "civilian-based defense" that makes a populace "unconquerable" and allows it to shift away from counterproductive military strategies. Even in World War II, widespread civil resistance was far more effective at this than history books written by militarists allow; Hitler invaded Denmark and Norway for example, but never really succeeded in ruling them. A Catholic Church with imagination undimmed by just-war preoccupations could lead the way in translating historical examples and contemporary pilot projects into policy and politics.

"Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace": the title of Pope Francis's 2017 World Day of Peace message makes an unmistakable point. We should no longer damn nonviolence with faint praise by recognizing it only as a heroic witness for saints, or as a tactic we recommend to protesters only when we fear their desperation will turn violent and upset our comfortable lives. Instead, as Francis implies, nonviolence must become normal and natural to us—must become our very "style of politics." We must recognize its potential and indeed its power not just in private life, but for civil society movements, and in public life and governance itself.

But for that, we need practice. And on the right field, with the right game plan. ■

The War against Just War

Enough Already

Peter Steinfels

All my life I have been haunted by Catholic teachings on just war. Well, I exaggerate. It was not until age three that I launched my first allegedly just war against my older brother James. Nonetheless, by the end of grade school I was semi-fluent in the teachings about just cause, legitimate authority, last resort, likely success, no deliberate attacks on noncombatants, and proportionality in means and ends.

That fluency came mostly from two sources (leaving aside my parents and James), two journals that came into our home. The pacifist *Catholic Worker* regularly discussed just-war principles either to criticize them or to demonstrate how they ruled out any contemporary war. The just-war oriented *Commonweal* made those same principles the touchstone of its support of Western defense against Soviet totalitarianism while raising moral challenges to the nuclear balance of terror and the anti-Communist fever that fed wasteful armaments and anti-democratic entanglements overseas.

To my young mind, what pacifism and just-war principles had in common loomed much larger than what divided them, namely that America's military actions stood under moral scrutiny and judgment. It did not take much maturity to recognize that "just war" principles could as well be named "unjust war" principles. So in high school and college I wrote papers branding as immoral the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Bay of Pigs invasion, and other U.S. military adventures. My Catholic teachers did not necessarily agree, but they understood the frameworks in which I argued. I cannot say the same for my Catholic classmates. For them, as I suspect for most people, morality pertained primarily to personal and not public-policy choices. If they applied moral principles to the question of war, these were inchoate, implicit, and heavily mixed with patriotism

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and Cold War ideology. They were not articulated in terms either of pacifism or just-war teaching.

The force of these two moral currents, both in their convergence and divergence, continued to make itself felt. There was the draft facing all healthy males—and then the war in Vietnam, a major preoccupation of my time as a young member of *Commonweal*'s editorial staff. When I chose a PhD topic, it was a study of a group of French left-wing, anti-militarist intellectuals debating how their nation should respond in the 1930s to the rise of Nazi Germany's power.

Many years ago, I wrote in these pages ("Appointment with Hitler," July 12, 1985) about the way my year in Parisian libraries researching those debates affected my views of pacifism and just-war teaching. To be sure, with few exceptions, the intellectuals I was studying were not Christians. The pacifists among them were not motivated by the Gospel but by convictions about capitalism, nationalism, class exploitation, and the "merchants of death" that were as passionately held and absolute as Dorothy Day's or Martin Luther King Jr.'s commitments to nonviolence. Many had experienced the horrors of the trenches in World War I. It was impossible not to sympathize with their moral repulsion against war.

Yet when it came to making recommendations for public policy, the record of those pacifist intellectuals was dismaying, to say the least. They made excuses for Nazism, fostered illusions about Hitler, and denounced every hint of French military response to German demands and growing military power. Pacifism did not mean passivity, they insisted; invasion could be met by organized mass resistance. Unfortunately, as I wrote here, when invasion came, "that resistance did not materialize. What materialized instead was the sorry spectacle of a few of those pacifist intellectuals setting up as embittered Nazi propagandists in occupied France, attacking the Allies and the Free French, and spinning fantasies of a peaceful United States of Europe established under Hitlerian auspices."

Beyond those truly squalid cases of collaboration was the dismaying degree of self-righteous and wishful thinking that still makes me recoil when I hear it echoed, often with the same well-intentioned clichés and evasions, in contemporary Catholic discussions of war and peace.

My research did not end there. It included other left-wing intellectuals who were strongly anti-militarist but not pacifist. No less critical of much French foreign policy, no less appalled by the prospect of war, they concluded, reticently and painfully, that keeping the peace required France to arm itself and take the risk of confronting Hitler. Their evolving analyses were far from flawless. Nonetheless, their vision—a secular counterpart to just-war reasoning—proved not only more politically clear-eyed but *morally* more sustaining.

That hardly exhausted all that could be said about pacifism in France or what did or did not contribute to the coming of war, France's collapse, and what Jean Guéhenno, in his diary, called the "dark years" that followed. My time in Paris libraries did not preclude active opposition to what I judged to be America's unjust war in Vietnam. Nor did my research extinguish my admiration for people, including many friends, whose pacifist principles have often provided a counterweight to the nationalist and militarist reflexes afflicting American politics, whose defiance of popular passions has demanded real courage, and whose insistence on the humanity of adversaries has planted seeds of peace and reconciliation. Finally, that year could not resolve the specifically Christian question whether faithful discipleship of Jesus entails refusal to resist evil through violence regardless of consequences, as thinkers such as Stanley Hauerwas and John Howard Yoder and a host of their followers have argued.

Yet, when all was said and done, my immersion in those morally consequential debates of pre-war France undermined any tendency to assume that pacifism automatically occupies the moral high ground, especially the moral high ground from which to judge just-war thinking. It might, in fact, be the other way around. It might be the reasoning and challenge of the just-war tradition that assures the moral honesty and integrity of pacifism.

Not that I sit comfortably with all elements of the just-war tradition, or the church's failures to propagate and live up to it, or the absence of citizenly virtues that would enliven it. If I prefer to use terms like just-war "teaching," "thinking," "reasoning," "principles," and "tradition" instead of "theory" or "doctrine," it is precisely because the former suggest something in process, open to criticism, and always in need of correction. But over my decades of struggling with the tradition's strengths and weaknesses along with those of pacifism, few ideas have struck me as more wrong-headed than the belief that an essential step in converting people to nonviolence or active peacemaking is the renunciation of just-war thinking.

The pressure for such a renunciation is growing. It was a leading demand, perhaps *the* leading demand, of the Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference held last April in Rome, with the support of Vatican officials and other religious leaders. Whatever was the conference thinking?

"We live in a time of tremendous suffering, widespread trauma and fear linked to militarization, economic injustice, climate change, and a myriad of other specific forms of violence," the conference declared—and who could disagree?

Syria, Libya, South Sudan, Central Africa, South China Sea, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey-Kurdistan, Israel-Palestine, Darfur, Yemen, Ukraine, Venezuela, and on and on. Massacres, rapes, starvation, torrents of desperate refugees. Most recently, an igno-

rant and temperamentally challenged American commander-in-chief slides toward a nuclear face-off against a thirty-something, isolated North Korean despot.

In the face of such brutal realities, one can heartily endorse every scrap of nonviolent peacemaking that can be summoned—and urge that the church summon more. But did the conference really imagine that nonviolence alone would stop all this bleeding? Is this really the moment to call for the enfeebling of one of the few recognized moral traditions of restraint? The idea that a key prerequisite for advancing nonviolent peacemaking is the Catholic Church's abandonment of just-war teaching and principles rests in my opinion on a number of assumptions, all of them false.

Father John Dear, SJ, protests outside the White House.

Assumption Number One: *Nonviolence, peacemaking, and pacifism are essentially interchangeable notions. Accordingly, espousing just-war principles is incompatible with supporting nonviolent peacemaking.*

The focus of the Rome conference was nonviolent peacemaking. It was acknowledged that nonviolence in itself can be passive or indifferent toward conflict-breeding injustice. Whether nonviolence serves peacemaking obviously depends on the ends as well as the means—and the circumstances. Nothing at the conference demonstrated a contradiction between (a) a conviction that circumstances may possibly arise in which nonviolence no longer serves peace and justice unless supplemented by lethal force and (b) a determination to strengthen whatever nonviolent attitudes, practices, and institutions might possibly prevent those circumstances from arising.

The eighty-three conference participants submitted almost sixty brief reflections on their experiences with nonviolent peacemaking. Many recount concrete efforts to overcome enmities and build relationships in situations of civil war, tribal conflict, drug-cartel killing, neighborhood crime, and family abuse. The stories are informative and humbling, testimonies to courage, creativity, and spiritual depth. But most make no reference to just-war principles; no more than half a dozen articulate any critique. These testimonies confirmed theologian Lisa Sowle Cahill's own reflection for the conference on how contact with people "on the front lines" changed her theological perspective. "These people do not debate 'just war vs. pacifism.' They simply get to work for peace with justice." Conference participants described many forms of nonviolent peacemaking: building networks of trust; challenging injustices with demonstrations, disruptions, or civil disobedience; healing traumas; encouraging restorative justice; offering unarmed protection of civilians, and so on. Virtually all such nonviolent peacemaking efforts could and should be fully supported by believers in just-war principles.

And a lot of other, less extraordinary measures, too. We have devised international institutions like the United Nations and its civilian observers and armed peacekeepers, international courts, organizations addressing trade, public health, human rights, and other matters. We have devised peacemaking practices like foreign assistance, disaster relief, and refugee services. There are arms-control agreements and inspection agencies.

Many of these institutions are flawed, in some cases egregiously; in almost all cases they are underfunded. Churches and individual Christians support many of these peacemaking endeavors, though far from sufficiently. When established methods of peacefully resolving conflicts—e.g., political liberties and democratic elections—are threatened by violence, difficult questions of conscience can arise about defending them. But there is no evidence that the expunging of just-war principles would increase support for these "normal" forms of building and preserving peace.

Pacifism is another matter. As a refusal to bear arms,

CNS / REUTERS

cooperate with armed force, or engage in potentially lethal action under any circumstances, pacifism is obviously incompatible with any criteria, however stringent, that could admit the possibility of a just war. Like the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and, long before them, this journal, I believe that conscientious objection to military service springing from longstanding, deeply rooted convictions about the ethics of killing deserves the respect and legal protection of the United States, whether those convictions are based on just-war principles or absolute pacifism.

But pacifism is not necessarily peacemaking. It may be—and sometimes has been—or it may not be. Peacemaking is an empirical undertaking. The Christian pacifism dominant at the Rome conference is not. Such pacifists' religious or moral commitments do not rest on the likelihood of any particular outcome. If refusing military preparations or action would most likely result in massive atrocities, loss of freedom, and human degradation, so be it. For Christian pacifists, that outcome would be painfully mysterious, but it would not change what they judge to be a divine obligation of nonviolence revealed in the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus; it would not change their faith that tolerating these earthly horrors must somehow be part of God's design for eschatological fulfillment.

This is not an easy faith to hold, and pacifists must resist a grave temptation to make it easier by consciously or unconsciously trimming their reading of present circumstances and possible outcomes to ease any dissonance with an underlying a priori stance. There are many ways of doing this, from exaggerating the effectiveness of nonviolent techniques to averring that in each and every case, whatever the evil consequences of rejecting military action, the consequences of undertaking it would be far worse. That was the failure of my left-wing French pacifist intellectuals. This kind of illusion and self-deception did not, and do not, serve peacemaking.

The pacifists whose views dominated last April's Rome gathering have a much profounder theological and spiritual grounding than those French intellectuals. But they run the danger of practicing the same "stealth" pacifism, presenting a program of peacemaking that claims to be pragmatic, practically effective, and solidly based on evidence—when in fact it is driven by a pre-existing doctrinal commitment not really subject to normal tests of evidence. For them, just-war thinking is morally invalid because of an absolute belief that the Gospel mandates a way of life in which resort to armed force can *never* be countenanced.

This is a stark theological divide: exegetical, Christological, ecclesiological. It goes to the heart of how Catholic pacifists understand their faith and themselves. No wonder that materials produced by the Rome meeting often appear less focused on promoting just peacemaking than on denouncing the just-war tradition. Out of seventeen "Frequently Asked Questions" displayed on the conference website, one describes "gospel nonviolence"; one describes "a 'just peace' approach"; nine criticize just-war theory. And what is rooted in prior theological conviction gets translated, again, into allegations of fact.

Assumption Number Two: *From Constantine to yesterday, just-war teachings have legitimated wars.* That claim has been so constantly repeated as to be taken for granted even by critical defenders of just-war thinking. According to the Rome meeting's FAQs, for sixteen-hundred years the just-war "concept" has primarily "functioned to legitimate war, perpetuate war, and establish a war system."

As someone with the misfortune to be trained in history rather than theology, I wonder whether this is more logical deduction than historical fact. Did post-Constantine Roman emperors make sure their military defenses of imperial borders had approval from the church? Did the freshly baptized chieftains of invading "barbarians" or feuding medieval lords check with churchmen before riding into battle? Was Charles V driven to invade Italy and sack Rome by just-war theory? Did Louis XIV feel the need to meet just-war criteria before marching into the Rhineland? And why were there so many wars perpetrated and war-systems perpetuated in eras and lands and cultures not burdened by these legitimating just-war principles?

In the modern period, I see little evidence, alas, that statesmen cared a whit about just-war teachings—or official Catholic approval, for that matter—in their decision-making. At best, they drew on some analogous ideas rooted not in Augustine but in common sense, international law, political calculations, and visceral fears. In my lifetime, I can think only of President George H. W. Bush's awkward attempt to refer to just-war doctrine in his case for the first Gulf War—almost certainly a response to the American Catholic bishops' invocation of those teachings in criticism of Ronald Reagan's nuclear policy.

But this historical claim of legitimation comes in other flavors. One is a negative version. Even if just-war teachings did not provide positive legitimation for all sixteen hundred years of warfare, including the development of nuclear weapons, that "moral framework" has proved a "pervasive... failure" in not preventing it. (One could say the same about the commandments against theft and fornication.) Without the handicap of this "moral framework," the church would have presumably been able to block these evils, including the Manhattan Project to defeat Hitler—but of course there would have been no Hitler.

This strikes me as a fantastic exercise in what is called counterfactual history. History is a bloody mess marked by shameful Christian betrayals of the Gospel. We understandably seek some key that would have made it all otherwise. For example, a church pure of all the sins incumbent on links to political power yet simultaneously wielding moral sway over a Christendom. This counterfactual narrative ignores, in fact, the fluctuating forms and fortunes of just-war thinking over many centuries, ignores the relationship

between religion and power in the ancient world (indeed through most of human existence), ignores the church's default role of providing civic order after the deterioration of Roman authority, ignores the realities of "inculturating" the warrior ethic during the succeeding eras of invasion and feudalism, and ignores the twists and turns of church-state ties and secularization lasting into the nineteenth century. To say nothing of plain old human ambition, greed, hatred, cruelty, and fear. The Just-War Theory as Original Sin story is not history. It is myth, and myth in the service of a theological precommitment.

Two other versions of this assumption about the function of just-war thinking focus on contemporary Catholics. One is a slippery-slope version. Once you admit the possibility of any just war, you are well on the way to justifying all of them, even crusades or "holy wars." The other version hangs on a Catholic law of conservation of imagination and energy. Church life is zero sum. Any attention and validity granted to the just-war tradition is necessarily subtracted from what would otherwise be expended on nonviolent peacemaking.

Again, what is the evidence? Surely Catholic knowledge of just-war principles is uneven, sketchy, or just plain lacking. Surely Catholics are shaped by the surrounding political culture, including its uncritical national loyalty or vulnerability to war fevers. Surely there are grave deficiencies of formation and catechesis here—as in many other crucial areas of Catholic life. Is a church currently hemorrhaging members, struggling to communicate basic truths, reducing services for want of funds, and failing to replenish its leadership going to burst into a fount of peacemaking energy—if only the heavy hand of just-war teaching was lifted?

Back on planet earth, simply imagine a survey (funding welcome). Take a sample of Catholics with more than a passing knowledge of just-war criteria. Take a similar sample of those with no such knowledge. Which will prove more cautious about military interventions? Which will be more supportive of diplomacy, international institutions and mediation, or negotiated settlements? Which will be more perturbed by civilian casualties or appalled by U.S. atrocities? Which will be more sympathetic to nonviolent peacekeeping initiatives? Which will be more generous about supporting relief services or economic development? I will put my money on the Just-War Sample.

Assumption Number Three: *Catholicism remains the monolithic, clerical, and authoritarian reality that it was before Vatican II.*

The Rome meeting's proponents of repudiating just-war teaching would doubtless disavow that assumption. But I find little in their stance that looks to the baptized in the pews for wisdom or seeks dialogue with a range of Catholic thinkers and leaders, including those with experience in diplomacy, military service, or political and economic institution-building. On the contrary, the Rome conference makes it clear that while its Appeal is meant for all Catholics, "the initial focus is on the pope and magisterium." The hope, as explained in a conference reply to a Frequently Asked Question, is that just-war teaching will be struck from the Catechism of the Catholic Church as no longer "Catholic" and similarly invalidated in statements by bishops conferences (like the U.S. bishops' 1983 pastoral letter on nuclear arms) and other statements by bishops and Catholic organizations.

In his reflection prepared for the conference, Fr. John Dear, SJ, was blunt about this strategy. "Catholics do not know anything about nonviolence," he wrote, but "all support violence and war." Therefore, the church must "reject the just-war theory once and for all.... Because we are a hierarchical church, I suppose we need to push Rome.... We may never have a better chance than under Pope Francis."

In sum, Catholics are in the tow of just-war doctrine because it has been dictated from above; and they would change if it were not. Are the Catholic people, especially today, really so passive? Or will they make "just peacemaking" central in their faith lives only if persuaded, not ordered? To the extent just-war teachings are at all known and accepted in the pews, it may be because those teachings speak to obvious questions about peace, war, justice, and security. Don't assume that if Catholic authorities renounce those teachings, Catholics would flock to the nonviolent peacemaking practices celebrated by the Rome conference. There are, after all, other options: realpolitik, utilitarianism, a blank check for the government, jingoism.

The tendency of opponents of just-war teachings to favor old-fashioned argument from authority doesn't stop with well-chosen papal quotations. It extends to favored secular authorities. The works of Gene Sharp, an eminent theoretician of nonviolent civilian resistance, are elevated almost to biblical status. The Rome meeting also gave a kind of canonical status to a recent work, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, though without naming it: "Recent academic research," declared the final Appeal, "has confirmed that nonviolent resistance strategies are twice as effective as violent ones."

Why Civil Resistance Works by Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan (Columbia University Press) is an impressive study, weighty with eighteen Tables and eleven Figures and numerous cases, statistical comparisons, and methodological qualifications. One wonders how many of the peace activists who affirmed its conclusion in Rome had actually opened it. Its authors, to their credit, acknowledge the many problems surrounding their methods, definitions, and measurements. Most importantly, it is essentially a study of *insurgencies*, of intrastate rather than interstate conflicts. Its findings about the advantages of nonviolent over violent resistance are highly pertinent to Hamas and the Taliban, to the Muslim Brotherhood, Black Lives Matter, dissenters in Hong Kong, China, or Venezuela, and to indigenous and separatist movements in many places. Applying its findings to the Pentagon, NATO, Iraq, Iran, nuclear proliferation, the Paris Accords, or Russia is a very different

matter. (Theoretically, of course, any interstate conflict or threat of conflict could be turned into an intrastate one if one nation preemptively surrendered to its adversary and then conducted a nonviolent resistance campaign against it—e.g., if South Korea surrendered to the North and then waged a nonviolent campaign against Kim Jong-un. The authors do not examine this kind of scenario.) A favorable review in *Peace News*, a British publication, noted that Eastern Europe may have freed itself from Soviet domination through nonviolent action; but instead of disarming, these nations promptly joined NATO rather than entrust their newly won independence to nonviolence. To elevate *Why Civil Resistance Works* into a crushing reply to all the questions just-war teachings address does it a disservice.

To my mind, the extraordinary assurance that opponents of just-war teachings find in a few vaunted authorities or a few selected historical episodes (e.g., of resistance to Nazi Germany) bear a strong resemblance to the uncritical we-have-the-answers apologetics of pre–Vatican II Catholicism.

Assumption Number Four: *The deep theological differences between pacifism and just-war thinking can be smoothed over with an attractive vocabulary of "peacebuilding," "just peace," and "Gospel nonviolence" that in practice treats those matters as settled.*

Yes, language matters. Every serious exponent of just-war teachings regrets that the very phrase can be misunderstood and abused—and has been. Every good-faith critic of those teachings knows that, too. If it were only being proposed that the church always label this body of thought "just-and-unjust war" teachings, I would welcome it. Or, if you wish, call them "unjust-war" teachings. Then again the church could reframe its entire teaching about serious conflict in the language of "just peacemaking." It could place traditional moral analyses regarding legitimate or illegitimate use of lethal or military force within a larger emphasis on nonviolence and the full panoply of promising nonviolent responses. Some would argue that the pope and many church leaders have long since been doing that.

Unfortunately, what is being proposed is more drastic. And strangely lacking in transparency. The Rome meeting, for example, reported that just-war theory was discussed "with nuance"; and that participants "included people who value the just-war theory" and "people who saw reason for violent force in policing or peacekeeping." No further traces of those views made it into the conference documents. Nor did the substance of a discussion of "the ramifications of...making an explicit rejection of the concept of 'just war.'" It isn't clear whether the conference hoped for an outright official rejection of the teachings or just their quiet asphyxiation.

One way or another, just-war teachings seem to be consigned to the dustbin of history mainly by changing the way they are talked about. What about the hard questions—e.g., genocide, sovereignty, nuclear deterrence and proliferation—that have given new life to the just-war tradition in our time? Never mind. Better to talk about "just peace" or "Gospel nonviolence." The new terminology imports implicit answers to those agonizing questions but without ever directly confronting them.

It won't work.

I began this essay by noting the moral convergence I initially found in just-war and pacifist principles, especially when set against the accepted outlooks of most Americans, Catholics included. I was not unaware of the ultimate divergence of these two approaches. Yet they enjoyed something more than peaceful coexistence—a kind of working alliance around the general concern of putting military force under moral scrutiny and the particular concern, in notable cases, of opposing American military actions. Some Catholic neoconservatives aside, most advocates of just-war thinking have been strong advocates for church support of pacifist witness and conscientious objection.

Has that fruitful coexistence now ended? Influential Catholic pacifists have decided that this is the time to declare war on just war. To that end, they equate nonviolence, peacemaking, and pacifism; they stereotype the just-war tradition as responsible for sixteen hundred years of violence and for inhibiting contemporary nonviolent initiatives; they urge central Vatican or papal authority to officially jettison the tradition; and they do all this not so much by directly confronting just-war questions as by dissolving them in a bath of alternative concepts and vocabulary.

I am confident they are acting out of their deepest convictions and best intentions. But theirs will be a hollow victory. Certainly for peacemaking and moral restraint of war. Probably for pacifism, too.

There is a better way. Encourage pacifists not only in their personal witness but also in their efforts to convince the church at all levels of what is a theological case, not one of practical peacemaking. At the same time, press everyone to the work of just peacemaking: those who remain adherents of just-war thinking, pacifists convinced that lethal force is impermissible for Christians no matter the circumstances, dedicated activists "on the front lines" more absorbed in immediate challenges than disputed principles, indeed all the ordinary peacemakers whose efforts should not be overlooked, humanitarian and health workers, educators, diplomats pursuing cease-fires and settlements, arms inspectors, election overseers, legal reformers, environmental scientists and engineers, development economists, and even politicians.

Welcome them all to explore and embrace the widest possible use of nonviolent means to prevent, halt, and heal armed conflicts. Whether that is likely to work in each and every case and what Christians should do if it seems unlikely can remain contested questions. By their fruits you shall know the answers. ■

‘This Economy Kills’

Catholics Shouldn’t Defend It

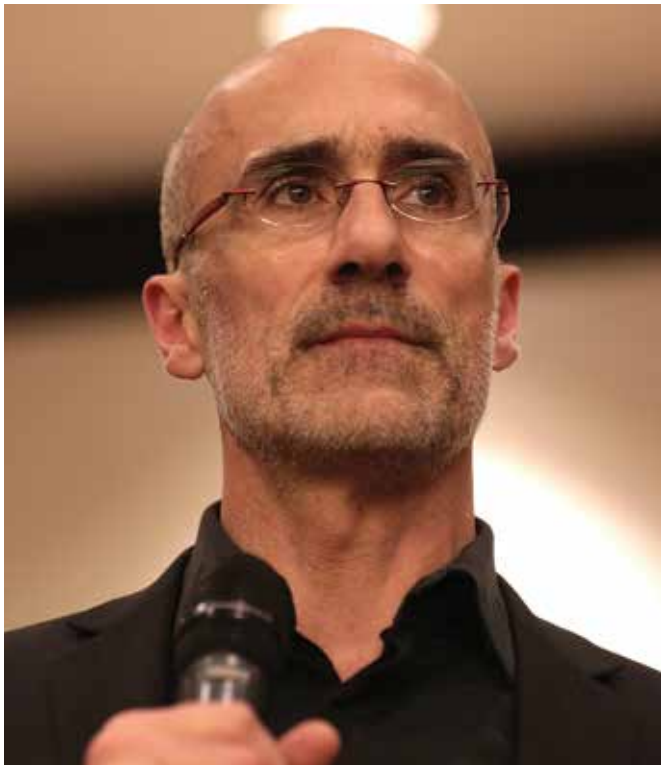
Anthony Annett

In an article published a few months ago in *America* magazine, Arthur Brooks—president of the American Enterprise Institute—described his conversion to capitalism. His basic argument is that the free-market system has lifted an unprecedented number of people out of poverty, which means that opposition to free enterprise is deeply misguided.

The frustrating thing about these debates is that the terms are rarely defined. Catholic social teaching certainly gives a qualified endorsement of the free-market system, but not in the way meant by Brooks. People like Brooks tend to conjure up a stark dichotomy between a virtuous free market and oppressive state control. They obscure the fact that Catholic social teaching has long condemned both extremes—libertarianism and collectivism (which Pope Pius XI dubbed the “twin rocks of shipwreck”).

Between these two extremes, Catholic social teaching insists that economic activity be ordered toward the common good. One aspect of this is “social democracy” or the “social-market economy”—a market economy, yes, but one in which the state ensures that goods and services essential to human flourishing but not necessarily provided by the free market are made available to all; one that corrects for the swings of economic fortune that are inevitable in any market economy and regulates business to better align private behavior with the requirements of the common good. This is why Pope Benedict XVI was able to declare that “democratic socialism was and is close to Catholic social doctrine and has in any case made a remarkable contribution to the formation of a social consciousness.”

But Catholic social teaching also insists that solidarity cannot be wholly outsourced to the state. Again, Pope Benedict argued that market activity cannot be just about making money for its own sake, but must embody “authentically human social relationships of friendship, solidarity, and reciprocity.” This means that business must orient its activities toward the common good—producing goods and services that meet genuine human needs, prioritizing dignified work and decent wages over profits, and embracing a keen sense of social and environmental responsibility. It’s not only about creating wealth, but creating it sustainably and distributing it justly.



Arthur Brooks

GAGE SKIDMORE

This is the kind of market economy favored by Catholic social teaching. But is it the kind favored by Brooks? Probably not. Brooks is known for painting a stark contrast between American-style free markets (good) and European-style social democracy (bad), and he has spent years castigating the centrist Barack Obama as an enemy of free enterprise. Nor is there any hint that he believes businesses have a responsibility to look beyond profit.

Brooks—like his ideological comrade Paul Ryan—seems under the spell of libertarianism or market fundamentalism, an ideology that puts economic freedom first. This ideology

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insists that all market rewards are fairly and justly earned and that the government's role in economic affairs should be severely restrained. And libertarians insist that the role of business is to maximize profit, typically equated with shareholder value.

This is something of a shell game. Brooks never uses the word "libertarian" in his *America* essay, which offers him plausible deniability. This is unsurprising, because such an ideology—by detaching individual freedom from communal responsibility, elevating self-interest over solidarity, and upholding freedom from coercion over the universal destination of goods (which Pope Francis deems a golden rule of social conduct)—is utterly incompatible with Catholic social teaching. It is a rock of shipwreck.

Brooks credits five forces for the reduction of poverty worldwide—globalization, free trade, property rights, the rule of law, and the culture of entrepreneurship. These forces are certainly important. But reducing all material gains to these forces is simplistic, and Brooks is wrong in inferring that a consensus among economists supports his ideology. Economic development is actually far more complicated than he lets on. Yes, trade is beneficial, but so is investment in health and education. When it comes to fighting poverty, a country might face natural impediments—including being landlocked, mountainous, without access to energy resources, prone to disease, or highly vulnerable to natural disasters. It could be stuck with self-serving and short-termist policies adopted by self-interested elites. There could be instability and conflict, including through the intervention of global or regional powers. Or there could quite simply be a poverty trap, whereby a country has good intentions but is too poor to make the basic investments needed to end deprivation. The bottom line: it's complicated. To claim that the 800 million or so people still mired in extreme poverty can escape their plight through Brooks's five factors is misleading and unserious.

From this wider perspective, any explanation of the economic rise of the United States must account for negative factors like the exploitative system of slavery and positive factors like an early push for mass education. It must also account for the devastation of Europe after the war, combined with the fact that the United States took over a role vacated by the United Kingdom—deploying military power to extend economic power. The Japanese postwar economic miracle had its roots in the deliberate and heavy-handed strategy of the U.S. occupiers to widen the distribution of income and ownership of wealth. Turning to China, the extraordinary reduction of poverty over the past few decades came from moving away from ruinous collectivism, not toward a Western-style free market, but toward a state-directed capitalism in which property rights—and human rights, more generally—are still at the mercy of the Chinese Communist Party. The recent progress in reducing poverty in sub-Saharan Africa was partly due to the end of the Cold War, combined with debt relief and development aid delivered under the aegis of the Millennium Development Goals. To reduce the reduction of poverty to such factors as property rights, entrepreneurship, and the magic of free markets is folly in the service of ideology.

Yet this ideology has made great inroads over the past few decades. The idea was deceptively simple: if government restraints on free enterprise were eased or removed, this would unleash a wave of dynamism and wealth creation. This idea was used to justify policies like deregulation, privatization, cutting government programs, reducing upper-income and capital taxes, and curbing the power of labor. After demand-side policies associated with Keynesianism lost legitimacy during the stagflation of the 1970s, these new supply-side policies were supposed to boost long-term growth, which entails boosting productivity. But this never happened. In his magisterial work, *The Rise and Fall of American Growth*, Robert Gordon shows that output per hour was much lower after 1970 than in the middle of the century. Even worse, total-factor productivity—the best measure of the pace of innovation—was actually three times higher in the earlier period (1920–1970) than afterwards. This earlier period was dominated by social-democratic policies under the auspices of the New Deal. It reflected a spirit of solidarity with high levels of social trust and economic growth that was broadly shared among the different social classes. In contrast, while the Reagan revolution never delivered its promised dynamism, it did deliver higher inequality, lower social trust, greater corporate power, and increasing financial instability.

In Europe, too, the social democratic settlement enjoyed phenomenal success in the decades following the war. Yet people like Brooks disparage the European social model. An un-nuanced analysis might note, correctly, that real GDP per capita in the Euro Area is only about 70 percent of what it is in the United States. But this is misleading on a number of levels. GDP per capita is a product of three separate factors—productivity, the employment rate, and average hours worked. It turns out that productivity in Europe is not that different from productivity in United States (although it is weaker in southern Europe). Nor is employment as different as some imagine, especially for prime-age workers. The big difference is in average hours worked, which reflects a conscious choice to forsake extra work in favor of family and leisure. This is a feature of Europe's social market, not a bug.

Not surprisingly, Europe beats the United States on a host of human-development and quality-of-life indicators. Poverty and inequality rates are lower. Life expectancy and infant-mortality rates are better. And yes, this is in large part due to extensive safety nets. In disparaging these programs, Brooks fails to mention their genuine achievements, or the fact that the European countries in the worse economic condition are precisely those, in southern Europe, with the most underdeveloped welfare systems. Nor does he mention the fact that the United States has effectively stopped fighting poverty in the aftermath of the Reagan

revolution. As Anthony Atkinson—one of the giants in the field—pointed out, no advanced economy has managed to achieve a low level of inequality or relative poverty with low levels of social spending.

In sum, the European social model shows that prosperity can go hand in hand with fairness and cohesion. This is especially the case in Scandinavia, the quintessence of modern social democracy, where citizens readily accept high taxes to ensure that everyone has access to quality education, health care, child care, and other social services. Despite the claims of libertarians, Scandinavia shows that it is perfectly possible for a modern economy to be simultaneously productive, fair, compassionate, sustainable—and happy.

The last point is important, because Brooks devotes so much attention to happiness. He is right to do so, although the evidence fails to back up his claims. In this year's *World Happiness Report*, half of the top-ten happiest countries in the world are Scandinavian—Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Finland, and Sweden. Rounding out the top ten are Switzerland, Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. The United States ranks fourteenth.

A key finding of the happiness literature is that, above a certain minimal threshold, money does not buy happiness. In the United States, while income per person has risen roughly threefold since 1960, happiness has not. This is known as the Easterlin Paradox. But this finding would not have surprised Aristotle, who understood that happiness was driven by such factors as relationships, meaning, and purpose. Modern happiness studies affirm this ancient instinct. Brooks himself points to a study showing that happiness derives from "intrinsic goals" rather than "extrinsic goals" like wealth or fame. What tends to matter most for happiness is the quality of social relations and the ability to make a social contribution. And indeed, the *World Happiness Report* demonstrates that happier countries enjoy stronger social support, higher levels of trust and generosity, and a greater ability for people to realize their capabilities. Even more, it shows that social factors have a larger effect on happiness than financial factors. Jeffrey Sachs has shown that happiness is declining in the United States not because of income, but because of a mounting social crisis—rising inequality, isolation, mistrust, and corruption. And it is precisely the libertarian policies favored by Brooks that drive this crisis. Sachs also demonstrates that "economic freedom"—measured by a Heritage Foundation index capturing such elements as property rights, small government size, low levels of regulation, and open markets—does not produce happiness. In short, libertarianism is at odds with human nature. The church has known this all along.

One of Brooks's main arguments is that income inequality is nothing to worry about, and that the real focus should be on equality of opportunity. The gist of his argument is that, while income inequality in the United States might be high and rising, this is not true for consumption inequality. This is a peculiar argument. It is of course important to look at consumption. But a quick perusal of the recent evidence shows that consumption inequality has tracked income inequality quite closely over the past few decades. Brooks is simply wrong. And anyway, the focus on income can easily be defended on the grounds that income provides advantages that go beyond consumption.

What matters is not that even many poor Americans now own devices and enjoy conveniences that would have astonished the richest robber baron of a century ago. What matter are the material conditions that allow one to participate and flourish across the various dimensions of life in a specific time and place.

What Brooks is trying to say is that because poor people have access to goods that their predecessors did not, such as air-conditioning and color television, we should not worry too much about inequality. But this appeal to historical comparison is actually ahistorical; it overlooks the fact that poverty and wealth are always contextual. What matters is not that even many poor Americans now own devices and enjoy conveniences that would have astonished the richest robber baron of a century ago. What matter are the material conditions that allow one to participate and flourish across the various dimensions of life in a specific time and place.

Brooks also downplays distributional concerns by appealing to the familiar fact that, while inequality within countries has risen sharply in recent decades, inequality *between* countries has fallen: the gap between the rich and poor countries is shrinking. This development reflects the remarkable achievement of countries like China, which transformed itself from an impoverished village-based nation to a middle-income economy within a matter of decades. Nevertheless, the nation state remains the locus for deliberation on the common good and the most effective political instrument for distributive justice. We therefore have good reason to be concerned about growing inequality

within our borders, since that is the inequality over which we have some control as citizens. Why should the rise of a large middle class in the developing world, welcome as it is, justify an increasingly uneven and inequitable division of wealth in the developed world?

The real problem with inequality is that it severs the sense of shared purpose necessary for the realization of the common good. This is an insight that goes all the way back to Plato and Aristotle, who feared that when the gap between rich and poor grows too large, the rich become more attached to their wealth than to their civic obligations. The founding fathers of the United States fretted about oligarchy for similar reasons. This older insight seems to have been largely forgotten, but it is highly relevant today—because inequality has returned to Gilded Age levels, and because market ideology has detached the creation of wealth from social duty.

Today, as during the Gilded Age, inequality is being driven by technology and globalization. But in both periods, it quickly developed a momentum of its own. This self-perpetuation is a key theme of Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, which argues that inequality is endemic to capitalism, since the financial return on wealth tends to exceed the rate of economic growth over long periods of time. Branko Milanovic, another leading expert in global inequality, has reached similar conclusions with somewhat different reasoning. Milanovic argues that while inequality in each period has been spurred by underlying economic factors, it soon ushers in policies that favor the rich—cuts for upper income and capital taxes, curbs on the bargaining power of labor, greater tolerance for monopoly power, and looser restraints on financial innovation. From this perspective, market ideology might be nothing more than a mask for plutocracy.

The evidence suggests that in a highly unequal society the sense of an all-encompassing common good tends to evaporate. As the rich grow increasingly segregated from the rest of society and more convinced that wealth is always and only the product of individual effort, their circles of fraternity and ethical horizons tend to narrow. Wealthy individuals and powerful corporations increasingly put narrow financial gain over the broader common good. And since an unequal distribution of income translates too easily into unequal access to political power, the rich have the ability to get what they want and keep what they have. In this retreat from the common good, it is the poor who get trampled.

The relationship between economic growth and inequality is complicated. Neoclassical economics has traditionally insisted on a trade-off between equity and efficiency; it has warned that efforts to reduce inequality can undermine incentives to work, save, and invest. But in present circumstances, this doesn't seem to be the case. The IMF has shown that income inequality is associated with less sustained economic growth and that growth trickles up from the poor and middle classes, not down from the rich.

Why might inequality hurt prosperity? There are a number of reasons. First and simplest, demand is lower in a more unequal economy. This is because the rich spend less of their income and save more. Second, inequality goes hand in hand with a decline in trust and social capital, which in turn harms productivity and increases the likelihood of social strife and political instability. Third, because the common good is undermined, inequality reduces the likelihood of growth-enhancing investments in areas like infrastructure, education, decarbonization, and research and development. Fourth, inequality tends to be associated with corporate rent-seeking—the tendency to extract rather than create wealth, driven by such factors as monopoly power, corporate concentration, and weak corporate governance.

There is a fifth reason that is directly relevant to Brooks's argument: inequality of income is directly tied to inequality of opportunity. This is because inequality magnifies the social advantages of the wealthy. Plutocracy rewards mediocrity and undermines meritocracy. Unsurprisingly, there is a strong empirical association between income inequality and intergenerational mobility—the famous "Great Gatsby curve"—and both are better in Europe than in the United States. The bottom line is that if Brooks truly cares about inequality of opportunity, he should also care about inequality of income and wealth.

In downplaying the detrimental effects of American inequality, Brooks draws a distinction between the United States and other highly unequal regions in the world, such as Latin America. He argues that, in these other places, prosperity depends more on power and privilege and less on the free market. He's right about that. But he fails to note that as the United States inches ever closer to Latin American levels of inequality, the corrupting effects of plutocracy become ever more embedded in our own system. It is important to point out that in Latin America, the pattern tends to be one of oligarchic dominance interspersed by disruptive populist backlashes—and both harm the common good. Given recent trends, perhaps the United States is destined to go down this path. Perhaps last year's election actually represents a terrifying regime shift. The catch, of course, is that Donald Trump is a plutocrat masquerading as a populist.

The corrosive effects of inequality extend well beyond the economic dimension. In a pioneering study titled *The Spirit Level*, social epidemiologists Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett showed that people in more unequal societies trust each other less, fear each other more, participate less in community life, and are more prone to violence. In the United States, Robert Putnam and others have documented a decades-long decline in social capital, civic purpose, and associational life—all in tandem with rising inequality. Wilkinson and Pickett tie fraying social relations to a litany of social ills—including poor physical and mental health, drug abuse, weak educational attainment, obesity, teenage

pregnancy, and illness among poor children. The social dysfunction is also tied to the neoliberal ideology that is driving much of the inequality. This ideology stunts not only solidarity but self-worth. It sends a toxic mixed message—telling people that happiness comes from consumerism and that market outcomes reflect moral desert: those who do not succeed have only themselves to blame. Not surprisingly, the growing prevalence of this outlook has been linked to an unprecedented epidemic of stress, loneliness, and mental illness. In the United States, the recent rise in opioid addictions and the documented decline in the life expectancy of working-class white people adds to the long list of social pathologies. Having a color television or air conditioning—to use Brooks's favorite examples of the luxuries of the poor—is a paltry consolation prize in the face of massive social collapse.

Brooks is well aware of the claims that market ideology—by emphasizing such traits as selfishness, competitiveness, and boundless acquisitiveness—can undermine virtue. Yet he has no real answer other than to say that "systems are fundamentally amoral" and that what matters is the morality of the people who participate in the system. But this view is not in accord with Catholic social teaching. In *Caritas in veritate* Pope Benedict XVI states explicitly that the economic sphere cannot be regarded as "ethically neutral": "It is part and parcel of human activity and precisely because it is human, it must be structured and governed in an ethical manner." Indeed, as the theologian David Cloutier pointed out in his own response to Brooks, it is ludicrous to conjure up a powerful economic system that depends on such vices as fear and greed, and then claim that the problem is only with the vices, not with the system itself.

The bottom line is that the toxic interplay of inequality and ideology gives rise to an economic system antithetical to solidarity. It gives rise to what Pope Francis has described as the economy of exclusion, the throwaway culture, and the globalization of indifference.

In the U.S. context, this can be demonstrated with a couple of topical examples: health care and climate change. In health care, the attempt to sabotage the Affordable Care Act is a brazen ideological assault on a form of solidarity that calls for the young and healthy to subsidize those most in need—the old, the infirm, expectant mothers. The debate has been framed by Republicans as a matter of consumer choice, not compassionate care. In direct contravention of Catholic social teaching, this ideology insists on consigning a basic human right to the whims of the market. Worse, the money saved from cuts to Medicaid and insurance subsidies is to be transferred to the rich by means of tax cuts.

The case of climate change is even more egregious. In the United States, a combination of libertarian ideology and the lust for profit lies behind the scandal of climate change denialism and the intention of the new administration to abrogate responsibility for cutting carbon emissions. This puts the planet on course for environmental disaster, and is tantamount to a direct assault on the poor of today, as well as future generations. It is one of the great moral issues of the twenty-first century and a core theme of Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'*. And it is exhibit A of what harm can be done by the ideology Brooks defends in his *America* article. I have no doubt that he is sincere is his desire to improve human well-being, especially the plight of the poor. Yet the institution he directs—the American Enterprise Institute—takes money from climate-change deniers and hard-line libertarians, including the Koch Brothers. Such people pose a grave threat to the common good, and no amount of rhetoric can make their positions compatible with Catholic social teaching.

Our situation today is perilous. At a moment when we desperately need political consensus to address collective problems, such consensus seems farther out of reach than ever before. In its place, we have the false consensus of neoliberalism, which tells us that there is no alternative to the economic model Brooks celebrates.

Our situation today is perilous. At a moment when we desperately need political consensus to address collective problems, such consensus seems farther out of reach than ever before. In its place, we have the false consensus of neoliberalism, which tells us that there is no alternative to the economic model Brooks celebrates. As Mark Carney—governor of the Bank of England—suggested, unchecked market fundamentalism can lead capitalism to devour its own children. Or as Pope Francis puts it, this economy kills. What we urgently need is a re-orientation of the economy toward the common good. We need policies that set markets in the kind of moral framework promoted by Catholic social teaching. This will require both personal and structural change; it will require that we spend our money differently, judge politicians differently, and run our businesses differently. In other words, it will require a genuine conversion—away from the creed preached by Arthur Brooks. ■

Robert M. Pennoyer II

Hallowing the Gaps

NOT LETTING CERTAINTY SMOTHER FAITH

Georges Seurat, Le Bec du Hoc à Grandcamp, *1885*

My boarding school kept a piano in the chapel. The designated practice rooms were a ten-minute walk from my dorm—too far on cold nights. So I'd head down to the basement chapel, open the lid to the Yamaha upright, and watch my fingers at work in its glossy black reflection. I was never very good at the piano. But I could shut my eyes, let time collapse, and when the chords finally resolved (or didn't), I'd unsqueeze my eyelids and find a white patch of light hanging in my field of vision—a blind spot whose brightness stung. It once took a full five minutes to go away.

When I first saw the trace of light hanging beside me, I wondered whether it was God, come to keep me company. I was old enough to know that my eyes, held shut for a minute or so, could have produced that patch of light all by themselves. I was old enough to doubt that the prayer-book prayers I was learning to say in that chapel held any effective power beyond the aesthetic. I was old enough to find friends' rejection of religion more persuasive than any endorsement of it I'd encountered. And yet the thought—never a certainty—that I'd just glimpsed God, stays with me, even more than the memory of the light itself.

Of course, I shouldn't credit that piano for my being a Christian. Demographics must have played a more significant role. Had I been born in Morocco (99.8 percent Muslim) or Bangladesh (0.03 percent Christian), I doubt I'd spend much time thinking about Jesus. Nor, presumably, would the cadences of the Book of Common Prayer have lured me into becoming an Episcopalian. It's far more likely that a Bangladeshi me would have lived and died without knowing, or caring, that this ever-shrinking denomination even existed. Why should he?

The New York City of my childhood was not exactly a hotbed of faith. But my mother was the superintendent of our church's Sunday school, and when she told me that I could fold my hands, bow my head, and speak to God, I believed her. Most days, I still do.

* * *

"If you think so much of your religion is bullshit," she asks, "why are you studying to become a priest?" We'd gone around the table, making the usual wedding-reception introductions, and my answer to "And what do you do?" had caused the biochemist and her husband, an environmental lawyer, to perk up. I'd explained that I was in divinity school with a year to go before I'd be ordained in the Episcopal Church. Polite follow-up questions let me add that I'd been a teacher for eight years before going to seminary, that I missed the classroom and wanted to work in schools again, that I might be too irreverent to be an effective priest: "A high tolerance for bullshit seems to be a prerequisite for a life in the church." Church folks, at least the ones I hang out with, aren't offended when I complain about all the bullshit you find in religion. They confront it every Sunday and so know its peculiar stench: the noxiousness of smug certainty, the obsession with the niceties of ritual. No, it's the atheists that my blasphemy outrages.

"I mean, do you even believe in God?" the biochemist asks.

I reply, to no one's satisfaction, that it depends on what she means by God.

* * *

Imagine a Seurat painting: a hundred thousand pointillist dots, layered thickly and with utmost care on a vast canvas. Hang the piece on a massive wall, and each tiny splotch of paint will cohere into a larger image, a unified whole. But shrink the room in your mind's eye till it becomes no more than a narrow hallway, and you'll never have the distance for a good view. What can you see this close? Nothing but individual dots, resolutely independent. You can press your back against the wall and crane your neck, fighting the room for a vantage that will let the points blend into something recognizable. You won't find it.

No individual dot tells an honest story. Stand a nose-length away from the canvas. Smell the trace of turpentine. Then pick a dot: a smudge of pink, say, suggestive of skin or coral or sunlight skimming the lake—or stare at the tar-blue knife nick whose sheer edge makes you flinch. By itself, what can this one dot possibly disclose about its larger purpose?

* * *

The medieval theologian Meister Eckhart died before the Inquisition investigating his writings could denounce them as heretical. His death didn't stop the pope from publishing a bull condemning lines the Dominican monk had written—quotations lifted in part from the poetic sermons he preached to a community of Beguine women. The papal bull existed to rid innocent minds of a corrupting influence and to erase Eckhart from Christian consciousness. But it's thanks to that document that some of his lines managed to

survive centuries of obscurity. You can burn a heretic and his books. A pope's declaration of heresy, however, gets filed away safely in a library.

Among Eckhart's offending statements preserved in the bull is this: "Anyone who blasphemes God himself praises God."

Eckhart was baffled by the accusations of heresy leveled against him. He understood that some of his sentences might strike listeners as unusual, unorthodox even, but that was clearly his intent. His sermons deploy lines designed to shock listeners out of their complacent ways of thinking and talking about God. Statements that seem puzzling or blasphemous can knock us off balance until we regain our footing on firmer ground. So Eckhart wrote head-scratchers—because when we've stopped scratching our heads, we've stopped searching for God.

The mistake Eckhart made was trusting that his provocative statements would remain planted in their original context. Instead, statements that worked in tandem were broken apart like a pair of scissors, and each blade looked less like half of a tool and more like a dagger. In context, all Eckhart's statements claiming knowledge of God ("the eye in which I see God is the same eye in which God sees me") come with a companion statement claiming the opposite ("the one thing I know about God is that I do not know him"). Examining only part of a carefully balanced contradiction is bound to get Eckhart's meaning wrong. God's ineffability demands a creative use of language, and Eckhart responded with paradox and poetry, with words that sought to point beyond themselves to God.

Knotty ideas rub against one another in apparent contradiction. A preacher's opaque abstractions relax into poetic lyricism of startling clarity. Dots on a canvas communicate with one another across whatever space divides them, hallowing the gaps.

* * *

"What about your religion doesn't feel like bullshit?" another lawyer at the table asks. He tells me the only authentic religious impulse he's ever felt came from reading *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James.

I'm standing powerless in a hospital as my four-pound daughter, born with a broken esophagus, disappears behind the heavy doors of the surgical wing. Terror and hope, in search of an object, muster a choked-out prayer. Ten days later, and our tiny girl gulps down her first meal, a chalk-white barium solution that we watch on a screen as it passes through her repaired tubes, telling us that, yes, she's going to be OK. Gratitude makes the world shimmer, and hallelujahs seem inadequate praise.

A different hospital, and a nurse calls me, the chaplain intern, because someone else's daughter is in the ICU, fallen into a heroin-induced coma, and her parents want words to pray. When the girl wakes up a day later, I do a card trick for her—pick a card, any card—and her dad says, in disbelief and joy, "Jesus Christ, Lila, you're laughing." *Anyone who blasphemes God himself praises God.*

There are moments when life overbrims, moments that make clear the givenness of existence, and offer us a hint of its giver. The words we typically reach for to describe these moments, "blessing" and "grace," are blunt instruments. Blunt because vague, especially when divorced from their theological context. Even in their context, though, they can seem inadequate at best. At worst they seem like ciphers rather than mysteries. Their familiarity obscures. A poem by the Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai, "The Place Where We Are Right," keeps returning to me:

From the place where we are right
flowers will never grow
in the spring.

The place where we are right
is hard and trampled
like a yard.

But doubts and loves
dig up the world
like a mole, a plow.
And a whisper will be heard in the place
where the ruined
house once stood.
(translation by Stephen Mitchell)

Amachai's insight is not so different from Eckhart's. Certainty will asphyxiate whatever it is that still breathes in our religious traditions, whatever it is that can surprise us with its whisper. Where custom has trampled a deep rut, it can be hard to hear the voice of God. Faith can aerate this lifeless ground, but only when it is capacious enough for doubts and for loves, and gives them room enough to dig.

* * *

"Did you ever hear Rabbi Heschel's line about how faith isn't some constant state of belief, but rather a sort of faithfulness, a loyalty to the moments when we've had faith?" The lawyer nods, I can't tell whether in recognition or assent. It's a helpful thought. My being a Christian is more understandable, to me and perhaps to others, when my faith is viewed as a sort of stubborn faithfulness to those moments of greatest belief.

But if the explanation satisfied my tablemates, who now steer the conversation toward inefficiencies in banking regulation, it didn't quite satisfy me. My moments of greatest belief are not just data points that I choose to weigh heavily. They are thoughts that mark my consciousness, like brush points on a canvas. There they refuse erasure. There, viewed from the right perspective, the right distance, they join with other points to form a picture of reality, or the part of it visible on this side of the grave. ■

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FOUR DEVOTIONAL POEMS

By E. J. García

Lord if you had been here my brother
If you had been here my brother
If you had been here
some light would not have been here, or some light would have—
some right, some body set aright, some upright body with its light on.
If you were here—my brother might be

* * *

If I can name every thing, who will you take from my side?
If I can see everything and find no rest—what will you do for me then?

Your patience like a strap around my neck

* * *

Let me sit at your feet.
Let me be your eyes, or let me have them—the deepest iris of the iris,
give me whatever darkness, or give me what brightens—
In this way, I rest my eyes upon your face,
even when you do not speak.

* * *

I am afire says the—
Where will I go?
In me, says the flame.

E. J. García is a teacher, and a deacon in the Anglican tradition. Her previous work has been published by the Poetry Society of America as a chapbook, Your Bright Hand. *She lives and works in Boston.*

Richard Alleva

Waving & Drowning

'NORMAN'

Power is certainly seductive, but the seduction is not always sexual. Not just trophy wives and mistresses but also hangers-on, go-betweens, bagmen, publicists, even chauffeurs and physical trainers—all those behind the scenes partake of the pleasure of being near the mighty. Aside from those looking for profit, such people can be divided into two categories: those who agree with the goals and ideologies of their boss, and those who simply love proximity to the powerful, regardless of moral values. (Contrast the starry-eyed staff of *The West Wing* with the amoral factotums of *VEEP*.) The compelling oddity of the eponymous hero of *Norman: The Moderate Rise and Tragic Fall of a New York Fixer* is that he belongs to the latter category and yet isn't completely amoral.

Roaming the streets of Manhattan, never without his phone earplug in place, Norman Oppenheimer (Richard Gere) is on the cusp of old age yet untiring in his quest to attach himself to anyone financially or politically im-

portant—not in order to put money in his own pocket, but just for the thrill of linking that person to someone else. Having wrangled a promised seat at a billionaire's dinner party for a possibly rising Israeli politician, Micha Eshel, Norman sneaks into the host's townhouse in order to make sure that the invitation was indeed extended. Mistaken as a party crasher, he's humiliated and ejected, but not before seeing the place card with Micha's name on it on the dinner table. Reading it, he beams with almost paternal pride. His man is in.

Early in the film Norman's nephew tells him that, in his pursuit of movers and shakers, the fixer is like "a drowning man waving at an ocean liner." Norman replies that he's a good swimmer "as long as I can keep my head above water." Trouble is, when you swim in the massive wake of an ocean liner, it's almost impossible to keep your head above water. When Micha Eshel unexpectedly becomes prime minister and greets Norman in public as his "unofficial ambassador to New York Jewry," the fixer suddenly finds himself a sought-after man for the first time in his career—but also targeted by the Israeli Ministry of Justice as a witness and enabler of Micha's possible corruption.

The film's one major flaw is that we're never sure the corruption is more than possible. The brilliant Israeli writer-director Joseph Cedar deals far too vaguely with this pivotal part of the narrative. It's been clear from the start that Norman is a hustler who never hesitates to lie in order to schmooze and wheedle, but has he committed financial malfeasance? What specifically does the Ministry of Justice uncover? Since we're never clear about this, we can't tell who is using whom, or if the investigator is targeting Micha because of his politics. In the 1981 Paul Newman movie *Absence of Malice*, we're shown specifically what a U.S. federal prosecutor discovers and what he invents, so we know just where the targeted hero stands morally. This is impossible in *Norman*, and this lack of clarity hobbles the drama.

What brings resonant, unsentimental pathos to the movie is the genuine bond of friendship between Norman and Micha, a bond rising out of the very different isolations of each man. Norman is isolated because he is socially unmoored and barely domiciled as he wanders around the city, looking for Wi-Fi and subsisting on canned herring and crackers for nourishment. In contrast, Micha, a Jewish Prince coming into his kingdom, is internally isolated because he is so riveted in place socially and politically: loudly denounced by enemies in the Knesset, fawned upon by admirers, hounded by the media, lectured on tactics by his handlers, and lectured in bed on familial responsibility by his wife. (In Cedar's films wives and girlfriends are both nurturing and brutally honest). But when Micha was at a low point in his career, Norman bought him an expensive pair of shoes, and this endeared him to the politician because the purchase seemed at the time free of self-seeking. But was it? Norman's greed is for sheer connection to power, not money.

The acting problem confronting Richard Gere was to shrink himself into his role. He's been an A-list talent for forty years, a studly wise guy in his youth (*Looking for Mr. Goodbar, American Gigolo*), a silver-fox man of power in middle age (*Arbitrage, Pretty Woman*)—and just the sort of mover-shaker that Norman pursues. But as Norman, Gere must conceal the charisma that most of his other roles have put on display. The fixer never dominates but constantly petitions. Gere shows that he well understands the thin-skinned, ground-down yet resilient nature of a quester who has encountered all too many obstacles. If his performance falls just a bit short of total success, it's because he's still a shade too robust and movie-starish to fully convey that Norman, whatever his temporary success, is actually approaching the end of the road.

The other movie star in the cast, though most Americans won't know it, is Lior Ashkenazi. Renowned in Israel, he played the lead role in Cedar's last film, *Footnote*. There he was a middle-aged Talmudic scholar, bearded, overweight, and seething with ambition and resentment. As Micha, he is a clean-shaven, sleekly handsome, and genuinely glamorous in the way that some politicians are. Ashkenazi can burnish the most straightforward statement with irony, captivate a room with his fervor before breezily walking away without a backward glance, and convince us that such a man can sincerely love a supporter before feeding him to the wolves of justice and journalism. Early in the movie, Micha claims Norman's attention by quoting Bernard Shaw: "You see things and say 'why?' but I dream things that never were and I say 'why not?'" Inspirational, right? But what Norman perhaps doesn't know is that Shaw (in *Back to Methuselah*) put that sentence in the mouth of the Serpent who gets Adam and Eve kicked out of Eden. Ashkenazi's performance encompasses both the idealism and the fecklessness of that aperçu.

Cedar brilliantly stages his complex, flawed, absorbing script. When Norman first approaches Micha outside a deluxe shoe store, Cedar keeps the camera behind the storefront window so that we can't hear the fixer's pitch, but the gestures of both men give us an eloquent pantomime of courtship. As in *Footnote*, Cedar isn't content with conventional close-ups but zeroes in on a single facial feature that sums up a character's objectives. When a government investigator interrogates Norman, her eyes fill the screen as she tries to penetrate his defenses. And, in an unforgettable scene, when the new prime minister praises Norman at a VIP reception, the director freezes the action, turning everyone in the room except our hero into a mannequin, while the fixer, bemused by his new good fortune, wanders among the cognoscenti. Then Cedar cuts to an overhead shot in which the now-tiny Norman appears lost in a labyrinth of well-dressed bodies. The effect is so startling that, at the screening I attended, a viewer murmured, "This must be a dream." He was wrong in one way, right in another. Norman is in a real room among real people. But, indeed, he is lost in a dream. ■

Patrick Jordan

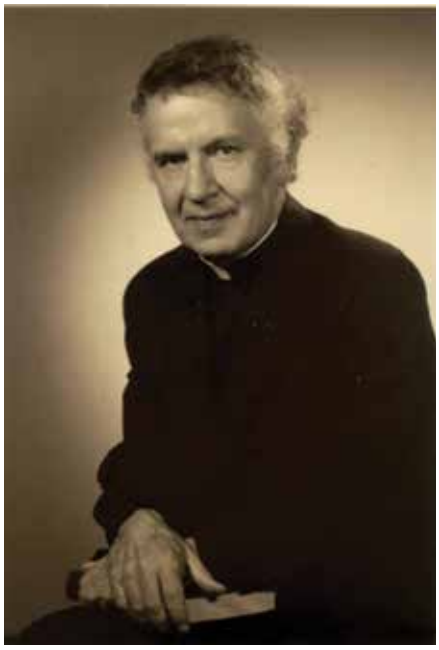
Dorothy Day's 'Second Conversion'?

Called to Be Saints
John Hugo, the Catholic Worker, and a Theology of Radical Christianity
Benjamin T. Peters
Marquette University Press, $25, 586 pp.

Who was Fr. John J. Hugo? What was the "famous retreat" he preached in the early 1940s, the so-called Lacouture retreat, that had such a profound influence on Dorothy Day? Why did the retreat quickly land Lacouture, Hugo, and others in ecclesiastical "hot water," suppressing Hugo's preaching of the retreat for more than fifteen years and leading to his internal exile in the Pittsburgh diocese? Why did Hugo's themes (particularly his emphasis on self-sacrifice, the primacy of the supernatural, the importance of human intention in achieving holiness, and on poverty and pacifism) meet with such strong resistance in the theological circles of his day? Finally, how might a study of Hugo shed critical light on the "public theology" that holds sway in American Catholic theology today?

These are the questions Benjamin T. Peters sets out to answer in this scholarly treatise (there are no fewer than 840 footnotes in 254 pages of text). In so doing, Peters argues that Hugo was never a spiritual rigorist à la Cornelis Jansen (1585–1638), but rather represented a rich Ignatian mystical tradition à la Jean-Pierre de Caussade, SJ (1675–1751). Hugo's method of *ressourcement* (returning to the sources) also put him in tandem with the path-breaking work of such twentieth-century European theological eminences as Maurice Blondel (1861–1949) and Henri de Lubac (1896–1991). Finally, as proof of a pudding is in the eating, the author and publisher provide facsimiles of hundreds of pages of Dorothy Day's own handwritten 1942 retreat notes (transcripted on facing pages) to underscore the contribution and depth of Hugo's method, and, as a consequence, his effect on Day.

John J. Hugo (1911–85) was a newly minted priest when he first attended a 1938 priests' retreat given by Fr. Onesimus Lacouture, SJ (1881–1951). A French-Canadian, Lacouture had fashioned a week-long silent retreat for priests based primarily on the first stage of St. Ignatius Loyola's Exercises. (Lacouture hoped to incorporate later aspects of the Exercises in subsequent retreats, but was never able to do so.) Hugo was so taken with the retreat's potential and its emphasis on the call to holiness for all the baptized (what the Second Vatican Council would later term the "universal call to holiness") that he set out to craft and deliver the retreat for lay audiences.



Rev. John Hugo

Dorothy Day (1897–1980) had been alerted to the Lacouture retreat by Maisie Ward in 1939, and was subsequently provided a set of retreat notes by her friend Sr. Peter Claver Fahy (whose name, unfortunately, is misspelled several times in the text, as is that of St. Francis de Sales). At the time, Day commented that she was not much impressed with the notes because "the written word did not have the life and vitality of the spoken word, and perhaps it was the personality of the retreat master [Lacouture] that made the teaching so powerful." (In later years, meeting Lacouture himself, she reported that she found him charming, and told of their mutual laughter when she described the extremes to which some Catholic Workers had gone in carrying out the retreat's emphasis on self-denial.)

Tom Sullivan, a mainstay at the New York Catholic Worker in the decade following World War II, told me a story about Day and how she had sought to free a young retreatant from her scrupulous tendencies. It happened on the Worker paper's press day one Lent. Dorothy, Sullivan, and a young woman editor were having lunch at a diner. Dorothy ordered a slice of lemon meringue pie, at which point the young woman's face fell. When the pie arrived, Dorothy downed it with what Sullivan described as almost spiteful relish, further scandalizing the young woman. For Sullivan, the episode was a lesson from a spiritual master, not only about the dangers of rigorism, but of spiritual pride.

Day made her first retreat under Hugo in 1941 (her last was in August 1976). She was twelve years older than Hugo, and by his own account, "had a world more of experience." Although he

was never her confessor, he served as a spiritual adviser to her for many years (she had others, including Fr. Joseph McSorley, CSP [1876–1963]). Hugo later remarked that Day's initial request for direction from him was "less flattering than frightening." In his posthumously published *Your Ways Are Not My Ways* (1986), Hugo said that "dying and rising was the stuff of [Dorothy's] daily living. She was a mystic in the Pauline sense, loving to the limit.... No need to hunt for miracles in Dorothy's life," he added. "Her whole life was a miracle." Further, Hugo said, Dorothy did not "consider [the retreat] extreme or rigoristic or Manichaean or Jansenistic. She understood it as the language of love." To Day, it was certainly a call to metanoia: to a radical change of heart and mind by means of taking up one's cross and putting everything in the perspective of God's grace.

Peters admits that Hugo's presentation could be "mechanical and heavy handed." There can be little doubt that some of the priest's statements (at least as recorded in Dorothy's notes in this book) might give the impression of rigorism to retreatants (and to Hugo's ecclesiastical superiors). Further, for Hugo, as for Day and the Catholic Workers, Jesus' radical teachings on poverty, violence, and dying to self applied not merely to individuals but to society and the church. Firebrand challenges from a young priest were bound to elicit some ecclesiastical response, and soon did. By 1942, Hugo was silenced and subsequently reassigned to the diocesan hinterlands. He was only vindicated fifteen years later.

A second part of Peters's project is to make the case for Hugo's significance as a mid-twentieth-century American theologian, someone to be engaged and reckoned with. He attempts to do this by contrasting Hugo and his critics at the time, many of whom now seem passé following Vatican II. To make his case, Peters links Hugo with other pre–Vatican II dissidents who were put under wraps prior to the council but later reinstated, people like M. D. Chenu, Yves Congar, and Henri de Lubac. But the comparison limps, and Peters rightly admits that "Hugo's work is clearly less theologically sophisticated, and his sources much more limited."

What may prove still more provocative and incendiary, however, is Peters's attempt to portray as deficient a whole generation of contemporary American Catholic theologians who "have tended to uncritically affirm American society and culture." He argues that "Hugo's theology offers an alternative to the public theology that is so influential in American Catholicism now," and he names names. (A partial list includes J. Bryan Hehir, David Hollenbach, Kenneth and Michael Himes, Kristen Heyer, Richard Gaillardetz, and David O'Brien.) He then contrasts them to "radical" theologians like Michael Baxter, William Cavanaugh, Michael Budde, and David Schindler, whom Peters praises for their "counterculturalism" and their "commitment to fundamental Gospel values." Let's hope such remarks are not the prelude to another Hugo-like controversy within the American Catholic theological community.

As for my understanding of Day, Hugo, and his influence on her, Peters is correct to note the importance of their encounter and how they supported one another's endeavors. Still, he overstates the matter when he suggests Hugo's theology "offered Day a way to discern how to engage with American society and culture." Long before meeting Hugo, Day had been doing just that. It was, in fact, thanks to Day that Hugo himself became aware of such issues. Second, Peters writes that Hugo was "the primary source for a vision that shaped [Day's] life—one that brought about her 'second conversion.'" But this smacks of historical revisionism. While it is true that Hugo provided some remarkable tools that were crucially important in Day's life—from the war years until her death—the primary source of her "theological vision" was unquestionably the gospels. As for her "second conversion," if there was one, it must be attributed to Peter Maurin (1877–1949), cofounder of the Catholic Worker movement. Her "first conversion" had resulted from the birth of her daughter Tamar. Unfortunately, Tamar herself came to see the Hugo retreat—particularly what she considered its negative effect on her mother—in a decidedly critical light (see Kate Hennessy, *Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved by Beauty*, 2017).

A final word on this volume's appendix. I compared the facsimiles of Dorothy's notes from the 1942 retreat with those from her 1976 retreat. (Unfortunately, the transcriptions of Dorothy's handwriting in this volume are sometimes inaccurate.) In comparing the two sets of notes, I was struck at how Hugo seems to have mellowed over the years. While the basic tenets of the earlier retreat remain in Dorothy's later notes, a greater pastoral sensitivity reigns. Second, whereas the epistles set the tone in the 1942 notes, that role now belongs to the gospels. Finally, there is a greater use of outside sources and examples that enliven the '76 notes (including mentions of Dante, Dostoyevsky, Shakespeare, Rabbi Heschel, Bonhoeffer, Teilhard, C. S. Lewis, Chaim Potok, even Sartre). Whether these are interpolations added by Dorothy, we'll probably never know. Still, the overall contrast from the earlier retreat is striking.

In January 1973, Day wrote a letter of thanks to supporters of the Catholic Worker. In it she noted that Fr. Hugo was "the most exciting teacher of applied Christianity it has ever been my good fortune to meet." She then remarked on how he had taught her to "sow time"—that if you give up time to respond to others' needs, even when most inconvenient, you will be given the time and energy to achieve what you need to do. Then she concluded her letter: "So I'll finish this, adding only that 5 knocks at my door, five visitors, five conversations (all interesting) interrupted this letter. Love, gratitude, and peace to you all, Dorothy." ■

Patrick Jordan *is the author of* Dorothy Day: Love in Action *and the editor of* Hold Nothing Back: Writings by Dorothy Day *(both Liturgical Press).*

Stephen Pope

I Don't Feel Your Pain

Against Empathy
The Case for Rational Compassion
Paul Bloom
HarperCollins, $26.99, 304 pp.

Paul Bloom, professor of psychology and cognitive sciences at Yale, has written a thoughtful criticism of the widespread assumption that we can improve the world by increasing our empathy. In his farewell address, for example, President Barack Obama said that empathy for those who are different is an essential pillar of democracy. Political polarization could be reduced if Republicans and Democrats had more empathy for one another. Teachers, psychologists, and politicians suggest that lack of empathy lies behind complacency toward Native Americans, judgmentalism toward opioid addicts, and hostility toward immigrants. If we felt the pain of the afflicted, it is often assumed, we would want to take proactive steps to help them.

Bloom doubts it. He rejects the assumption that empathy is either a strong motivator of moral goodness or a proper guide to moral decision making. One can identify emotionally with the suffering of others but not do anything about it; conversely, one can offer effective assistance to another person without echoing his or her internal states.

Bloom goes even further in arguing that empathy is actually responsible for more harm than good. A wide array of studies in social psychology and neuroscience show that empathy is highly context sensitive, shortsighted, mood dependent, narrowly focused, biased, and parochial. People who want to alleviate their "empathic distress" can simply remove themselves rather than help the victim they are empathizing with. We are much more prone to feel empathically toward someone whom we perceive to be like us than with strangers. Empathy functions like a spotlight that calls our attention to particular people but leaves others outside our empathic engagement. Intense empathy for members of one's own group is perfectly consistent with aggression toward those we don't know or who are unlike us.

Bloom's own normative moral perspective is rather eclectic. He attacks empathy but values compassionate caring for those who suffer. But he wants rational compassion: utilitarian "effective altruism" is a policy of always acting in ways that maximizes the well-being of the greatest number of people possible. Bloom does not talk about the well-known limits of our capacity accurately to predict the consequences of our actions under complex circumstances over extended stretches of time and place. In any case, he confesses that in real life we have to use common sense rather than consistently apply an impartial cost-benefit analysis of possible courses of action. He shifts from what psychologists call System 2 thinking (conscious, rational, deliberative, slow) to System 1 thinking (quick, unconscious, intuitive, fast) without offering any principled account of when or why one ought to take priority over the other. This puts him in the awkward position of implying, for example, that acting as a good parent (say, paying for your child's violin lessons) makes you a bad person (because family priority violates the requirements of impartial beneficence), and vice versa. Bloom's desire to avoid fanaticism is laudable, but in the end he is left saying that he has adopted utilitarianism because it is intuitively correct to him...except when it is not.

Feeling what others feel can be one possible source of moral insight, but it cannot do anywhere near all the work of moral reflection—indeed, our ability to resonate affectively with another person is not itself deliberative.

Jacopo Bassano, The Good Samaritan*, circa 1562*

Bloom's assessment of the weakness and dangers of empathy resonates with much of the Catholic moral tradition. For example, the golden rule—treating another person the way we would want to be treated—in no way depends on one's intuitive ability to feel what the other is feeling. What Augustine said about love, *amor*, can be applied to empathy. Empathy is a human capacity that can serve good or evil, and that can be exercised wisely or foolishly, so it has to be properly developed, trained, and ordered by reason. The proper moral significance of empathy can only be attained when put in the context of an overarching commitment to justice, the virtue that requires us to consider the goods and harms done to individuals in light of the common good. Justice for both Bloom and Aquinas incorporates a kind of impartiality that puts particular loyalties in proper perspective and works to correct the worst effects of our unconscious biases. Justice, for example, forbids a parent from unjustly harming a third party out of empathic concern for his or her child.

Thomists would insist to Bloom that the virtue of prudence has the first rank among the cardinal virtues. Practical wisdom enables us to determine how reason ought to put proper form into the raw material of our feelings. This is not to downplay the real significance of empathy or other feelings, but it is to deny their ethical primacy. If we are unmoved by the suffering of others, we lack mercy, *misericordia*; yet if we try to address the suffering we encounter unintelligently or unreasonably, then our actions will likely increase rather than decrease misery.

So Bloom is right to point out that compassionate acts are often not preceded by empathy. The good Samaritan was moved by the victim's sorry state, but there is no reason to think he felt anything like what the victim would have felt lying on the side of the road. What was important was the Samaritan's good will and good judgment about how to help the poor man. More generally, the point is that we do not have to feel any particular way in order to do what is right in any given situation. What is essential, as Thomas Aquinas put it, is a "constant and firm will to give each his or her due."

Bloom provides a lot of helpful information for those of us who want to conceive of the good life as one centered on exercising the virtues. Leading ethically mature and balanced lives requires us to exercise not just one or two but a wide array of virtues. Compassion without courage, for example, wilts in the face of opposition. The person who is temperamentally compassionate but lacks the virtue of temperance will satisfy desires in ways that inevitably leave other people with the short end of the stick. To speak of goodness in terms of virtues goes well beyond what Bloom attempts in his book though not entirely outside the realm of the human sciences. It requires an account of character-training, virtue-forming practices, and communities of conscience. Because he does not distinguish between the raw capacity for empathy and its habituation in various character traits, Bloom fails to appreciate ways in which our empathic capacities can be developed, extended, and reordered by imitating those who possess such virtues, participating in liturgies, following the guidance of wise moral authorities, and leading examined and self-directed lives. Moral conversion is not on his psychological map.

This is a cleanly written and interesting book. Its provocative character comes from Bloom's unusual use of the term "empathy." Most people think of empathy as another word for all-purpose caring or compassion, but, as we have seen, he uses it in a much narrower sense. But readers can rightly wonder whether anyone actually believes that feeling what others feel is absolutely necessary, let alone sufficient, for either moral goodness or wise moral decision making. ■

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Stephen Schloesser, SJ

Without Walls

Building the Human City

William F. Lynch's Ignatian Spirituality for Public Life

John F. Kane

Pickwick Publications, $35, 292 pp.

The year was 1965, the high-water mark of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society. The previous year, only six months after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the new president had signed into law the Civil Rights Act, surrounded by onlookers including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In January, following his landslide election victory, Johnson was sworn into office at an inauguration drawing a record 1.2 million people. On August 6, he signed into law the Voting Rights Act. And in 1966, he would go on to establish the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities (PCPID).

It was in this context of multi-fronted governmental action for social progress that William F. Lynch, the Jesuit scholar, writer, and editor, published his 1965 book, *Images of Hope*. In this uplifting inquiry into the psychology and metaphysics of hope, Lynch laid out his vision of the perennial human dilemma in stark contrasts:

> We can decide to build a human city, a city of man, in which all men have citizenship, Greek, Jew, and Gentile, the black and the white, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, the mentally well and the mentally ill.... Or we will decide to build various absolute and walled cities from which various pockets of our humanity will always be excluded. They will pose as ideal cities, and will exclude...the Negro, the sick, the different.

A half century later, Lynch's alternatives echo with uncanny relevance. Indeed, if you substitute the words "Muslim," "immigrant," and "transgender"—and keep the wall—he could be writing in the latest issue of *Commonweal*.

John F. Kane's *Building the Human City*, a new study of Lynch's life and work, reverberates with this sense of contemporary relevance. Such relevance is somewhat ironic since, as Kane notes, Lynch's disappearance from the intellectual and cultural scene was as thorough as it was regrettable. In May 1960, following the publication of his best-known work, *Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination*, *Time* magazine had hailed the Jesuit as "one of the most incisive Catholic intellectuals in the U.S." One year earlier, Lynch had published a scholarly work, *Approach to the Metaphysics of Plato through the Parmenides*, along with *The Image Industries*, his critical analysis of the effect of film and TV on our culture's moral and spiritual imagination. *The Integrating Mind* (1962) and *Images of Hope* (1965) soon followed.

Lynch's popularity peaked, and then ebbed, at a turning point in both American and Catholic cultures, when war abroad and urban violence at home would come to alter American thought and culture irrevocably, just as the Second Vatican Council and *Humanae vitae* (1968) indelibly recast American Catholicism. "[F]or ten long years," Lynch wrote in 1973, "our own country claimed the Vietnam War as our point of crisis." He was convinced, however, "that a far worse crisis was and is going on, the true war, which is such a collapse of faith between the two major culture classes"—namely, "the middle class on the one hand, and, on the other, the intellectual-academic culture"—"as has hardly ever occurred so sharply in our history." Such sentiments were prescient—perhaps too much so for a society still stung by war abroad and urban violence at home—and Lynch's last two books, *Christ and Prometheus* (1970) and *Images of Faith* (1973), found less receptive audiences.

Almost twenty-five years after Lynch's last book, and nearly a decade after his death at age seventy-nine in 1987, came Gerald Bednar's synthetic study of his career, *Faith as Imagination* (1996). And now we have John Kane's effort to reclaim Lynch for still another new generation. Kane's approach is separated from Bednar's by two decades of important history: the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Great Recession, the first African-American U.S. president, and the election of Donald Trump. Where

William F. Lynch

Bednar's work, set within a theological context, focused on individual consciousness and its relationship to faith, Kane focuses on the communal, identifying "[Lynch's] grand and overarching concern from the start: the political, the polis, the human city," and zeroing in on his mission of "explaining the foundational elements of a spirituality for public life."

Kane's title, with its implicit inversion of Augustine's City of God, underscores his focus and his concerns. What is required for building the "city of man," for constructing a city more human than inhumane—that is, a city without walls? What role does individual imagination play in constructing our common life? How can a community's collective images, inherited and appropriated by individuals, be harnessed in order to mitigate polarizations, binary divisions, echo chambers, filter bubbles, and other products of those "image industries" Lynch criticized?

The connections Kane draws between Lynch's different works will be welcome to anyone who has taught them. Lynch's method, wandering and sometimes circular, resistant to stating clear aims or arguments, can be difficult for both students and teachers. His medium was his message: we should not move too quickly "from the many to the one." Kane's unfolding of this basic principle in his discussion of Lynch's 1959 study of Plato's *Parmenides* is especially useful and insightful. As he demonstrates, both Lynch's embrace of the finite and his rejection of the "absolutizing instinct"—the leap out of time into timeless absolutes, idols, and ideologies—are central: "everything I have ever written," Lynch confessed, "asks for the concrete movement of faith and the imagination through experience, through time, through the definite, through the human, through the actual life of Christ." Kane underscores the "Ignatian" underpinnings of this preference for the finite. Ignatius, wrote Lynch, had no use for "pure angelism," but rather "was remarkably strong in his sense of fact, history, and the present moment." Yet undergirding this affinity, as Kane makes clear, lies Lynch's reading of Plato's analyses of the many and the one, finitude and infinity, temporal and eternal.

Of all Lynch's categories, perhaps the one most timely today is that of creative contrariety. In Plato we find, as Lynch wrote, that "certain oppositions or contrarieties will exist in the same entity; the like will also be unlike; the one will also be a multiplicity." We may hunger for clarity, identity, and simple forms of unity. But Lynch encourages us to move slowly from the many to the one, not least because any such unity might in fact be inwardly complex, composed of contrary elements whose creative tension is essential to life. Absolute and walled cities, based on images of total difference, pose as ideal cities, offering "totalizing seductions," as Kane calls them, that lure us with promises of simple clarity and self-identity. But they are false promises, based on excluding differences. The truly human city, the "city of man," integrates the many into a truer unity, a multifaceted identity. *E pluribus unum*.

While reading Lynch once again after many years, I couldn't help thinking of George Lakoff, now retired from the University of California at Berkeley, whose first of many works—*Metaphors We Live By*, co-authored with Mark Johnson—appeared in 1980. I wonder whether Lynch read it in his final decade. Lynch's leanings, both irenic and ironic, might have recoiled at the sharp political divisions found in Lakoff's more recent writings. But Lynch would have found in Lakoff a fellow traveler, both in agreement (with Ignatius Loyola) on a fundamental insight—namely, that so much depends upon the image. ■

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Anthony Domestico

Double Focus

Slight Exaggeration
An Essay
Adam Zagajewski
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $26, 288 pp.

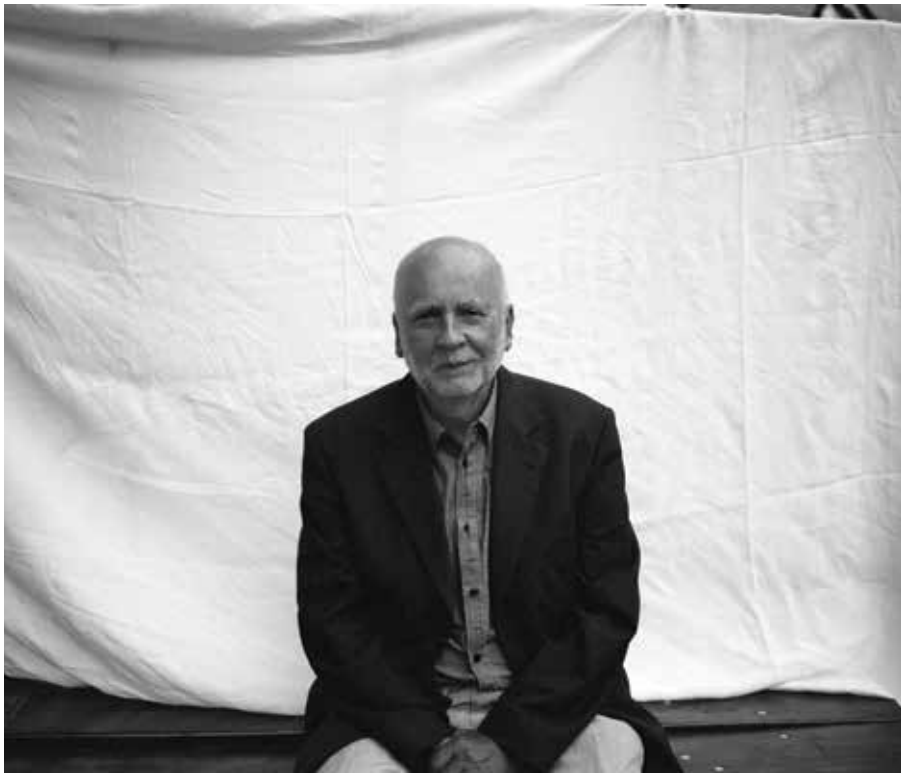
In his 1942 poem "Of Modern Poetry," Wallace Stevens offers seemingly contradictory claims about what modern poetry should or, in Stevens's stronger phrasing, "has to" do. First, Stevens asserts that modern poetry "has to be living, to learn the speech of the place. / It has to face the men of the time and to meet / The women of the time." Karl Barth is supposed to have said that the Christian must preach with the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other. Stevens appears to be making a similar claim here on behalf of poetry: modern poetry must come from, and speak to, the time. It must concern itself with historical particularity, with the concrete and the contingent.

Later in the poem, though, Stevens tacks in a new direction, describing the modern poet as "a metaphysician in the dark." What a lovely, resonant phrase. The poet is "in the dark" because the old ways of understanding existence—including, for Stevens, orthodox Christianity—no longer seem viable. And yet, despite this, the modern poet must continue to explore fundamental questions—groping in the dark, perhaps tripping herself up, but trying nonetheless. If modern poetry has to face history, then it also has to face that which exceeds history. If it has to be living, then it also has to explore the very conditions—temporality, materiality, being as such—that enable life.

Few recent poets have more perfectly fulfilled these twin demands than the Polish poet Adam Zagajewski. On September 24, 2001, mere weeks after 9/11, he published a poem in the *New Yorker* titled "Try to Praise the Mutilated World." In it, he acknowledges the pain and violence of the moment ("You've seen the refugees heading nowhere, / you've heard the executioners sing joyfully") while also exhorting the reader to "[r]emember June's long days, / and wild strawberries, drops of wine, the dew." Indeed, in his four-decade-long career, Zagajewski's poems have regularly addressed history. "Referendum," for instance, takes as its starting point Ukraine's 1991 vote on independence, while "To Go to Lvov" concerns the loss experienced by the Zagajewski family—and an entire generation—after the Soviets forcibly relocated them to central Poland in 1946. (Zagajewski was born in 1945 and so has no memory of the move from Lvov, though it has shaped much of his life.)

Yet Zagajewski's poems just as regularly pivot from the historical to the metaphysical—to what simultaneously emerges from and transcends the particular moment. In one poem, the Catholic Zagajewski defiantly addresses that antiquated figure, the soul: "We know—or at least we've been told—that you do not exist at all, anywhere. / And yet we still keep hearing your weary voice / —in an echo, a complaint, in the letters we receive / from Antigone in the Greek desert." In another poem, titled "A Flame," he implores God, "Give us astonishment / and a flame, high, bright." In his poem "From Memory," Zagajewski describes how he "lived in two idioms"—a perfect distillation of the balancing of the profane and the sacred, the historical and the metaphysical, that his poems everywhere exhibit.

Zagajewski's latest book, *Slight Exaggeration*, describes, in crackling and lucid prose, this living in two idioms. (Clare Cavanagh is the superb translator of this book and Zagajewski's last several collections of poetry.) In an appreciation of the work of his fellow Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz, he writes, "He didn't lack for mystical appetites, but his mysticism fed on the yeast of reality." A little later, he claims, "A poem is like a human face—it is an object that can be measured, described,



Adam Zagajewski, 2012

cataloged, but it is also an appeal. You can heed an appeal or ignore it, but you can't simply measure its meter. You can't gauge a flame's height with a ruler." Still later he asserts that "we live on the border between 'life' and 'art,' we migrate between them, drawn first to one, then to the other, as though wild nomadic tribes held us captive, tribes favoring each empire by turns." In each of these examples, seeming binaries—the real and the mystical; the measurable and the immeasurable; life and art—aren't so much blurred as shown to be parts of a larger, more integrated whole. Auden once wrote that the "one infallible gift of greatness is the capacity for double focus," a wide-angled vision that can accommodate ostensible contradiction. Zagajewski praises and displays such a double focus.

Readers of Zagajewski's previous books of prose, especially *A Defense of Ardor* (2014), will recognize the style and structure of *Slight Exaggeration*. It is, like many works of prose written by poets, more miscellany than treatise, blending criticism, memoir, diary, and polemic in almost equal parts. The book lacks chapter breaks, and it proceeds by poetic association, not by narrative demand. Sections—some as long as several pages, some as short as a single sentence—shift ceaselessly and excitingly between subjects and registers. There are several touchstones to which Zagajewski returns again and again: the displacement from Lvov sixty years ago; the various cities—Krakow, Paris, Houston—that have served as homes for the peripatetic poet; Milosz, Herbert, Brodsky, Mandelstam, and other modern poets who possessed the double focus Zagajewski so admires; and classical music, "which links inner rhythm, the soul's rhythm, to the voices of the outer world."

Zagajewski continually comes back to the dislocations and traumas of twentieth-century Polish history. The displaced, Zagajewski writes, "never made peace with the space of their workaday existence, its walls and trees." But such losses have their own compensations: a sharpened memory, since "loss alone touches us deeply, [while] permanence goes unremarked," and "an abyss, a longing within" that leads many of the displaced to artistic creation. (Zagajewski believes there's a reason so much good Polish poetry was written in the twentieth century.) Some of the book's most moving passages center on Zagajewski's father, an engineering professor and rationalist who can't quite understand his son's vocation. (The book's title, *Slight Exaggeration*, comes from his response to a question about his son's imaginative treatment of their shared history.) As Zagajewski was writing this book, his father was suffering from dementia and memory loss—a particularly bitter fate for an exile whose life has largely been defined by remembrance.

In *A Defense of Ardor*, Zagajewski writes, "Only ardor is a primary building block in our literary constructions. Irony is, of course, indispensable, but it comes later." Zagajewski's ardor for other writers and artists shines throughout. Rather than take others down for real or imagined sins, Zagajewski is far more likely to celebrate those writers, like Simone Weil and Emil Cioran, whose words continue to populate his mind.

Occasionally, Zagajewski moves from celebrating to lamenting, as when he grouchily declares, "I may be one of the few writers, not counting theologians, who raises now and then the notion of the 'spiritual life.'" Perhaps as proof of this, he later describes an evening spent with a French poet ("for discretion's sake, we'll call him G") who complains about the recalcitrantly religious interests of Polish poetry: "One thing troubled him, he said: Polish poets—of course not all of them—keep reckoning with God. He couldn't understand it. 'Long ago we reached the conclusion, the basic conclusion,' he said, 'that God does not exist, and taking that business seriously is considered, excuse me, rather childish.'" While this reductive and dismissive attitude certainly isn't unheard of, there are plenty of contemporary writers—and not just Polish ones!—who take theology and the spiritual life seriously. To name but a few, Christian Wiman, Carolyn Forché, Lawrence Joseph, Annie Dillard, Marilynne Robinson. I love Zagajewski's metaphysical seriousness, but he's not the only one doing this kind of work—and thank God for that.

Late in *Slight Exaggeration*, Zagajewski asks the book's central question: "Does the light, the poetic force without which no great poem could take shape, exist only in our imagination, in intense, blissful fantasies of inspiration, or does it have some counterpart in reality?" His answer, initially tentative but ultimately stirring, asserts poetry's purchase on the real and shows Zagajewski to be one the form's strongest defenders:

> If questioned, I myself would say, I have my doubts, I worry at times that this light is only Saint Elmo's fire, glowing on the masts of our imagination. But ultimately, were I freed from my doubts, rooted in a pure and powerful place, I'd reply, what is most remarkable, wonderful (and rare) in poetry derives from reality, from a dimension that seldom reveals itself, from some radiant part of the planet. ■

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To the University, with Love

Paul J. Griffiths

Lu Zhi, Zhuangzi Dreaming of a Butterfly, *Ming dynasty, mid-16th century*

Since 1983 I've been on the faculties of various universities in the United States: two public land-grant systems (Wisconsin, Illinois), one Catholic university (Notre Dame), and two private research universities (Chicago, Duke). I've taught undergraduates and graduate students, supervised doctoral students, written books and essays and journalism (some of it for *Commonweal*), and, throughout it all, talked to anyone who wanted to listen, with a special preference for those who'd pay to listen to me. The ordinary academic thing.

I'm a creature of the university, and, above all, a child of words. Words have flowed through me, sometimes easily and sometimes not. They're what I've immersed myself in and provided a channel for, and they're what I've tried to give to others. I've loved word-work and poured my life into it. I love it still.

I am, too, a working-class emigrant Englishman, in the first generation of my family of origin to gain a university degree. I've been a delighted citizen of the United States by naturalization since 1994, and have lived here much longer than that, from the bitter end of the Carter presidency to the astringent beginning of the Trump years. I'm sixty-one now, and was twenty-four when I landed at JFK Airport with a suitcase, a scholarship, and $500. My life in those years has been a university life, which has been both a privilege and an ecstasy.

Deep in me is a love for, and romanticism about, the United States that is perhaps only possible for an alien. Equally deep, the gift of class and temperament, has been a need to make my way. That's an ordinary immigrant passion, at least for those without resources. I had none, except for words. And so words, in universities, have been what I've used to make my way. I've used them to elucidate, to explain, to understand, and to argue. The word-life, which is the same as the life of the mind, has been for me one of struggle to accentuate and sharpen intellectual differences with the goal of increasing clarity about what they come to and what's at stake in them. I've been rewarded for that word-struggle with academic positions and some academic honors. For those rewards I'm grateful and, often, still, astonished. How is it possible that I've held professorial chairs at top-flight universities? It didn't seem possible when I began; it scarcely seemed so even when it happened; and now that it's over it seems like a Taoist butterfly-dream or a Buddhist sky-flower.

It's over because I recently, and freely, resigned my chair in Catholic Theology at Duke University in response to disciplinary actions initiated by my dean and colleagues. Those disciplinary actions, in turn, were provoked by my words: critical and confrontational words spoken to colleagues in meetings; and hot words written in critique of university policies and practices, in support of particular freedoms of expression and thought, and against legal and disciplinary constraints of those freedoms. My university superiors, the dean and the provost, have been at best lukewarm in their support of these freedoms, preferring to them conciliation and accommodation of their opponents. And so, I reluctantly concluded, the word-struggle, the agony of distinction and argument, the search for clarity by dramatizing and exploring difference—these no longer have the place they once had in the university.

Harsh and direct disagreement places thought under pressure. That's its point. Pressure can be intellectually productive: being forced to look closely at arguments against a beloved position helps those who hold it to burnish and buttress it as often as it moves them to abandon it. But pressure also causes pain and fear; and when those under pressure find these things difficult to bear, they'll sometimes use any means possible to make the pressure and the pain go away. They feel unsafe, threatened, put upon, and so they react by deploying the soft violence of the law or the harder violence of the aggressive and speech-denying protest. Both moves are common enough in our elite universities now, as is their support by the powers that be. Tolerance for intellectual pain is less than it was. So is tolerance for argument.

For me, the sky-flower has fallen to the ground, its petals scattered but bearing still the beauty of a remembered reverie. I bear responsibility, of course: my class, my intellectual formation in the snidely and aggressively English dialectic of debate, my eye-to-the-main-chance polemical temperament, and no doubt other deep and damaged traits of which I'm scarcely aware, all had their part to play in bringing the sky-flower to earth.

The words remain, however, and I as child of them—child, too, of the Word in which the words participate. Leaving the university is a small thing in that light. It's the opening of a door. And at sixty-one, the door opens, among other things, upon the path toward death. *Timor mortis conturbat me*, certainly; but the anticipation of death comforts me, too. That there are words for that complicated condition—and that it's possible to think with them—are not among the university's gifts. But without the university I would not be able to think about those words as, in fact, I can; and that is a debt of gratitude I won't now be able to further discharge. ■

Paul J. Griffiths, *a longtime contributor to* Commonweal, *recently resigned from his position as the Warren Chair of Catholic Theology at Duke University. He is the author of several books, including* Lying: An Augustinian Theology of Duplicity, Intellectual Appetite: A Theological Grammar, *and, most recently,* The Practice of Catholic Theology: A Modest Proposal.

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