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Commonweal

OCTOBER 21, 2016

★ THE ★ ELECTION ISSUE

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Commonweal

OCTOBER 21, 2016 • VOLUME 143 • NUMBER 17

Election 2016 Issue

Founded in 1924
Commonweal

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Subscription Information
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Commonweal [ISSN 0010-3330], a review of public affairs, religion, literature, and the arts, is published biweekly, except in April, July, August, and November, when it is published monthly, by Commonweal Foundation, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115. Telephone: (212) 662-4200. E-mail: editors@commonwealmagazine.org. Fax: (212) 662-4183. POSTMASTER: send address changes to *Commonweal*, P.O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834-9982.

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Book Review Digest, and Book Review Index. *Commonweal* articles are available at many libraries and research facilities via ProQuest and OpinionArchives. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional offices. Single Copy, $3.95. Yearly print subscriptions, U.S., $65; Canada, $70; other parts of the world, $75. Special two-year rate: U.S. $108; Canada, $118; other parts of the world, $128. Add $45 for airmail. For digital and online subscription options visit www.commonwealmagazine.org/digital.

Cover design: Cecilia Guerrero Rezes

LETTERS

A prairie church, Hillary Clinton, climate change, etc.

GOD'S HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE

Thank you for Faith Bottum's sketch of St. Anthony's church in Hoven, South Dakota ("Prairie Romanesque," September 23). What a beautifully written piece about a beautiful place!

A church like this is a powerful reminder that there is a difference between an assembly hall and the house of God. If the right building can transform a landscape, then we might say that a church building can baptize a landscape. If a church can be a "sermon in stone," so can the interaction between that church and its surroundings. And it can be a lesson in identity and belonging, as well as a powerful invitation to enter into it—both the physical church and *the* church. May this bold, courageous building keep speaking!

THOMAS EDERER
Walla Walla, Wash.

SPECIFICS, PLEASE

By alleging that Hillary Clinton is "morally unworthy of the office" and adding that "the evidence of the past four decades compels the judgment that she is unusually and offensively dishonest, unethical, and entitled" ("Neither of the Above," September 23), Richard W. Garnett assumes a heavy burden of proof that he is unwilling to shoulder. Instead, he claims that "there should be no need…to set out the particulars." It is shocking that a person occupying an endowed professorship in the law school of the University of Notre Dame would stoop to such a low level of sophistry. If Garnett has such evidence, let him present it in a well-reasoned argument, instead of begging the question. This is not an argument; it's name-calling.

JOHN CLENDENNING
Emeritus Professor of English
California State University, Northridge

CLIMATE CHANGE IS A LIFE ISSUE

In his eloquent statement of why he "prefers not to" vote, Richard Garnett unfortunately does not consider the greatest prolife issue in the election: climate change. This is really an existential threat. Since one of the major candidates threatens to undo even the inadequate steps that have been taken to fight this catastrophe, we shouldn't need *Laudato si'* to convince us that we have an overwhelming obligation to vote to keep this person from becoming president.

WILLIAM F. REYNOLDS
Belmont, Mass.

JUST PEACE, AGAIN

Although the right to self-defense is a given, "A Church for Peace" (September 9) is an excellent presentation of conditions we hope for and aspire to. Just-war theory is just that, a theory. At its best, it seeks to limit the response to violence and to determine proportionate methods. But it can also be wishful thinking, a too-easy justification for war. Once a war begins, the passions aroused by fear, destruction, and death lead to open-ended carnage of the enemy in every way available. As we all know and regret, war is our ultimate folly.

The just-peace efforts are long overdue as every generation has acknowledged the need for better, deeper, and more integrated efforts to eliminate war as a "solution" to our differences. Hopefully, this endeavor for just peace will take root in our hearts and lead to all that is necessary to achieve it. Pope Paul VI stated the basic foundation to do this: "If we want peace, work for justice." Like all hopes, aspirations, intentions, and goals this one will require a long process. It begins with the first step. It begins with me.

MARK FRANCESCHINI, OSM
Denver, Colo.

The next issue of
Commonweal
will be dated
November 11, 2016

Stunts & Punts

Last month President Barack Obama vetoed the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA), a bill allowing the families of 9/11 victims to sue Saudi Arabia for any role it played in the terrorist plot. The next day overwhelming majorities in both houses of Congress voted—for the first time in Obama's presidency—to override his veto. It was a bold and bipartisan act of defiance: in the Senate, only one Democrat, Harry Reid (D-Nev.), voted to sustain the president's veto.

Almost immediately, however, leaders of Congress began to backtrack, expressing serious reservations about the law they had just passed. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) worried that it might have "unintended ramifications": "Nobody had really focused on the potential downside in terms of our international relationships," he said. Well, not *nobody*. President Obama, various diplomats, the European Union, and national-security agencies had all warned that JASTA would be a mistake. Still, McConnell had the nerve to suggest that the president himself was partly to blame because he had "failed to communicate" his misgivings early enough. Meanwhile, House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) admitted that the law might have to be fixed "so that our service members do not have legal problems overseas." He did not offer to explain why Congress had not fixed the bill before passing it. In fact, the real problem was not that President Obama had waited too long to make his case against JASTA, but that lawmakers had rushed through a shoddy piece of legislation simply because it was good politics. Who wants to say no to 9/11 families?

The problems with JASTA are twofold. First, by expanding the exception to sovereign immunity, it complicates Washington's relationships with foreign governments and sets what President Obama has called "a dangerous precedent," inviting other countries to adopt laws that could expose U.S. officials and service members to lawsuits abroad. Second, while most of the 9/11 hijackers were Saudis, an independent commission found no evidence linking the Saudi government to the attacks. The victims' families may now get their day in court, but they're very unlikely to get any money from Riyadh.

Just one week before Congress embarrassed itself with this ill-considered stunt, the Senate gave up a perfect opportunity to hold Saudi Arabia responsible for atrocities it *has* committed. The United Nations reports that more than 2,200 noncombatants have been killed in Saudi-led airstrikes against Houthi militias in Yemen. A survey conducted by the Yemen Data Project estimates that more than a third of all Saudi airstrikes have hit civilian sites, including schools, mosques, and hospitals. According to the survey, a single school in Dhubab has been hit nine times. In August, the Saudis bombed a bridge used by the UN to deliver humanitarian aid to Sana'a, Yemen's capital, even though the bridge appeared on a no-strike list the U.S. Defense Department had sent the Saudi military.

So far, there have been no serious consequences for these indiscriminate airstrikes; indeed, U.S. tankers continue to refuel Saudi bombers regardless of their targets. Eager to soothe the Saudis' anger at the Iran nuclear deal, President Obama has quietly offered them unconditional support for their war against the Iran-backed Houthis, which they are waging with American-made weapons. During Obama's eight years as president, the United States has sold Saudi Arabia $110 billion worth of arms.

Congress could put a stop to this, and yet most of the senators who voted on September 28 to override the president's veto of JASTA had voted on September 20 to clear a $1.15 billion sale of new military equipment to Saudi Arabia. One week the Saudis were our trusted allies, fully deserving of U.S. aid no matter what they were accused of doing in Yemen. The next, they were presumed to be responsible for the worst terrorist attack in U.S. history. This rank hypocrisy on the part of Congress ought to have made headlines. Instead, it went mostly unnoticed.

The war in Yemen has itself gone mostly unnoticed in this country, while politicians and the media focus instead on the civil war in Syria. It is not obvious what the United States could do—short of declaring war—to stop the killing of noncombatants in Syria, but it could end state violence against innocent civilians in Yemen simply by withdrawing its support for Saudi Arabia's involvement there. Washington should do so without delay. Unwise as it is to offend an old ally in defense of a conspiracy theory, no alliance, however old or important, justifies complicity in war crimes. ■

—October 4, 2016

Mollie Wilson O'Reilly

You'll Feel a Little Pinch

MYLAN & THE EPIPEN RIP-OFF

My son's prescription wasn't at the register when I went to pick it up. They were holding it "in the back," they told me, not because it was a dangerous substance or a rare one but because of its price. The clerk looked like she was bracing for a blow-up when she held out the bag. "It's five hundred and twelve dollars—that's with the $100 coupon. So...do you still want it?"

My three-year-old had just been diagnosed with a nut allergy. The allergist prescribed an EpiPen, a device that delivers a controlled dose of epinephrine, to have on hand in case an unexpected trace of walnut sends my son into anaphylaxis. In an emergency, an EpiPen could mean the difference between life and death—and Mylan, the pharmaceutical company that sells the EpiPen, has worked hard to make sure consumers see it that way.

Epinephrine is an inexpensive drug, and Mylan didn't develop the "auto-injection" device that delivers it; they acquired that in 2007, at which time a pair of EpiPens cost about $100. Under the guidance of CEO Heather Bresch the company began lobbying and advertising for EpiPen use—what they call "awareness-raising," and what a more cynical observer might call expanding their market. They successfully advocated regulations protecting and promoting their product: EpiPens are now sold only in pairs (in case the first dose isn't enough to reverse the life-threatening reaction), and there are incentives to encourage schools to keep a supply on hand. Meanwhile, would-be competitors have had trouble getting FDA approval for their devices. Perhaps there is a credible public-interest case to be made for all these measures. But while Mylan was encouraging concerned citizens to keep a pair of EpiPens in every pocket, they were also hiking the price some 400 percent.

I filled our prescription in late August, at the very moment public outrage over Mylan's price gouging hit its peak. I had read all about the eye-poppingly high price that 20 percent of patients (the ones whose insurance doesn't cover the cost) were paying for their back-to-school EpiPens. And like those patients, I paid up—Mylan's awareness-raising campaign had convinced me I couldn't afford not to.

When the bad press got to Mylan, they responded not by lowering the EpiPen's list price but by promising to issue more generous coupons that would cover more of the copay. That news broke the morning after my trip to the pharmacy, which means my child's medical condition picked a pretty rotten time to manifest itself. But what illness has good timing? That is why people need medical insurance, after all—to protect us from being capsized by unanticipated, unavoidable expenses.

In Bresch's telling, it's a failure of the insurance system that patients are now aware of what her company has been up to. "It was never intended that a consumer, that the patients would be paying list price, never," Bresch said in an interview on CNBC. "The system wasn't built for that." The trouble is the system wasn't built for patients at all. The system that has made Bresch so much money—her compensation was $19 million last year—is one in which drug prices are limited only by what insurance companies will pay. Given its success at gaining a virtual monopoly on the expanding adrenaline auto-injector market, Mylan can command astronomically high prices for a product that costs them little. But insurance companies have to make a profit, too, and so those high drug prices get passed along to consumers, in the form of higher premiums and copays, or else to the government. Bresch even blamed Obamacare for the financial squeeze, citing "rising insurance premiums" that "shift significant costs" to patients, without mentioning her company's decision to hike the price as a factor in creating those costs.

Bresch also said the good people at Mylan "are committed to do our part to drive change" in the healthcare system. And they are working for changes—to get back to the system that worked so well for them before, the one where patients were shielded from seeing the list price even as the company keeps driving it up. In September the *New York Times* reported that Mylan is now funding efforts to get the EpiPen classified as a "preventive" medical service, one that must be available to all patients without a copay. Then they could keep charging indefensibly high prices for it, but consumers wouldn't see the evidence. And if their premiums go up again, they'll blame Obamacare.

Bresch is right that the system isn't working in patients' best interests—in fact, she's living proof that big changes are still needed. But we certainly shouldn't count on drug companies to lead the way. ■

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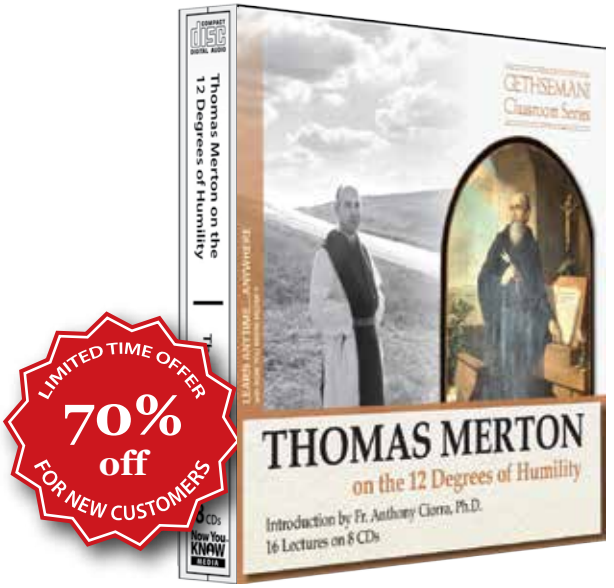

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Christopher M. Duncan

Summoned

HOW JURY DUTY RESTORED MY FAITH IN AMERICA

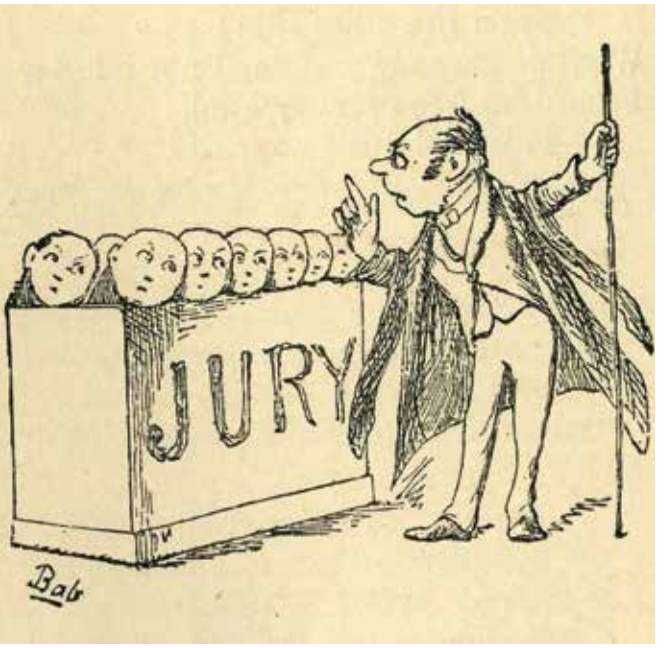
The world will be saved by flawed and broken people, or it will not be saved at all: this is an aphorism I have embraced over the years since I became a Christian. Before that, as a young idealist, I tended to believe that some sainted class, party, or person would rise up and lead us to the political Promised Land. But my conversion, by way of bringing me to a deep understanding of the ubiquity of sin and our inescapable need for divine grace, taught me that we should not wait for saints to show up, Godot-like, and hand us a more just world. Like it or not, it is we sinners who will need to work that vineyard and harvest that fruit—lest it die on the vine, waiting for the pure picker to arrive.

As a Christian I embrace the intrinsic power and necessity of love for enacting social change; and while I'm not optimistic about the realization of a more robustly democratic and loving political order, I am *hopeful*, reflecting my belief that God and his creation are always and everywhere good. Having said this, I must admit that both my hope and my faith are being tested this political season. Donald Trump—and many of his supporters—can have that effect on a person (see "The Voice of the Faithless," April 15). Yet I recently had an epiphany of a sort and a corresponding renewal of that faith. The occasion for this unexpected renewal? Jury duty.

As a democratic theorist, I have written glowingly about the virtues of the jury system, that profoundly democratic rite whereby twelve ordinary women and men decide the guilt or innocence of a fellow citizen and render justice. Yet since I myself had never been called to serve, my perspectives remained highly theoretical. When the summons came from the City of Saint Louis, I was more than a little excited to see how the system actually worked in real life. The experience did not disappoint.

I showed up to find myself in a cohort of ninety-six potential jurors. We were sent to a courtroom to meet the presiding judge, a no-nonsense African-American man with a sharp sense of humor. He established quickly how little tolerance he had for people who could not follow the rules, or who refused to speak clearly and loudly when called upon. After enjoining us to discuss the case with no one and to answer all questions with complete honesty, he introduced us to the case at hand. An older man stood accused of sexually abusing a young girl. That was hard enough in its own right; worse, the accusation had been made ten years after the fact, leaving the prosecution with an absence of witnesses and physical evidence.

But the case itself is not what provided my revelation. That



came from the voir-dire process, in which both prosecutor and defense attorney question prospective jurors, seeking to find the right mix of people to serve the cause of justice in any particular case. In the voir-dire process as it was applied to our panel of ninety-six, sometimes individuals were singled out. Sometimes a group question was asked, and those who raised their hands were questioned. Sometimes the questioners went up and down each seated row. Much of the questioning was tedious and repetitive. Yet bit by bit, in a pointillist kind of way, a picture emerged—a picture of America, one that became beautiful and full, as I sat there and watched each dot take its place on the human canvas.

To begin with, the sheer diversity was stunning. Our group contained both male and female citizens, of course, but also black Americans, white Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and possibly others. There were old, young, and middle-aged Americans; rich, middle-class, and poor Americans; PhDs and the barely educated; straight and gay Americans. There were military veterans, lawyers, teachers, college professors, engineers, nurses, construction workers, librarians, shopkeepers, a policeman, an architect, a number of city employees; stay-at-home moms and stay-at-home dads; business people of one kind or another; unemployed citizens; and even a young guy who looked like a gangbanger right out of central casting. There were people who spoke English as a second or even third language. They came from Bosnia, Laos, Vietnam, India, Mexico, Honduras, Somalia,

Japan, Russia, and Western Europe. There were Catholics and Protestants, but also Muslims, Jews, and adherents of other world religions. Whatever our visible differences, we were all American citizens; and all our diverse paths and choices had led us to this place on this day, to serve our city and its laws. It made me smile. This is what democracy, rightly understood, looked like.

As impressive as the diversity was, with its embodied representation of the American ideal of "from many, one," still more impressive to me was the palpable responsibility and outright civic earnestness manifest among the citizens collected in that courthouse. Because this was a criminal trial of a sexual nature, the questions asked by lawyers and judge—intended to probe our capacity to be fair jurors—were often personal and difficult. "Have you or anyone close to you been sexually abused?" "Have you or anyone you are close to been the victim of a violent crime?" And: "Have you ever been arrested or convicted of a crime?" Those who answered affirmatively to that question were then asked, "Do you think the police and the court system treated you fairly?"

In many cases the answers were painful. Perhaps a quarter of our group had been arrested at some point. Many were for DUI, drug possession, or underage drinking. But some had resisted arrest or assaulted a police officer. Some had been convicted of larceny, theft, or criminal trespassing, and one or two of fraud. At least two had been arrested on multiple occasions for possession with intent to distribute, or for drug trafficking. One man admitted to hitting his wife once, when she was "drunk and out of control." These allocutions were done without a hint of bravado, but also without an overabundance of shame. I am certain more than one of us knew that, had certain nights in our lives gone just a little differently, we might also be admitting such sins to a room full of strangers. Interestingly, in the vast majority of cases my fellow potential jurors said that the police and courts had treated them fairly.

The tougher stories were from those who had been sexually abused or assaulted, or were close to someone who had been. Even when these stories were told matter-of-factly, the pain and suffering remained evident. I was shocked at how many had either experienced rape, abuse, and sexual harassment themselves, or had friends or relatives who had. While the stories were bleak and disheartening, to say the least, I was struck by the courage of my group-mates in sharing them, and by their capacity to keep moving forward in their lives despite the evil they had endured or witnessed. Here they all were, after all, ready to serve.

Perhaps most fascinating, from an intellectual perspective, was watching my fellow citizens wrestle with the demands of the law and with their own internal voices of reason and conscience. This was a case with more than a few legal complexities, and some of the questions were posed in problematic ways—for instance, "If the accused did not defend

TRAITOR

For even life in exile...is not as bad
as life alone in one's own country.
The World of Yesterday
Stefan Zweig

Two-ton eagle above the stairs,
soldiers cradling M16s,
flags everywhere,
the Consul's *Why?*,
the oath I swear
to *absolutely and entirely*
renounce my...nationality,
murmur *Traitor*, as I stand,
cancelled blue passport in hand,
a grey haired alien on foreign land.

Forty years doubts brewed in me
about Yankee Doodle verities
poured into us as kids.
Loyalty corroded to hostility,
and left no choice but quit
the homeland I never fit.

I feel no remorse,
but wonder, nonetheless,
how Dreyfus felt, braced
on the square at *l'Ecole Militaire*,
sword snapped, disgraced,
reviled for what he did not do,
though faith, not fury, stood him askew.

—Dan Burt

Dan Burt is a writer whose poetry and prose have appeared in PN Review, *the* TLS, *the* Financial Times, *and the* New Statesman, *among others. He lives and writes in London, Maine, and St. John's College, Cambridge, of which he is an Honorary Fellow.*

himself in his own voice, would you be inclined to think he had something to hide?" While we all could understand, in theory, that it is the state's job to prove its case and not the defendant's job to prove his innocence, it's hard to accept that an innocent person accused of something terrible would not want to get on the stand and tell you he didn't do it. That's a steep hill for common sense to climb, and I watched people struggle with the question, even as I struggled with it inwardly myself. Everyone knew what the "right" answer was. But some hesitantly answered that yes, a defendant's not taking the stand under such circumstances would make it hard for them to believe that he was not guilty of at least something. I am not here to say whether they were right or wrong, only that the evidence of a real struggle and introspection affirmed my sense that I was sharing the room with human beings who wanted to do the right thing—and who also realized that doing so can be complicated.

The late William F. Buckley Jr. once famously said he would rather be governed by the first two thousand names in the phone book than by the faculty at Harvard University. That's a pretty big nod to the democratic experiment for a self-professed elitist and arch-conservative—and, as a child of the middle class with social democratic leanings, I was certainly with him on this score. Yet as this election cycle grinds forward with Donald Trump as the nominee of Buckley's old party, I have to admit that Harvard's faculty are starting to look pretty good to me. Witnessing the effusions of support for Trump via cable news and social media, I have felt my faith in my fellow citizens waning. Although I can understand the frustration, inequity, and fear that are feeding this new version of American populism and xenophobia, I know—both as a citizen and as someone who studies politics and philosophy—that Donald Trump is not the solution for what ails this country; and it's hard for me to grasp the sheer level of vitriol and hatred currently manifesting itself.

Yet while this is no doubt a slice of the American pie, it isn't even close to the whole of it—as I learned to my relief when I ventured out from my home in the academy to spend time with a real cross section of American citizens. My day of jury service (I was eventually sent home) put me in company with some of the tired, some of the poor, some of the huddled masses yearning to breathe free, along with many other makes and models of the American electorate. Almost to a person I found them to be honest, reflective, truthful—and, yes, flawed, broken, and sinful. I imagine that those who cared to look saw the same traits in me. Knitted together as we were, on this particular day in that particular space, I knew that we were stronger as a collective body than any of us would be alone.

This knowledge reconfirmed me in my belief that we are better people than the politics of the day suggests. Flawed, broken, filled with grace and the capacity to do what is right, we will help each other recognize and reject false prophets, demagogues who see strength in uniformity rather than the pluralism and diversity that truly mark the children of God. My summons to jury duty, and the company of souls summoned along with me, helped me remember this important fact. And that, as one of my favorite songs by John Mellencamp says, is America—something to see, for you and me. ■

Christopher M. Duncan *is dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and professor of political science at Saint Louis University.*

R. Scott Appleby

America First?

PREDICTING THE NEXT PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN POLICY

Of all the contested aspects of Barack Obama's presidency, few are more controversial than his foreign policy. As his second administration heads toward its end, estimates of Obama's performance abroad range from dismal to deftly capable. How to sort this out? What has the Obama presidency actually wrought in U.S. foreign policy? What will his successor do to advance, undermine, or complicate the president's legacy?

In evaluating Obama's record, one should recall what disarray his predecessor bequeathed him: the most debilitating global financial crisis in modern history; a failed foreign policy in the Middle East, including debacles in Iraq and Afghanistan; and a near-complete loss of confidence in U.S. leadership among our allies and would-be allies. Ignoring these realities, self-proclaimed foreign-policy realists have criticized what they see as Obama's insufficient projection of American power on the world scene. They deride as weakness Obama's concessions to a multipolar world, and mock the default respect he shows for foreign cultures and national sovereignties.

Such critiques are shortsighted. For a new president in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis, faced with an obstructionist U.S. Congress, an aggressive Russia, and an economically imperious China, clinging to "lone superpower" ambitions and rhetoric would have been little short of delusional. To be sure, Obama's foreign-policy record is hardly without blemish. Too often, prudence and consultation have deteriorated into ambivalence and indecision—sometimes, as in Syria and Libya, to disastrous effect. Forced to choose between the incumbent prime minister of Iraq, Noury Al-Maliki, and a rival who actually outpolled him in the historic 2010 elections, the Obama administration stuck by their man, who proceeded to deepen the Shia-Sunni rift and return Iraq, after a period of relative stability, to the bitter sectarian civil war that helped weaken the state and set the stage for the rise of ISIS. Drawing a red line in Syria and then erasing it was not the president's finest moment. And the pivot to Asia sometimes seems to be more about cutting our losses and running from the Middle East than about building new economic and political alliances in a region still relatively unscathed by recent American adventurism.

Yet there have been real accomplishments. The administration's signal achievement in foreign policy—the Iran nuclear deal—is a triumph of diplomacy over militarism, and as such represents an all-too-rare success in rolling back what Andrew Bacevich, in these pages and elsewhere, has rightly called "America's unending war." Obama has been fundamentally correct, too, in his analysis of al-Qaeda and ISIS. The president deserves credit for recognizing that military alliances and precision strikes against ISIS must be matched by longer-term economic, educational, and cultural alliances with the peoples of the Middle East—as promised in his early, stunning speeches in Cairo and Ankara, which offered an olive branch to the Arab and Muslim worlds.

The largely unfulfilled promise of those overtures points to an ongoing problem for Obama—namely, the gap between the skillful messaging and the actual policies emerging from the White House and the State Department. The relative restraint Obama has shown in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria, for example, sits uneasily alongside what is perhaps the Nobel Peace Laureate's most disturbing legacy: the unleashing of drones in the struggle against the jihadi extremists. Obama's defenders yield no moral ground on this issue. The deployment of drones for targeted strikes on terrorists saves countless lives, they contend, and they scoff at those who worry about the proliferation of drone warfare by our opponents as well as allies, insisting that that genie is already out of the bottle. Perhaps so. Yet it is disconcerting to read accounts of secret target approvals, via principles that remain opaque to the public, by the same president who in other contexts resolutely invokes the rule of international law.

If his popularity in the polls is any indication, while many Americans express profound concerns about drone policy, they likely also applaud President Obama's clear and consistent articulation of the interconnections between climate change, poverty, war, and health-care epidemics. This view renders obsolete the old distinction between "domestic" and "foreign" policy in sorting the major threats facing our country and the world. Obama's record on climate change shows him reckoning with what is perhaps the most urgent of these challenges. He rejected the Keystone XL pipeline proposal in 2015 and has expanded conservation efforts to include more than 265 million acres of protected land and water. And in September the president formally committed the United States to the Paris climate-change agreement, signed in April by leaders from more than 170 countries, each pledging to do its part to reduce carbon emissions and arrest the rapid growth in global average temperature.

Meanwhile, how has the administration fared in the pivotal realm of global development? Here Obama's predecessor left a more promising legacy. George W. Bush established the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Millennium Challenge Corporation—programs that raised the profile and efficacy of U.S. foreign assistance, not least in Africa. To his credit, Obama has continued support for

these initiatives, and despite a rocky start marked by difficulty managing a sprawling foreign-assistance apparatus, his first term saw the launch of Feed the Future, a global hunger initiative with potential to improve food security. Some analysts point to a string of recent under-the-radar accomplishments, including the passage of the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act and the Global Food Security Act. More recently the president hosted a Global Development Summit at the White House, where he affirmed the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (adopted in September 2015 by the United Nations and endorsed, with some important amendments, by Pope Francis) as "one of the smartest investments we can make in our shared future—in our security and our prosperity."

At the same time, as Obama's presidency winds down, we might lament certain missed opportunities. Military spending continues to dwarf spending on basic human needs at home and abroad. Arms exports to Saudi Arabia have continued unabated, contributing to the destruction wrought by that regime on one of the world's most vulnerable populations in Yemen. Obama has also increased military aid to Israel, a move questioned even by many staunch supporters of the Jewish state. And U.S. refugee resettlement efforts have not matched the magnitude of what Pope Francis and other faith leaders referred to as "fundamentally a crisis of humanity." The end of 2015 saw 65.3 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide, including 21.3 million refugees. And while the Obama administration announced in late August that it had met the modest goal of admitting ten thousand Syrian refugees this fiscal year, our Canadian neighbors have welcomed three times that number since last November.

A voter looking ahead will find no comparison, on many of these topics, between the public record of the two major-party presidential candidates. As secretary of state, Hillary Clinton advocated tirelessly for the global development agenda that ultimately became the Sustainable Development Goals. Like Obama, she has repeatedly invoked the role of poverty alleviation and the provision of jobs, health care, and education in the prevention of violent extremism and the promotion of human dignity. A Hillary Clinton presidency that is inattentive to these issues seems highly unlikely. Regarding the more conventional dimensions of U.S. foreign policy, as Secretary of State Clinton worked to reinvigorate public diplomacy and improve America's image abroad. Her record-setting 112 overseas trips helped repair strained relationships. And she emphasized "smart power"—the integration of defense, diplomacy, and development in a comprehensive strategy for U.S. foreign affairs. Candidate Clinton's national-security campaign positions reflect this approach. To be sure, a Clinton presidency would likely be more hawkish than her former boss's. Critics cite her initial support for the war in Iraq versus Obama's loud and clear opposition, and in 2011 she was a strong proponent of military intervention in Libya. She has called for enforcing a no-fly zone over Syria, and urged the covert arming of Syrian rebels earlier and more forcefully than her Obama-administration colleagues. A supporter of Obama's drone policy, Clinton would likely continue a similar approach as president. And she has advocated the enhancement of missile defense systems in Israel, East Asia, and Eastern Europe.

The difficulty in comparing Clinton with Donald Trump on any of these issues, of course, is that Mr. Trump has no record of governance whatsoever, and his inconsistent public utterances during the campaign make it difficult to predict what positions he might take as president. That said, certain things seem likely. Central to a Trumpian foreign policy, as the candidate repeatedly promises, would be the attempted restoration of American hegemony over opponents and allies alike, which the candidate views as part and parcel of his mission to bolster the American spine. In an April 2016 foreign-policy speech Trump vowed that no American citizen "will ever again feel that their needs come second to the citizens of foreign countries."

This "America First" approach could make America more vulnerable, not less. Indeed, many senior national-security officials in Trump's own (adopted) party see the prospect of a Trump presidency as exceedingly dangerous—so much so, in fact, that scores of elected Republicans and former Republican military and foreign-policy strategists have denounced him. In addition to "weaken[ing] U.S. moral authority as leader of the free world," as fifty prominent Republicans wrote in August, Trump lacks understanding of "America's vital national interests, its complex diplomatic challenges, its indispensable alliances, and the democratic values on which U.S. foreign policy must be based."

Many of Trump's foreign-policy prescriptions would jeopardize carefully cultivated global partnerships and diplomatic achievements. He has questioned the relevance of NATO, and he applauded the UK's "Brexit" vote to leave the European Union; he wants to withdraw from the Paris Agreement

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and opposes the Iran nuclear deal; he has suggested he would permit the use of "enhanced interrogation techniques" such as waterboarding. By contrast, Clinton has declared her support for the NATO alliance and for a united Europe that includes Britain. She acknowledges the threat climate change poses to lives and livelihoods across the globe, and has pledged to meet the commitments of the Paris Agreement. She supports continued implementation of the Iran nuclear deal (while threatening to re-impose unilateral sanctions if Iran violates its terms).

Perhaps most provocative has been Trump's professed admiration for Vladimir Putin. Trump's apparent readiness to back a bigger role for Russia on the world stage is worrisome at best, given his demonstrated lack of basic understanding of our relationship with that country. (In July, for example, he asserted that Russia "won't go into Ukraine," somehow overlooking the fact that Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014.) Where Clinton has criticized Putin for essentially carrying out a bombing campaign on behalf of Assad, Trump seems inclined to give Russia a freer hand in Syria. His responses to ongoing crises in that region have ranged from "let Russia defeat ISIS" to "let ISIS defeat Assad" to "I would bomb the s--- out of them [ISIS]." And while earlier he raised the possibility of putting thousands of U.S. troops on the ground, lately he has adopted a comparatively more measured tone, advocating (as does Clinton) establishing a no-fly zone over Syria and working with Arab and Western states to defeat the Islamic State. Finally, Trump has questioned the longstanding U.S. commitment to nuclear nonproliferation and suggested that he would consider using nuclear weapons against ISIS. In one primary debate, he appeared not to know what the nuclear triad was. In his first debate with Clinton, he appeared to confuse the terms "first strike" and "first use."

All in all, then, what do we have? When it comes to choosing the next occupant of the Oval Office, we are faced with two imperfect candidates, to say the least. Many might wish that Secretary Clinton's advocacy for the vulnerable extended to the unborn. Detractors also accuse her of insufficient regard for religion in its various constructive public modes, since she has clashed repeatedly with the "conservative" wings of evangelical Christianity and Roman Catholicism. Still, in terms of preparedness, temperament, and capacity for statesmanship, the choice in November—to this observer, anyway—seems both consequential and clear. I'd advise my fellow citizens to make generous use of "the Catholic difference"—constant prayer of petition—to help the nation avoid what could be a catastrophe of, well, *huge* proportions. ■

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It Still Takes a Village

Hillary Clinton, Conflicted Communitarian

Russell Arben Fox

Among the many criticisms regularly directed at Hillary Clinton, the perception that her life, her career, and now her march to the White House has been focused, scripted, and controlled to a discomforting degree is one of the most common. She lacks the genius and the foolishness, the expansive generosity and the destructive self-indulgence of her husband, many say. In contrast to Bill, Hillary is depicted in a perfectly calibrated, perfectly adaptable, perfectly predictable political gray. There is some truth to this portrait, as Clinton herself has admitted on the stump. Still, despite the surprising strength of Bernie Sanders's challenge to her during the primaries, the damaging FBI probe into her private email server, and her continuing deep unpopularity with large parts of the electorate, Clinton apparently sees little need for introspection and little reason for going off script. And she's probably not wrong to think that way. She's qualified, she's experienced, she's a known quantity—all things that her opponent Donald Trump is not.

So why should she rethink her technocratic, hawkish, statist, moderately progressive liberalism? Close to 25 percent of voters basically agree with her on all the major issues, and more than another 35 percent are moderate enough to find Trump appalling in comparison to her. So she'll keep appealing to the core constituencies of the Democratic Party, keep assuring moderates that America's place in the global economic and military order will not be challenged by her presidency, stay focused on November 2016, and avoid all surprises.

Twenty years ago, when Bill Clinton ran for re-election against Bob Dole, the outcome didn't turn out to be much of a surprise either. As *Time* magazine put it a week before the election: "It's not much of a contest, but it is a choice." But the similarities largely stop there. Hillary Clinton's campaign is taking place at a profoundly different moment. Deep concerns over the ongoing threat of global terrorism and the lingering effects of the 2008 financial crisis have replaced the—arguably naïve—squabbles that dominated the often superficial world of the mid-1990s: fights over violent Hollywood movies and video games, over O. J. Simpson's guilt, over whether Rush Limbaugh and Howard Stern and the whole new, overheated media world of CNN and talk radio were going to destroy American democracy. We may look back with amusement at all that handwringing, but those frequently abstract and apolitical distractions included serious reflections regarding what America in that (mostly) rich and victorious post–Cold War moment ought to be all about.

Cultural criticism that looked inward, thinking through the nature and future of the American community, thrived during that brief moment. Clinton herself, in 1996, made a major contribution to it with her most-remembered book: *It Takes a Village, and Other Lessons Children Teach Us*. The worries and perspectives of the era that produced that book and the arguments featured within it are mostly absent from the Clinton campaign of 2016. Not that she has run away from the book or its general sentiments; on the contrary, she explicitly referenced it in her acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention. "None of us can raise a family, build a business, heal a community, or lift a country totally alone," she reminded us. But reducing a set of ideas that once apparently engaged her (and many others) at length to a simple invocation of the Democrats as "the party of people working together" leaves a great deal unsaid. As Clinton's march toward 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue continues, it's worth looking back at that book and its milieu, to consider more deeply ideas that she and many voters don't seem to think are worth arguing over any longer—but that still demand a place in our national understanding all the same.

Those ideas, worries, concerns, and perspectives actually all share a label, one Clinton never used directly in *It Takes a Village*: "communitarianism." In the mid-1990s that concept and label—along with variations on it, like "civic republicanism" or "third-way politics"—were riding high, or at least as high as any broadly applicable yet intellectually coherent ideological movement ever rides in the United States. In 1995 and 1996 bookstores and op-ed pages were filled with writings that employed explicitly

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communitarian rhetoric and questions. Probably the single most influential academic article on communitarian themes during the 1990s, Robert Putnam's "Bowling Alone," was published in 1995. (He would go on to expand the article into a much-discussed book of the same title.) Probably the most significant book published by the scholar most thoroughly associated with communitarianism—Michael Sandel's *Democracy's Discontent*—was published in 1996. But that just scratches the surface. There were also Alan Ehrenhalt's *The Lost City*, Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Democracy on Trial*, Daniel Kemmis's *The Good City and the Good Life*, and the writings of communitarianism's cheerleader-in-chief, sociologist Amitai Etzioni. Clinton's *It Takes a Village* was right in that mix, even if it sold far more copies than all the aforementioned books put together.

The heart of the communitarian argument was essentially a revival and embrace of the moral anthropology of classical republicanism. Communitarians argued that our full development as social creatures, fellow citizens, and simply human beings depends on cultivating civic virtues and an understanding of responsible freedom that individualism often undermines. Thus, forms of economy, government, and personal behavior that give primary (or at least equal) consideration to community identity, integrity, and participation ought to be pursued. In other words, communitarianism began with the res publica. (You could use other languages to articulate these concerns, of course: Catholic writers influenced by communitarian principles, like Mary Ann Glendon and David Hollenbach, often suggested that it really began with St. Paul's description of the Body of Christ.) Very simply—no doubt too simply—the popular argument of the 1990s went basically like this: If you saw the point of freedom as the achievement of opportunities for independent choice, you were some kind of philosophical and political liberal; but if you saw the point of freedom as the ability to contribute to, or deliberate about, the common good, then you must be some kind of communitarian.

Putting it in those terms might suggest why whatever traction communitarian arguments seemed to be gaining twenty years ago didn't appear to last. The 1990s were—despite all the aforementioned critiques—all about the celebration and empowerment of individuality, after all. The spread of the internet, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the state socialist parties that were aligned with its cause, the simultaneous explosion of both globalization and irredentism (famously diagnosed by a fellow-traveler of communitarianism, Benjamin Barber, in *Jihad vs. McWorld*, also published in 1995) all contributed to this. Liberal marketplaces were on the march, and the Moral Majority was beginning to fall apart. So obviously the language of communitarianism—collective responsibilities, not individual rights!—was going to be smothered by the dot-com boom and lost amid the wreckage of the Religious Right's crack-up, right?

Well, perhaps. But then again, that very celebration of choice almost certainly added to the vague discontent so many felt throughout the 1990s. Ehrenhalt, at least, took very seriously the possibility that, while those in the driver's seat of American culture and politics twenty years ago wouldn't figure out where they'd gone wrong or gone too far, their children might. They would respond, he suspected, to the expanding discontent around them by rediscovering the value of the authority, the structure, the narratives, and,

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most crucially, the limits that healthy communities provide. He concluded *The Lost City* with a hunch:

> [The rising generation] will come to adulthood in the early years of the next century with an entirely different set of childhood and adolescent memories from the ones their parents absorbed. They will remember being bombarded with choices, and the ideology of choice as a good in itself; living in transient neighborhoods and broken and recombinant families where no arrangement could be treated as permanent; having parents who feared to impose rules because rules might stifle their freedom and individuality. Will a generation raised that way be tempted to move, in its early adult years, toward a reimposition of order and stability, even at the risk of losing some of the choice and personal freedom its parents worshipped?

It might be easy to look at an American generation supposedly addicted to selfies and mobile apps and dismiss Ehrenhalt's predictions. Still, perhaps allowances should be made. The young adults I have come to know as a college professor over the past fifteen years—the famous Millennial generation—emerged from their adolescence, journeyed through their universities and apprenticeships, married and began their families (or pointedly chose not to), and started their adult working lives all in the midst of two huge developments that couldn't be more different from the drifting, distracting years of 1995 and 1996: the War on Terror and the Great Recession.

The social, political, and cultural consequences of those transformative events are many and diverse, but there are areas of overlap. Both privileged global narratives (abetted by increasingly global technologies). The constantly implied message conveyed by the angst and arguments both these developments provoked was that the primary community one was part of, the community that most threatened one's choices or preferences, was a global one—which is to say, a community only in the most attenuated sense of the word. Think of the categories so often deployed over the past decade and a half: the United States vs. worldwide terror, Bush vs. the UN, Obama vs. the Tea Party, Red America vs. Blue America, Christians vs. Muslims, the West vs. the Rest. (The apocalyptic rhetoric that Donald Trump has both personally benefited from as well as inspired in his opponents is a partial continuation of the same tendency.)

If the money-making exuberance, talk-radio squalor, and occasional aimlessness of America in the 1990s was partly what made it a little easier for people to consider a more communal and civic way of conceiving the political stakes around them, then presumably the increasingly ideological intensity of recent years helped push such reflections to the back burner. The fact that too many communitarian thinkers—Barber, Etzioni, and Elshtain stand out in particular—went along with this, perversely ramping up their discussion of the res publica to world-historical and international levels, didn't help their cause.

And yet, if the hollowness of the 1990s opened up a space for one kind of communitarian moment, perhaps the bewilderment of today is the occasion for another, different kind. To take one example: It's too easy to assume that the unfolding of individual rights in regards to sexual morality in America has proceeded without any kind of attention to social responsibility, civic respect, and permanence. The whole story of how it is that America's political and legal culture went from the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996 to *Obergefell v. Hodges* in 2015 will no doubt be told and retold many times from many different perspectives. But surely there must be at least some significance to the fact that, out of all the assaults upon this country's default cultural understandings about sexual behavior, the one that generated the greatest Sturm und Drang—at least since the end of anti-miscegenation laws during the Civil Rights era—was not divorce or polyamory, but rather a push for marriage: a push that ultimately invokes ideas of sexual commitment and limits, not liberation. Despite reasons to be troubled by the sexual world that liberal individualism's apotheosis helped usher in, the reality is that most twenty- or thirty-something Americans today do not appear to have thrown off the idea of this most intimate kind of belonging, but rather to have embraced—in an admittedly new way—the cause, the right, and the properness of marriage.

It is interesting to note how much Clinton, whose career in politics has been so thoroughly entwined with expectations and condemnations particular to matters of marriage, motherhood, and gender roles, presented herself twenty years ago as struggling through this same evolution. Not that she addressed it specifically; the few comments about the lives of gay and lesbian Americans in *It Takes a Village* are entirely nonpolitical. But ultimately one cannot read Clinton's book today without connecting the positions she hesitatingly laid out there with transformations of the American community that are now broadly accepted. Which prompts another question: Why, then, has Clinton, along with many of her strongest supporters, left this communitarian perspective aside?

Partly, to be sure, because much of the perspective she offers in that book sounds downright conservative. From the start of *It Takes a Village*, one can't help being struck by Clinton's traditionalism. Using language clearly borrowed directly from Putnam and other communitarian and civic republican writers (though never with any direct citation), she framed her arguments around a recognition of the dependency of a democratic community—as well as a healthy environment for child-raising—upon stable moral traditions and civic involvement. To this was joined her own obvious sympathy for the more civically involved and family-ordered world of her youth in the 1940s and '50s. The results are sometimes surprising: in her book Clinton speaks unambiguously against no-fault divorce and the casual glorification of sex and violence in music and mass media. (She praised both former Secretary of Education Bill Bennett and Tipper Gore's Parents Music Resource Center on these points.) Clinton also clearly

favored abstinence-promoting education and mandatory school uniforms.

Clinton's expression of these concerns, however, was almost always conveyed in terms of families managing themselves and even thriving in the midst of the cultural and economic transitions that capitalism and individual choice make inevitable. That is, in *It Takes a Village* Clinton was certain that community and family are essential to a truly rewarding childhood, but she wasn't calling for the American economy or society to be radically restructured around prioritizing them. Instead, she seemed committed to the idea of government employing what some contemporary writers call "structured paternalism" to conserve those traditional realities. This was a very liberal form of communitarianism.

Her approach remains consistent throughout the book. For Clinton, the community on which individuals, particularly children, depend is far more threatened by bad corporate actors than by bad cultural developments, and more in need of trained, organized, expert assistance than almost anything else. For example, she favored providing resources to parents "scouting out child care" options, for assuring "basic safety requirements" and the "training of child care workers" at day-care centers, for checking children for "proof of immunization" in public schools, and for fighting the "institutional resistance" to maternity- and paternity-leave policies. Clinton's faith was, twenty years ago, one that readily accepted the original progressive idea of an activist government. Such a government employs incentives and structures to make possible a more equitable distribution of those goods, freedoms, and opportunities that individual parents, teachers, and caregivers should want to cultivate in a changing world. It is revealing, I think, that Clinton was honest enough to confess a self-consciousness about how her own priorities, and the priorities of her generation, contributed to the discontent and dislocation to which she was responding. (In one telling anecdote, she sheepishly admits that she was too fearful to allow the young Chelsea and a friend to bicycle to the public library ten blocks away, while simultaneously reminiscing about the freedom of movement she had enjoyed at that age.) Yet she also never offers any sustained critique of those priorities, choosing instead to ameliorate problems rather than consider their deepest sources.

There always was a suspicion, at least among her more careful readers, that Clinton's deployment of communitarian concerns was less than wholehearted. Elshtain strongly criticized *It Takes a Village* in the *New Republic* for what she saw (correctly, in my view) as its implicit bias in favor of the mores of our educational meritocracy, as opposed to embracing the whole of America's messy, diverse communities. The harshness of Elshtain's review was perhaps to be expected; in her own sometimes-communitarian manifesto, *Democracy on Trial*, she emphasized again and again the divided, contentious, multi-layered, and civilizing processes of democratic belonging (as opposed to the definitional fact of belonging itself). Elshtain also offered a strong rebuke to those who twisted the concerns of her erstwhile communitarian compatriots—perhaps thinking of Clinton here—into what she saw as a too-casual defense of vague "community institutions" capable of "eviscerating any public-private distinction" in the name of a "future perfect gemeinschaft." In short, Elshtain wanted to resist hitching concerns about community to the assumptions of progressivism. In taking this line, Elshtain was working out an argument similar to the one often made by Christopher Lasch, whose final book, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* was published posthumously in—you guessed it—1996. Lasch warned against a communitarianism that was powered more by a static nostalgia than by a populist drive to empower citizens, families, and neighbors, to build and preserve community in the face of capitalism's two-pronged effect of increasing global cultural homogeneity and economic inequality. The suspicion was that if the dictates of Clinton's progressivism were in tension with her professed attentiveness to the needs and hopes of actual, flawed communities, her progressivism would win.

The suspicion was that if the dictates of Clinton's progressivism were in tension with her professed attentiveness to the needs and hopes of actual, flawed communities, her progressivism would win.

Over the months of the Democratic primaries, millions of young people, both women and men (and not just white ones), showed strong support for the broad range of policies Clinton advocated, but nonetheless chose to support her opponent. It may be worth noting that, among the college-student-aged Sanders supporters I know, a determination to challenge the system and push the Democratic Party further to the left is often conjoined with what might be recognized as a kind of careful, chastened, decidedly non-grand and quite diverse communitarian or civic republican perspective. This is a different version of communitarianism than

the one students of mine would find if they read *It Takes a Village* today, one that doesn't look back to the 1950s as a favored point of reference.

There is the reality of the shifting—but not necessarily compromised—attachment to that most grounding of institutions, marriage, which I've already mentioned. Similar arguments could be made about how technology is used today (how much contemporary screen addiction reflects complete isolation, and how much reflects new forms of social interaction?); the work habits of the millennial generation (might the rise of the DIY ethos and the resistance to long-term expectations for corporate work suggest not just resigned economic realism, but also a desire to carve out space for creative opportunities with one's friends and family?); their living patterns (is the flight from the suburbs and the return to the city an embrace of individualizing anonymity, or actually a rebuke of exactly that?); and much more. Maybe, despite the upheavals of the past two decades, some of the communitarian challenge to American liberal individualism and its corporate economic support isn't dead. Perhaps many of the people who agree with Clinton's policies but nonetheless don't quite trust her recognize that the populist Sanders captured the point of the communitarian challenge—especially its inescapably moral dimension—in a way that Clinton's technocratic policy-minded approach did not.

Another way of capturing the dynamics of this new, different strain of communitarianism can be found in the work of Matthew Crawford: first in his book *Shop Class as Soulcraft*, published in 2009, and now *The World Beyond Your Head*, published just this past year. These books point to a re-appropriation of communitarian concerns in terms that are more local, more diverse, less statist, and less structured than what technocratic progressivism offers. Crawford is a trained political philosopher who has embraced motorcycle repair as a vocation, and who ably defends that choice as one that reconnects him with a kind of hands-on cognitive and moral authenticity. He works through ideas of tradition, technology, belonging, authority, embodiment, and identity by way of figures as diverse as Aristotle, Burke, Kant, Marx, and Heidegger.

While Crawford doesn't identify his argument as one primarily about recovering the res publica (indeed, his second book is subtitled "On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction"), any close reading makes it clear that his concern is to help people, in their ordinary and everyday work, perceive the communities of practice of which they are part. He wants to enable them to see, "from the perspective of communitarianism," the importance of seeking to grasp in one's life choices those character-forming opportunities of habit and work. Without the disciplines of skilled labor and the virtues they foster, we are ultimately at the mercy of social, political, and economic forces that make us, for all our pretensions to individuality, just cogs in the machine of late capitalism. There are rewards in that machine, to be sure. And yet, Crawford warns: "genuine community is possible only among people who are willing to put themselves at risk" by abandoning the depersonalizing, bureaucratized processes that remove responsible choices from our lives. It is that sort of riskiness that I see in young adults who are, even in the midst of an often profound alienation, building connections and businesses, engaging in projects and initiatives, leaping into relationships and commitments. There is flight into a technologically secured privacy among these people, yes; but there is also, I think, an emphasis on finding and strengthening their places in conjunction with others.

This relatively hopeful view rests on a kind of wager: that humanity's traditional social anthropology has not been entirely defeated, and the ability to perceive and pursue collective and stabilizing ways of life has not been entirely lost. If that is the case, then the ability to form and sustain functioning communities hasn't been lost either. It's still there, somewhere; we just have to learn how to see it where it is and for what it is. From that perspective, perhaps the rising generation that Ehrenhalt spoke of evinces more than a little communitarianism after all—and their ambivalent reaction to Clinton may be part of that.

None of this is to say that liberal individualism and the rampant mobility and often militant non-judgmentalism of American society today isn't a problem; on the contrary, those of us who care about conserving a humane connection to our own communal nature and history need to constantly watch how we teach, how we live, how we spend—and just as important, where we do these things—in order to combat such ideas and practices. But as one form of attachment gives way, our mourning should not prevent us from noting and nurturing other attachments that take its place.

If another rash of books were to be published proclaiming communitarianism, the movement would likely be revealed as more local, less political, more sustainable, less ambitious, and both more and less conservative (in the familial and cultural senses, respectively) than it was twenty years ago. But the essential focus of a hypothetical, 2010s communitarianism—the imperative of belonging to and bonding with the people and the rituals of a particular place—would be, I think, the same. We might hope for such a revival, even if it is highly unlikely that a future President Clinton could contribute much to it: she has committed herself for too long to a static, government-centered perspective on community and family. But those who might hear and respond to such a revival might well look around themselves and find, in comparison to those of us who latched onto these teachings two decades ago, that they are far less alone in feeling inspired by these today. And who knows? If enough hear that call, perhaps such citizens and voters could even influence our next president to remember and reconsider what she once wrote about and pondered. Clinton does have a reputation for making time in her strict schedule for regular, expert listening, after all. ■

Women & Children First

Catholics & the Politics of the Family

Bernard G. Prusak

Several presidential election cycles ago, in 2004, the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre published a short article, "The Only Vote Worth Casting in November," arguing that the responsible choice in that election was not to vote at all. "When offered a choice between two politically intolerable alternatives," he wrote, "it is important to choose neither." His argument provoked considerable debate. Were the alternatives in fact intolerable? Is our system so broken as that?

Among MacIntyre's recommendations for redressing the ways in which he considered our system broken was his call for a child-centered politics. In his view, a prime question we should be asking in our political debates is, "What do we owe our children?" His answer is that

> we owe them the best chance that we can give them of protection and fostering from the moment of conception onwards. And we can only achieve that if we give them the best chance that we can both of a flourishing family life, in which the work of their parents is fairly and adequately rewarded, and of an education which will enable them to flourish.

It follows, he went on, that our politics must be invested "in providing health care for expectant mothers, in facilitating adoptions, in providing aid for single-parent families and for grandparents who have taken parental responsibility for their grandchildren," and finally in demanding "the provision of meaningful work that provides a fair and adequate wage for every working parent, a wage sufficient to keep a family well above the poverty line." Given such prescriptions, it's understandable why MacIntyre wished a pox on both parties: such a child-centered, pro-life, pro-labor, pro-welfare politics has found a home nowhere among Democrats or Republicans, whether in 2004 or 2016.

The limited political possibilities of today, however, by no means foreclose the political possibilities of tomorrow.

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BROOKIE

As Pope John XXIII reminded the assembled bishops in his opening address to the Second Vatican Council fifty-four years ago, history gives the lie to "prophets of gloom, who are always predicting decay, as if the destruction of all things were at hand." The student of history knows, by contrast, how much has changed over the millennia, and such knowledge gives us hope that the Spirit is not done with us yet. Yet the "new order" of things Pope John discerned will not come to pass unless we act to facilitate it. To this end, we need to scrutinize the signs of the times, as the council fathers enjoined the church to do in *Gaudium et spes.*

What, then, are signs of the times that a child-centered politics must address? One critical sign, I propose, is the changing role of the father.

Here's what *Gaudium et spes* has to say about fathers:

The family is a kind of school of deeper humanity. But if it is to achieve the full flowering of its life and mission, it needs the kindly communion of minds and the joint deliberation of spouses, as well as the painstaking cooperation of parents in the education of their children. The active presence of the father is highly beneficial to their formation. The children, especially the younger among them, need the care of their mother at home. This domestic role of hers must be safely preserved, though the legitimate social progress of women should not be underrated on that account.

It is worth noting that while the active presence of the mother is taken for granted in these reflections—enfolded within the "domestic role" that *Gaudium et spes* sets out to safeguard—the active presence of the father is not a given. Instead, that presence must be summoned and encouraged. There was evidently a distance fathers needed to travel.

Several key developments in the fifty-plus years since then measure how far that journey has been accomplished. One is the significant extent to which the roles of mothers and fathers have converged. According to the Pew Research Center, mothers in the United States now do much more paid work than they used to, and fathers do much more housework and child care. Another is the rise of the two-working-parent household—now roughly 60 percent of all two-parent households with children under age eighteen, according to Pew. Moreover, as the *New York Times* reported in 2015, social scientists have found that "millennial men—ages eighteen to early thirties—have much more egalitarian attitudes about family, career and gender roles [in] marriage than generations before them." Such attitudes are clearly related to the growth of stay-at-home dads: in 2012, 16 percent of all at-home parents were men, representing a near-doubling since 1989.

To be sure, discrepancies remain in men's and women's family roles, and while millennial men have notably egalitarian attitudes about parenting, research shows that work-life conflicts still tend to push women back into the home far more often than men. All in all, though, we might conclude from these findings that, in the United States at least, fathers have answered *Gaudium et spes*'s call: they are "actively present" in children's lives to an extent the council fathers didn't imagine. Yet this is also only half the story, and the other half is not nearly so happy.

To understand why, we need to take other developments into account. One is what the bioethicist, cultural critic, and former *Commonweal* editor Daniel Callahan called the "infantilization of males," a phenomenon he linked to the practice of artificial insemination with the sperm of anonymous donors. Since the birth of the first baby through in-vitro fertilization in 1978, this practice has created several million children whose daddy's name is "Donor," as one study provocatively put it. Writing in 1992, Callahan viewed the practice as abetting a more general dereliction of male duty, and condemned "using anonymous sperm donors to help women have children apart from a permanent marital relationship with the father" as posing "a long-standing source of harm for women" even as it symbolically attacked the foundations of family life. "What action," he asked, "could more decisively declare the irrelevance of fatherhood...?"

Since then, the claim that dads are dispensable has ceased being provocative or controversial, and indeed now seems something of a commonplace. Consider the remarks of actress Jennifer Aniston, who, while promoting her 2010 movie, *The Switch*, defended her character's decision to opt for single motherhood via sperm donation. "Women are realizing…more and more," Aniston mused, "that they don't have to settle with a man just to have that child." Data would seem to support this claim. According to the Pew Research Center, in 2013, 34 percent of children lived with a single parent (over 80 percent of whom were women)—up from just 9 percent in 1960. According to the U.S. Census, one in four children under the age of eighteen today—a total of about 17.4 million—are being raised without a father. And while in 1960 only 5.3 percent of all births were to unmarried women, by 2013 it was 40.6 percent. That is a stunning change.

Statistics for teen delinquency, depression, and pregnancy all correlate significantly with whether or not a child is living with his or her father. What matters, after all, is not whether the parents are legally married, but whether the father is living with his children. And far too many aren't.

One other statistic has generated a lot of commentary: the fact that, in 2013, about 72 percent of non-Hispanic black births were to unmarried mothers. Why? One answer resides in the mass incarceration of black men over the past forty years. Since the 1970s, the prison population in the United States has quadrupled to 2.2 million, with the number of children with fathers in prison rising from 350,000 to 2.1 million. While black men constitute just 6 percent of the U.S. population, they account for 40 percent of the current prison population; this high rate of incarceration creates a gender gap among men and women in the marriage-age African-American population.

Another factor needs to be taken into account in the overall picture—namely, that the institution of marriage has fallen on hard times. Less and less is it viewed as the only proper context for having children. A 2014 *Washington Post* article reports that in the early 1990s, a quarter of the single women who got pregnant married the father of their child, while today that figure is down to just over 5 percent—with another 18 percent opting to cohabit with

the father without marrying. Against the background of the widespread loss of well-paying, middle-income jobs through globalization, outsourcing, and automation, it seems clear that cohabitation is becoming what social scientists call the poor person's marriage. "Marriage, as a context for childbearing and childrearing," the *Post* article notes, "is increasingly reserved for [our] middle- and upper-class populations." And cohabitation has proven considerably more fragile than marriage. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, while the probability of a first marriage ending within five years is 20 percent, the same probability for cohabitation is 49 percent. After ten years, the breakup rates rise to 33 percent and 62 percent respectively. Inasmuch as cohabitation is less stable than marriage and most children go with the mother when a relationship ends, more cohabitation ends up meaning less active fathering.

And thus the half of the story that is not nearly so happy. Yes, the father's role has grown significantly since 1965—in two-parent households. Fathers in those households are actively present in children's lives to an extent that the Vatican Council fathers could hardly imagine. Yet the two-parent household is less and less the rule, and increasingly reserved, as we have seen, for the better-off. And so the stunning, eightfold increase in births to unmarried women since 1960 translates to a greater absence of fathers for those children who arguably need fathers most: children afflicted by poverty and by the effects of racial discrimination. According to Brad Wilcox's research for the National Marriage Project, statistics for teen delinquency, depression, and pregnancy all correlate significantly with whether or not a child is living with his or her father. What matters, after all, is not whether the parents are legally married, but whether the father is living with his children. And far too many aren't.

How might Catholic social teaching about fathers and families best respond to these cultural, social, and political circumstances? I want to make two claims.

The first is that the contemporary church would do well to look to the medieval one. This may sound surprising, since, as the moral theologian Jean Porter has put it, "there is probably no point at which we feel the distance between the [medieval] scholastics and ourselves more sharply than in [the] evaluation of sexuality." The scholastics had a hard time acknowledging the goodness of sexual desire, which we moderns have a hard time even questioning. Instead, they were concerned—as Augustine had been—about the power of sexual pleasure to distort our reason and will, to blind us to other goods of human life, and to bind us to destructive patterns of behavior. Yet the scholastics were unable to deny the goodness of procreation, by which they understood, Porter writes, not "simply biological reproduction but the extended process by which children are educated and prepared" to participate fully in the life of a community. Commitment to the goodness of procreation followed from the basic faith commitment to the goodness of creation itself.

Put aside whether procreation, in this extended sense, is the only licit purpose of sex, or whether every sex act must be open to it. The important point for the contemporary church is that scholastic natural law with respect to the family took its bearings not from some vision of what marriage or the family or even the sex act must be like: remarkably, medieval natural lawyers were open to entertaining forms of marriage other than one man and one woman, such as polygamy. Instead, it derived from a concern that procreation be served—which is to say, that children be enabled to flourish and develop appropriately into adults. From this perspective, Pope Francis is being medieval (in a good sense) when he decries those who "insist only on issues like abortion, gay marriage, and the use of contraceptive methods," and asserts instead that "when we speak about these issues, we have to talk about them in a context." Context in this regard includes both the good news of God's saving love and mercy, as Francis is always keen to proclaim, and the bad news of our politics' failure to focus on ensuring the well-being of our children. And that failure is exactly what Catholic social teaching today must help correct.

My second claim is that—as some Catholics might reply to Francis—when we put what has happened to the family and fatherhood over the past fifty years into context, we have to include issues like abortion and contraception. It's not

COSMOS

In the niched cosmos of the church wall,
Christ's palms, painted vermillion,
metamorphose—
in wood and tempera
he holds whole the lead-white
thorns and false roses.

—Valerie Wohlfeld

Valerie Wohlfeld's most recent book of poetry is Woman with Wing Removed *(Truman State University Press). Her first collection,* Thinking the World Visible, *won the Yale Younger Poets Prize (Yale University Press).*

only structural causes such as job loss and welfare policy that explain the erosion of marriage and the stunning increase of out-of-wedlock births. There are moral and cultural changes that must also be reckoned with.

Twenty years ago, a paper co-authored by Janet Yellen, current chair of the Federal Reserve, made just this argument. According to Yellen's paper, "the magnitude of [the] changes" to family structure cannot be explained either by the expansion of the welfare state in the 1960s or the decline in jobs for less-educated men since then. Yellen and her co-authors proposed a "technology shock" explanation, zeroing in on the increased availability of contraception and legal abortion as factors that profoundly changed relations between men and women. Access to contraception and abortion, they argued, freed women to engage in premarital sex without fear of consequences, and as a result, "the norm of premarital sexual abstinence all but vanished." This change proved problematic for those women who lack access to contraception—or don't use it effectively—and are unwilling to have an abortion. Such women, said Yellen and her co-authors, are at a competitive disadvantage: amid changed sexual mores, they are badly positioned to leverage "the promise of marriage in the event of a pre-marital conception." Instead, Yellen and her co-authors argued, the man involved is likely to reason as follows: "'If she is not willing to obtain an abortion or use contraception, why should I sacrifice myself to get married?'"

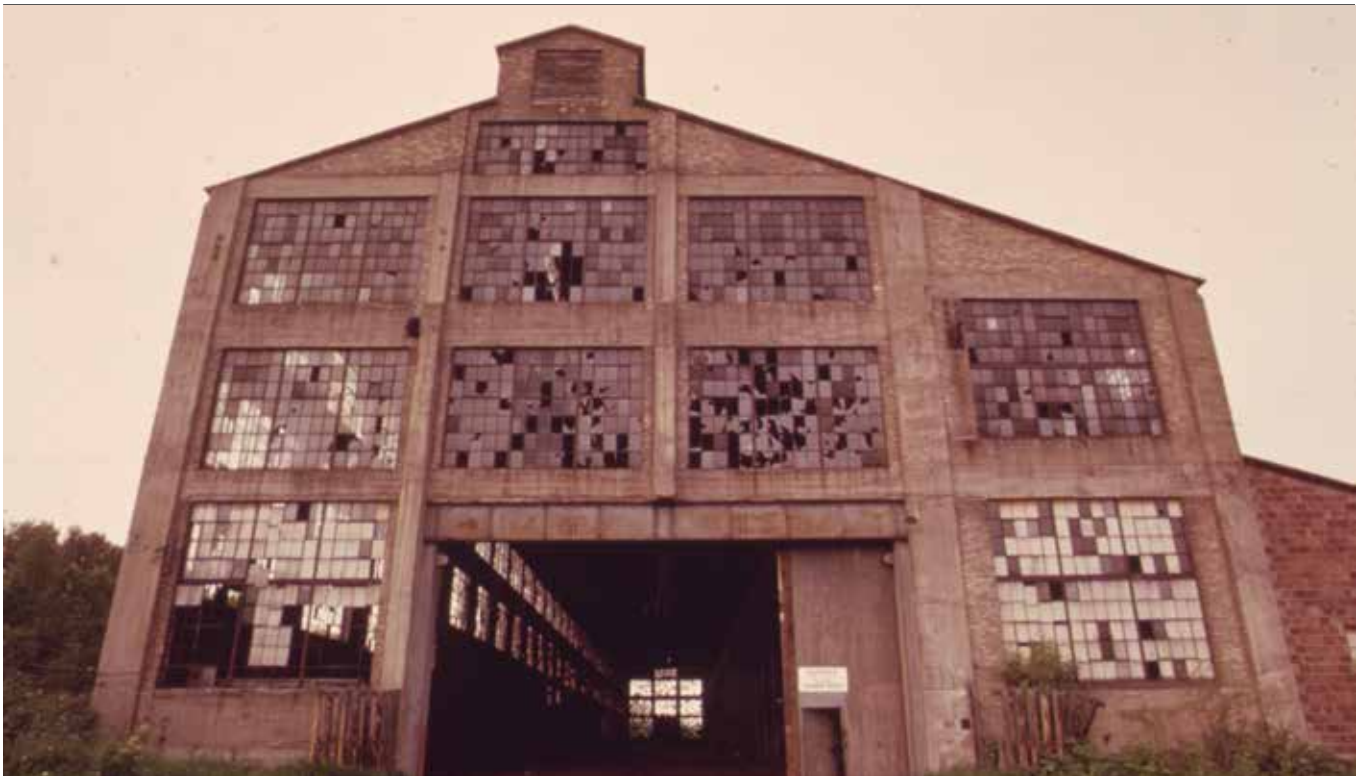
Whatever the limits of such explanations might be, certainly those who would hold men responsible for the children they help bring into being have reason to be wary of arguments that cast abortion as the rightful choice of women no matter the moral status of the fetus. As the philosopher Elizabeth Brake has argued, "if women's partial responsibility for pregnancy does not obligate them to support a fetus, then men's partial responsibility for pregnancy does not obligate them to support a resulting child." Put simply, if a woman may morally choose to abort an unborn child, then a man should be able to choose not to parent that child—a choice that in fact seems modest next to the woman's power over the unborn child's life and death. The director of the New York–based National Center for Men speaks in this regard, inelegantly, of a man's right to a "financial abortion."

It will strike some as paradoxical that the church's greatest contribution to the lives of women over these past fifty years may have been its opposition to abortion on demand. Yet should abortion come to be seen as a morally indifferent act, many people will arrive inevitably at the belief that it is unfair to hold a man responsible for a woman's choice to carry a pregnancy to term. Pope Francis has remarked along these lines that the church's defense of unborn human life is not "subject to alleged reforms or 'modernizations,'" dismissing the notion that one can "resolve problems by eliminating a human life."

To be sure, holding the line against abortion on demand is not the same as helping women and children. Nor will sounding the trumpet for a renewal of character suffice. The sexual revolution of the 1960s is not about to be overturned, nor is economic globalization likely to be reversed. So what, concretely, is the church to do? One answer Francis has given us is to cultivate "the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful." The church, he counsels, "needs nearness, proximity"; it needs to serve as "a field hospital" for the many wounded in our world.

How to do this? Indeed, how might we go even further, and advocate for preventive care, so to speak? One clear step, I think, is to call an end to the culture war over marriage, a war that is not merely beside the point, but antithetical to the kind of child-centered politics advocated by Alasdair MacIntyre in the essay I started off with. As for MacIntyre, in that brief essay he goes on to offer a very far-reaching proposal. Reminding us that "the costs of economic growth are generally borne by those least able to afford them," while "the majority of the benefits of economic growth go to those who need them least," he puts forth a never-realized idea of Milton Friedman's: a negative income tax, which would provide payments to all families below a certain income level. Securing a sufficient minimum living for every family, McIntyre writes, would represent "a large and just redistribution of income" in the United States.

Supporting such a policy would require a politician to acknowledge, as MacIntyre argues, that "the pro-life case" and "the case for economic justice...are inseparable, that each requires the other as its complement" in the formation of a truly child-centered politics. Now *that* is a candidate I for one would gladly cast my vote for, this November or any other. And do our children deserve any less? ■



Lost in Storyland

Mark Phillips

In a time when lost stories seemed rare, Aunt Laura was the first I knew who lost one. In the gin mills near my home, where these days I can hear any number of stories about lost stories, some people say they lost their stories to thieves—but nobody blamed theft back when Laura lost hers.

Before she blew out her back in a furniture factory and got addicted to opiates, my aunt enjoyed telling my sister and me tales populated by witches, ogres, and brave children. Laura never wrote her creations, but dramatized them in her scratchy voice, her laughter at our reactions reminding me of the hoarse barking of seals in the Buffalo zoo. Gestating characters and coursing nicotine freed her mind, I suppose, from her dull duties in the factory, while, in the smoky somewhere else of a new story, the children—the little people—triumphed because they were clever and brave and remembered to say their bedtime prayers. I imagine also that just before the initial amp of pain, when she used her back rather than her legs to lift her assigned end of a wooden industrial product, an elusive finale distracted her.

Mark Phillips *is author of the memoir* My Father's Cabin.

She babysat once while my parents were at a New Year's Eve party. My sister and I fell asleep on the couch before the ball dropped on television, but Laura woke us in time and later distributed pots and spoons and joined our celebration in our dark front yard, ringing welcome to the unknown, inrushing years. We beckoned the dead as well. When we were inside again, the floor puddled by snowy boots, the grump next door telephoned to complain. Laura suggested he have a good stiff drink. He called again in the morning, waking my hung-over father to complain, and Dad suggested he pound salt.

In the possession of drugs, Aunt Laura no longer told us stories. Her words became slurred, her speech parsimonious and labored, and, like one of the dangerous creatures in her tales or the chained dog up the road, she snarled at the approach of children. One afternoon, Mom and Dad took her and my sister out to lunch while Uncle Pete and I searched his and Laura's Buffalo apartment for the pills she had obtained by traveling from doctor to doctor, pharmacy to pharmacy, and who knows where else. I had almost as much fun as when hunting for Easter jellybeans. We found varicolored stashes under carpeting and grates and in the

nooks of the pantry. As my uncle poured out pills hidden under the liner of a cereal box, they rattled into the kitchen sink like a frozen, shattered rainbow.

After a heart attack killed Pete, Laura moved in with each of her four brothers, one after another, wearing out each welcome by falling asleep while smoking. When she arrived at our house, my father made her promise not to smoke in bed and to allow Mom to hold and dispense the cigarettes and pills. Mom went through the suitcases, which must have been humiliating for both women, but Laura was accustomed to circumventing searches—and that night Mom discovered her asleep atop a smoldering mattress.

Laura eventually moved in with a sister out in Michigan and stayed there for many years. I wonder whether, with her fairy tales lost, she told her sister grownup stories to which her brothers would have been deaf, applauding too loudly their own.

So of the family stories within my personal story, one of the few about women (and the longest) is about an aunt storyteller who worked outside the home and was childless. I sometimes suspect that my father—who once informed me that having children improves a woman "just like having puppies makes a dog better"—assigned me to join Pete in the drug bust with the intention of teaching me what becomes of a woman who attempts to live in the wrong kind of story.

I know legends about my great-grandfather Samuel Phillips, who was a blacksmith in the North of Ireland before emigrating to America, and about Samuel's father, a County Down dirt farmer, and one about Samuel's grandfather, a seafaring horse trader from Wales who fell in love with a woman in Ulster and stayed. As female lives slip by unmentioned, an agnatic figurehead mounts the prow of family lore. I can repeat dozens of tales about my grandfather Phillips, who was an iron worker in Buffalo, but can tell you little more of my grandmother Phillips than her surname and that her sons thought her the world's best cook.

I can tell you though that one afternoon, during the gray years when Grandma had dementia, Grandpa drove to my childhood home to say she no longer knew him and had told him her husband was dead. Standing in our kitchen, he wept as if he had lost everything.

It is doubtful to me that my grandfather could have imagined women breaking into the stores of stories. Or "the ethnics"—as my father-in-law referred to people who had darker skin than his: busting in, filling sacks, departing with precious words. To some Americans it is still unimaginable. Men complain that women talk too much. White people complain that black people are too loud. And Hispanics talk too fast.

My wife every so often insists on recalling when we returned from a date and found her father asleep in a running car parked in the family driveway on a cold night. Margaret's mother had thrown him out of the house. Recently, I interrupted the story: "Yeah. I know. I was there."

She told it again anyhow.

A recent study found that the death rate for white middle-age Americans, especially in the working class, is increasing. Premature death from drug overdose and suicide were considered to be possible causes for the increase, but no definite conclusions were drawn. In an interview cited by *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, Angus Deaton, one of the authors of the study, noted an anthropologist's theory that white middle-age Americans "have lost the narrative of their lives." A number of white working-class folk have subsequently suffered my questions about their reportedly lost "narrative"—typically while we are entertained by a sporting event on a TV mounted to a wall behind a bar—and usually it is the men who reply, in effect, *Lost it, my ass. It was ripped off.*

A family with brown skin has moved into what is called a neighborhood hereabouts—which is to say, within a few miles of my home in the hinterlands of the Alleghenies. I know a few people who have taken this change as evidence that our neighborhood is hopelessly lost. Our loose neighborhood has been the scene of two police raids on crude methamphetamine laboratories, but those occurred several years ago, when the population here was still entirely white and nobody thought we were lost. Within the past fifteen years, several neighborhood white guys have done prison time for drug dealing, arson, theft, and other such criminal acts formerly assumed to be distant and urban in nature, and yet neighborhood introspection is too superficial to halt the spread of certain rumors about our new neighbors. Stories circle like the wagons in a Zane Grey fiction.

During this long campaign season, some candidates have warned that immigrants are stealing both employment and the American story. Our government has made it easy for corporations to move jobs to countries with labor laws as scarce and lax as those in the American Gilded Age, but according to some of the scripts traveling across teleprompters, the immigrant population is—along with excessive taxation and regulation of business—a major cause of unemployment. In these contemporary Jim Crow yarns, which are devoid of any intended irony, immigrants are shiftless and yet labor long hours for employers who pay starvation wages rather than hiring U.S. citizens and paying them well.

I am reminded of the laboring characters in legends that seasoned the fare at my childhood dinner table. Unless smeared with grease or ground with coal dust, none had dark skin. Next to none was female. When, at age eighteen, I took a summer job in the coal-fired power plant where my father was a welder, almost the entire labor force there was Caucasian despite the plant's proximity to a large African-American population that had its own family histories, including stories about employment applications lost in white, white Buffalo blizzards.

In the blue-collar stories I heard following our mealtime prayers, work is sacred even when the Phillips legends are tragic. Falls at construction sites jar stories forever from the skulls of three ancestors; the ribs of another crumble with the errant swing of a fellow worker's sledgehammer; and trees crush two kin in logging accidents, leaving both men with permanent disabilities. Surely the wounded required pain medication, and yet the pills go unmentioned except in the story about Laura. The living return to work: we men were to remember that for his faithfulness, all that he lost was restored to Job.

The power plant where my father worked has closed, but it seems that some things never change. A neighbor of mine took gentler and lower-paying employment after rupturing spinal discs while laying out steel forms for concrete; another is disabled because a fringe benefit of his factory job was asbestosis; and one is back to work after an industrial accident and a year filled with surgeries and physical therapy. I know a fifty-something guy who returns from work so sore that after switching off the ignition he flips open a cooler and unlatches his pickup door, downs a can of beer and soon another, nudges the door with his left shoulder, stiffly shifts his left foot onto the running board, has one more beer, and only several minutes after this necessary homecoming ritual does he find it bearable to actually limp into his home.

On my way to town one day, driving by tumbledown barns and hillside pastures abandoned to hawthorn, I heard a member of Congress propose a further lifting of the national retirement age. A news person was mechanically asking the usual questions of the important man, who was giving the usual greased replies, reminding me that—some years before and not far from my home—a silage chopper bit into a farmer, and that when he didn't appear for dinner, it was his wife who found what remained of him.

If you would, consider for another few moments the surprising appeal of a businessman who is running for president of the United States as I write this in the year 2016. A callous on neither hand. Famous in part for humiliating workers on national TV by screaming with evident joy, "You're fired!" Declared bankruptcy four times while some minimally paid workers have held down three jobs concurrently. Would any hard-laboring and weather-beaten or dusty-lunged American hope for such a man to become president? It once would have been hard to imagine. Yet in diners and gin mills in town I encounter hard-bitten white men who identify with this candidate. And hard-bitten white women who do, too. His supporters say he won't tolerate uppity women and will wall out immigrants, and they accept his handout of a tale in which he fights for people like them—and I can't help but wonder how overwhelming must the hunger for a story become before anyone would swallow one like that.

Once upon a time, the poacher was a sympathetic figure in the lore of the Phillips family. As he sipped whiskey one night in our parlor, my father described his grandfather and great-grandfather's method of quietly poaching pheasants from estates in the North of Ireland. They soaked grain in poteen, spread the bait in a remote corner of a field and eventually wrung the necks of the intoxicated and helpless birds before stuffing the carcasses into a sack. In another of Dad's stories, a well-to-do landowner in rural New York discovers that a teenage trapper is poaching muskrats on his property. He chases the boy onto the small farm where my grandfather lived in his retirement. My grandfather, who happens to be outside, fetches a pitchfork from his barn and intervenes, allowing the lad to escape and thereby beating the devil at his own game. Yet these days, when stories are told at my family and neighborhood gatherings, the poacher is somehow no longer one of us. As voices rise over the hot spitting of the grill and the icy clattering from the beer cooler, the poacher is now characterized as a threatening outsider: a job-seeking Mexican who snuck across the border, an African American who benefited from affirmative action, a woman in a profession formerly reserved for men. And each time the poacher appears in a new story, usually as the usurper of someone's American dream, I recall the day when a friend and I pursued poachers—actually ourselves—through a winter forest.

My friend wanted to show me the landscape around the farm owned by the family of a woman he was dating. We set off late on a March morning, the snow somewhat blinding in the sunlight. On the far side of cropland, where after spring plowing one might find knapped tools of Native Americans, we unstrapped and removed our snowshoes temporarily so we could pass over a barbed wire fence and into a maple woods. Snow fleas swirled like windblown dust over the whiteness. Here and there, covered buckets hung dented and askance from spiles. Sap drummed tin. Trudging onward, we shouldered our coats, and I was urged to be on alert for trespassers in the thickening forest beyond the sugar bush. "A lot of trouble with them around here," my friend explained. "Poaching deer."

Many bare trees and much bright snow later, he halted and lifted his right arm and hand into a droopy point.

"Look—tracks. Poachers."

The tracks resembled our own. Indignant at my suggestion that we were lost and had traveled the woods in a large circle, he said, "I know where I'm going."

So we set off after the two poachers, eyes watering in the glare, noses dripping, thighs and calves pushing off sorely and mechanically, snowshoes lifting and arcing, snow crunching under the rhythm of our march. His legs were longer than mine, and, eventually, laboring to match his pace, I caught one of my snowshoes on the other and tumbled face-first into the snow, righting myself only moments before he halted and pointed at new tracks.

"Damn," he said. "Now there are four of them." ■

THAT SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER

And when we're evacuated—mind snapped and snapping
snapped back—in the fundament of things. What you said,
explosions so fierce you feared your eardrums punctured,
the building shook, it moved so much you thought it would crash,
I was, you said, thinking of you so much, you hoped, you said,
not too many were dead, afraid that if this is war
a chemical-warfare agent is in the air, you couldn't see a thing,
heavy, mud-colored, swirling, brown, black, grey,
fine dust particles, it looked like a solid curtain of nightmare,
you said, and, you said, you were frightened. And tower fragments
the size of football fields falling in every direction, seawater
pumped from the Hudson through hoses attached to fire-trucks
near West Street, and at night, candles lit at windows
to let the others know they're not alone. Small park
across Queens Boulevard, the leafless oak against the dark
green dusk air, strips of shadow along the pavement's edge.
Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time—"And how long,
my God, have I cried out the violence to you, but you do not
intervene, how long have I cried out for help, my God,
but you do not listen"—from the Book of the prophet Habakkuk.
Today, sunny and windy, blustery tonight and cold.
"Marine and Army May Scour Caves, U.S. General Says,"
headline in the *Times*. No longer in the government,
but on the inside with those in the government, the Taliban
in Afghanistan won't last another month, he says, Sudan
or, maybe, next the Bekaa Valley, but Iraq, there's no evidence
Iraq was involved, but we feel it is, we feel it, he says,
and anyway, he smiles, conditions are, now, ideal to take it.
Acid mist, volatile organic compounds, dangerous levels
of asbestos; rising and spiraling white steam;
blowtorch-produced green vapor, pit fumes,
white, stinking, transformed in pink light until clouds
of smoke obscure it. A common fate pain can't forget;
incessantly pulled apart; in this memory's light.

—Lawrence Joseph

Lawrence Joseph is the author of five books of poems, most recently Into It *and* Codes, Precepts, Biases, and Taboos: Poems 1973-1993 *(Farrar, Straus and Giroux) His sixth book of poems,* So Where Are We? *will be published by FSG in 2017. He is also written two books of prose,* Lawyerland *(FSG) and* The Game Changed: Essays and Other Prose *(University of Michigan Press). He is Tinnelly Professor of Law at St. John's University School of Law and lives in New York City.*

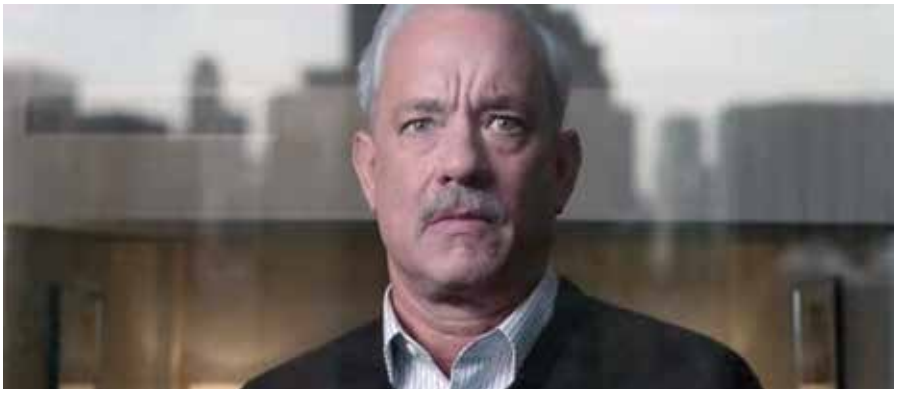
Richard Alleva

How to Dramatize Heroism—and How Not To

'SULLY' & 'SNOWDEN'

In an interview he gave a few years ago, Morgan Freeman suggested that Clint Eastwood might be the very best of current American film directors for sheer storytelling skill. Since I thought this praise at least plausible, it was with some consternation that I watched the beginning of Eastwood's latest film, *Sully*—an account of how, a few minutes after departing from LaGuardia Airport in New York, airline pilot Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger and his first officer Jack Skiler landed the disabled US Airways Flight 1549 on the Hudson River and evacuated all passengers safely. A formidable feat, worthy of being the climax of an action-disaster movie. But here was the very first shot of the film and the plane was already in the air and only seconds away from its fate. So soon? What about some dramatic buildup? Was the rest of the movie going to be one long anticlimax?

Well, of course not. What I was watching turned out to be Sullenberger's post-flight nightmare, concluding with the plane's total destruction. Sweating and shaking in his hotel room, he's failing to get a good night's sleep before testifying at a hearing of the National Transportation Safety Board, which will determine whether the river landing was necessary or whether a return to LaGuardia had been possible and preferable. Eastwood's storytelling sense is intact and more acute than ever. By beginning the narrative well after the accident occurred and while it's still under investigation, the director and his scriptwriter, Todd Komarnicki, postpone the action until we're ready for a nerve-wracking flashback. More important, they clue us into the movie's real theme: not the glorification of heroism but the mental agony of a man who will firmly justify his actions in public but inwardly craves solid, objective proof that he's done his duty. He may be 99 percent certain that he has, but the single percent of doubt is bothering him the way a dripping faucet rooms away can bother someone trying to sleep.



Tom Hanks in Sully

WARNER BROS. PICTURES

For an American public scarred by both September 11 and the financial crisis, the "Miracle on the Hudson" came as a much-needed opportunity to celebrate American can-do heroism, and Eastwood and Komaricki wittily present the different ways people idolize new heroes. A pretty concierge temporarily preserves her poise while showing Sully to his hotel room but then suddenly lurches forward to hug the embarrassed family man. And a bartender, delighted to find himself serving the man of the hour, and knowing that the airplane was disabled by Canada geese flying into its propellers, pours the pilot a glass of Gray Goose vodka on a splash of water, and names the concoction "The Sully." Not a bad joke, but the still-shaky pilot just grimaces.

Tom Hanks has played many heroes in the past decade, but this is the first time he's had to put his sense of humor on hold while doing so. (Even his mostly dour Captain Phillips enjoyed playing cat-and-mouse with his pirate captors.) Hanks's brow-furrowed, inwardly peering Sully never cracks a smile even as he receives the kind of attention from press and public that would inflate the ego of a weaker man. "Unhappy is the land that needs a hero," mourns Galileo in the Bertold Brecht play, but Sullenberger ponders another lesson about the media-drenched America of the twenty-first century: unsatisfied is the land until it can tear down an inflated hero. He realizes that amid the dense foliage of public acclaim lurks the hungry tiger of derision. After he dreams of his plane crashing, he has a second dream of his reputation crashing, with a fantasized Katie Couric declaiming on a fantasized TV program: "Sully—hero or fraud?" But Hanks's Sully, who feels like neither a hero nor a fraud, won't relax until he's heard the contents of the black-box recording.

Eastwood's choreography of all the first-responders—helicopter pilots, stewardesses, New York Waterway ships, NYPD, and the Red Cross—makes the post-crash rescue scene overshadow the excitement of the landing itself, and I think this was Eastwood's intention. For, despite its title, *Sully* is much more a tribute to teamwork than a paean to individual heroism. It comes as no surprise when the director interrupts the closing credits with a mini-documentary in which the real-life counterparts of the movie characters come together to celebrate the bonding that resulted from the accident.

Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation
(act of August 12, 1970: Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code).

1. **Title of publication:** COMMONWEAL.
2. **Publication Number:** 0010-3330.
3. **Date of filing:** September 9, 2016.
4. **Frequency of issue:** published twice monthly except for April, July, August and November, when it is published monthly.
5. **No. of issues published annually:** 20.
6. **Annual subscription price:** $65.
7. **Location of known office of publication:** 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115.
8. **Location of the headquarters of general business offices of the publishers:** 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115.
9. **Names and addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Publisher:** Thomas Baker, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115. **Editor:** Paul Baumann, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115. **Managing Editor:** Matthew Boudway, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115.
10. **Owner (if owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock):** Commonweal Foundation, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115.
11. **Known bondholders, mortgagees and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities:** None.
12. **The purpose, function and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during preceding 12 months.**
13. **Publication title:** COMMONWEAL.
14. **Issue date for circulation data below:** September 23, 2016.
15. **Extent and nature of circulation:**

	Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months	Actual number of copies of a single issue published nearest to filing date
A. Total no. copies printed (Net Press Run):	14,527	15,307
B. Paid Circulation:		
(1) Mail subscriptions outside county:	13,810	14,634
(2) Mail subscriptions in county:	0	0
(3) Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales:	0	0
(4) Other classes:	0	0
C. Total paid circulation:	13,810	14,634
D. Free or nominal rate distribution:		
(1) Free outside-county copies:	275	298
(2) Free in-county copies:	0	0
(3) Free copies mailed at other classes:	0	0
(4) Free distribution outside the mail (carriers or other means):	0	0
E. Total free or nominal rate distribution (sum of D):	275	298
F. Total distribution (sum of C and E):	14,085	14,932
G. Copies not distributed:	442	375
H. Total (sum of F and G):	14,527	15,307
I. Percent paid and/or requested circulation:	98.0%	98.0%

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

James Hannan, Business Manager

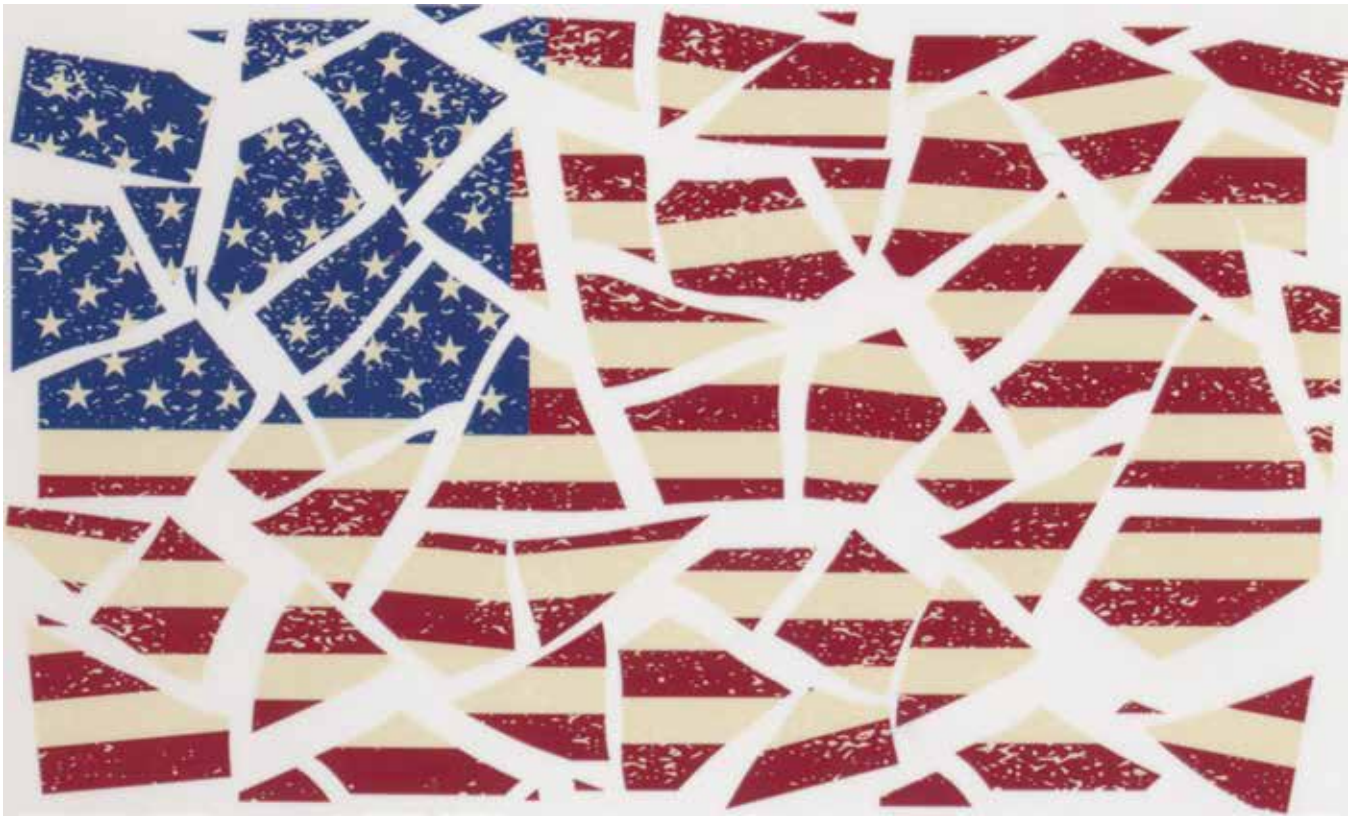
It's a group hug I can't begrudge them (though please see my colleague Rand Cooper's *dotCommonweal* post about the movie, which does exactly that), but it made me grateful that the movie preceding it acknowledges the reality of heroism only in the most understated, unschmaltzy style imaginable. It's Clint Eastwood's best work since *Mystic River*. Whether at his very best (*Unforgiven*) or very worst (*The Rookie*), he's always been a plain director, only as good or as bad as his script—no idiosyncratic flourishes, no stylistic curlicues. He was therefore the best choice to guide a movie about a man whose final account of himself is "I did my job." A workaday filmmaker for a workaday hero.

Perhaps nobody has enough information yet about Edward Snowden to render a definitive judgement on his character, but everybody seems to have an inflexible opinion. He's a hero! He's a villain! And what does Oliver Stone make of him? If you know Stone's previous work, you won't be surprised.

In *Snowden* Joseph Gordon-Levitt plays (quite well, let it be said) the same patriotic, soon-to-be-wised up naïf that Charlie Sheen embodied in *Platoon* and *Wall Street*. When asked during his entrance exam for the C.I.A. whether he believes the United States is the greatest country in the world, he unhesitatingly answers yes. The neophyte soon acquires two father figures (as did Sheen in his two Stone films): a Good Father in Nicolas Cage's Hank Forrester, who once invented for the Company a filtered surveillance program that would monitor only those legitimately suspected of terrorism; a Bad Father in Rhys Ifans's Corbin O'Brian, a C.I.A. honcho who claims that "secrecy is security and security is power," and wants to spy on every citizen in the world. Despite our hero's initial oscillation between these two characters (invented, I assume), we are never in any doubt as to which one Snowden will make proud. The motto of the movie (as enunciated by reporter Glenn Greenwald) is: "Terror is the excuse and the only thing surveillance workers are protecting is the supremacy of the government." For this is what the left-winger Oliver Stone has in common with right-wing conspiracy theorists: a belief that the government is always the enemy, regardless of who is president or which party is in charge of Congress. The major difference between Stone and right-wingers is that the latter are absolute in their paranoia while Stone believes that a just government is possible, and that one did exist during the Kennedy presidency.

Stone, like all of us, must be permitted his private mythology, but what can't be countenanced is his failure to delve into the complexities of the Snowden case and to dramatize it in a way that adults can take seriously. His apologist for surveillance, O'Brian (echoing Orwell's O'Brian in *1984*?), oils his way around the screen, craftiness glinting from his eyes, his lips always slightly upturned in a sinister half-smile, and his every expression of concern for the nation's safety smacking of proto-fascism. For the final confrontation between him and our hero in a Skype interview, O'Brian's image is projected onto a huge screen covering an entire wall. Before it stands Snowden, a speck of righteousness toward whom the towering screen figure stoops, seemingly ready to devour him. This is an image fit for "Jack the Giant Killer," but "Jack" is a fairy tale, while Stone fancies himself a cinematic historian and truth-teller. What kind of truth-teller bathes his protagonist in a celestial white light, as Stone does in one of the final shots?

If I reject this fluently filmed and briskly edited movie, it's not because of political disagreement. In fact, I'm more than willing to believe that the fugitive will one day be seen the way Stone sees him, as a courageous idealist. But the problem of counter-terrorism that has engulfed Snowden has also caught in its coils other well-meaning idealists, like President Obama (whom Stone implicitly dismisses as just another surveillance nasty in the film's closing montage), and this clash of patriots needs a dramatization that is adult and tragic, not juvenile and melodramatic. ■



JACKET IMAGE FROM *THE FRACTURED REPUBLIC*. © GOGRAPH.COM

Peter Steinfels

Can the Right Reform?

The Fractured Republic
Renewing America's Social Contract in the Age of Individualism
Yuval Levin
Basic Books, $27.50, 272 pp.

E. J. Dionne has called them the Reformicons. They are a contingent of young "reform conservatives," who are neither doctrinaire libertarians nor Tea Party primitives. Most nest in conservative Washington think tanks; a few are perched at *National Review*; one, Ross Douthat, occupies the op-ed page's rightmost branch at the *New York Times*. The Reformicon goal is to develop a positive vision for conservatism, defining it (and coincidentally the Republican Party) by what they are for, not only what they are against. So far their influence has been much greater inside the Beltway, and even inside a few congressional offices, than among the conservative rank-and-file of the GOP generally; but as an August 6 front-page story in the *Times* explained, although most Reformicons despise Donald Trump, his shattering of the Republican establishment may have opened the field for their ideas.

Yuval Levin is often described as the intellectual leader of this group, and *The Fractured Republic: Renewing America's Social Contract in the Age of Individualism* presents a Big Framework for their thinking. That alone makes the book worth examination. My own interest goes further. Levin is a Burkean. His last book was *The Great Debate: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, and the Birth of Left and Right*, a very one-sided debate in which he mainly used Paine as a foil for expounding the thought of Burke. Now I am anything but a young reform conservative, being neither young nor conservative. Still, as a lifelong liberal I have often considered myself a Burkean liberal and, even as a sometime democratic socialist, a Burkean democratic socialist. That is to say, incremental-

ist, anti-utopian, attentive to the "little platoons" at the base of society. Levin emphasizes the importance of mediating institutions standing between the individual and the state, and he parades the banner of subsidiarity, two concerns prominent in Catholic social thought. Currently the editor of a policy journal, *National Affairs*, Levin previously edited the *New Atlantis*, a journal that entertained doubts about science's resources for addressing the grave ethical questions it raises doubts that I had felt during my half decade in the then-burgeoning field of bioethics.

Oh, and one other thing in Levin's favor. He has long spotted Donald Trump as "an unstable, disordered, malevolent charlatan unfit for the presidency."

The Fractured Republic begins with the claim that American politics are trapped in twin nostalgias of baby boomers. The baby-boom Left looks back to a vaguely defined Golden Age in which the rebellions of the 1960s rested on the exceptional postwar economy of the 1950s. The baby-boom Right yearns for the lost vision of the Reagan Revolution, which sought to recover the cultural stability of the 1950s.

Levin places this contemporary battle of nostalgias within an overarching scheme of American history since the late nineteenth century. From the 1890s to the 1970s, America underwent a period of consolidation: the rise of giant corporations, progressive government institutions to regulate them, and a more unified national culture, all abetted by world wars, whether One, Two, or Cold. Starting in the 1960s, the nation began to enter an era of "diffusion." The postwar cultural consensus was fragmented by racial struggle, antiwar agitation, the sexual revolution, the counterculture, and a new individualism. The economic status quo was challenged by a first wave of globalization (think Germany and Japan), stagflation, new innovating industries, declining labor unions, more globalization, and deregulation. "Disruption" became a term of high praise. Anti-Washington fervor, political polarization, and congressional gridlock undid confidence in the federal government.

This framework does a lot of heavy lifting for Levin's argument. Attributing our political frustration to mere "nostalgias" of Left and Right baby boomers positions the author nicely in the middle as a voice of post-boomer conservative realism. The claim that America has irreversibly passed into an era of diffusion allows him to tag all progressive proposals involving centralized (read federal) action as "outdated," "antiquated," "anachronistic," "mired in the past," "not plausible," and so on. Instead, the breakup of older unionized industries, the distrust of Washington, and, above all, the fragmentation of cultural norms and the new diversity of lifestyles dictate greater reliance on market choice, subsidiarity, and working through mediating institutions.

By labeling baby-boomer politics as nostalgic and progressive proposals as anachronistic, Levin gives his case an aura of "wave of the future" inevitability, ironically a rhetorical tactic usually associated with the Left rather than the Right.

Of course viable social policy must escape Golden Ages illusions and accommodate the broad features of a particular era. But Levin's framework suffers from exaggerations. Are we really trapped by baby-boomer nostalgia? I cannot say whether dreams of reliving the Reagan Revolution hypnotize baby-boomers of the Right. As a slight pre-boomer (born before 1946 but nonetheless a child of the World War II generation), I can testify that for the Left the 1960s and early 1970s were in many respects a frightful, desperate time for which, apart perhaps from the music, we have little nostalgia. As for recent liberal evocations of the postwar economy, they are largely a response to the right-wing insistence that high taxes, economic growth, and greater equality are necessarily antithetical; and they are almost always evoked with the qualification that the postwar years were exceptional.

More serious are Levin's exaggerations of consolidation, especially of political centralization. Beltway-based Reformicons share the Reaganite fixation on the federal government. They pay scant attention to the real power (not necessarily any more efficient or any less corrupt than Washington's) of states, cities, villages, counties, courts, school districts, and a host of other local entities and authorities to elect, appoint, decide, tax, spend, subsidize, administer, redistrict, investigate, jail, compete, cooperate, or obstruct. To say nothing of the for-profit enterprises and charitable organizations that government relies on at every level. In fact, not a few of the federal government's failings, but also its strengths, stem from its entanglement, driven by either administrative or political necessities, with this complex web of decision-makers.

Levin's overestimation of governmental centralization is matched by his neglect of economic centralization. (Levin also has little to nothing to say about climate change, pollution, consumer safety, foreign policy, and war, areas where consolidated policy cannot be easily avoided.) In sector after sector, from banking to pharmaceuticals to hospital chains and health insurance to communications to airlines, top firms have increased their market share. For communities as well as consumers, economic diffusion evidently means that decisions are made by fewer people farther and farther away, in New York or China or Europe or Silicon Valley. One might imagine a conservative of Levin's stripe to be sensitive to this loss of local power.

Power and its disparities are, in fact, the invisible protagonist in Levin's framework. Federal power and progressives do get called out for being "anachronistic." Still, this is a very abstract story. Changes are attributed to forces, not agents. At least not agents defined much more concretely than "Right" and "Left." Otherwise, things change because of the "political system" or "structural transformations in the economy" or "extreme individualism." That's one way of analyzing our republic, to be sure; what's missing is any sense that behind those forces for

change are also profit-seeking CEOs and shareholders, corporate lobbyists, state legislatures engaged in partisan redistricting, wealthy campaign donors, state and municipal officials bidding against one another to lure new enterprises, advertisers and entertainment promoters eager to "push the envelope" of sexual expression, rich donors and foundations who fund socially liberal causes, women and racial minorities infuriated by traditional barriers.

No wonder that Levin can write so confidently, "Wealth is not a social problem, but poverty is.... In our society, the wealth of some does not appear to cause the poverty of others." No wonder he can dismiss the political "overemphasis on income inequality" and judge attention to the "super-rich" to be "a bizarre obsession." One might take this warning against zero-sum thinking about income and wealth more seriously if the author found something bizarre, perhaps even appalling, in last year's parade of presidential hopefuls before small circles of the super-rich to be vetted for the highest office in a democracy. What makes this complacency about disparities in power, especially economic power, particularly problematic is the Reformicons' agenda, as Levin describes it, of "replacing the institutions of the liberal welfare state with more market-oriented mechanisms." These mechanisms, in line with a "postmodernizing assumption," promise to be "nimbler and more responsive, customizable, and adaptable" than the allegedly "one-size-fits-all benefit programs" of centralized, progressive government.

Furthermore, Levin argues, we don't really know how to solve problems like poverty, social mobility, inner-city education, and assuring health care. So market mechanisms, which he describes somewhat antiseptically in terms of an "epistemology," a "bottom-up theory of distributed knowledge," provide a laboratory for experimentation by consumers rather than progressive experts. This is an odd laboratory, however, in which experiments can be designed and the results determined not just by distributed knowledge but maldistributed assets.

The most original part of Levin's framework, certainly for fellow conservatives, is his argument regarding the culture. In the present era of diffusion, he maintains, conservatives can no longer assume a cultural "moral majority," let alone imagine that it can enlist government to defend popular values against an elite veneer of sexual and lifestyle liberation. Nor, to the extent that this liberation extends important life choices, should conservatives oppose it. At the same time, he advises them that the commanding heights of the culture are no more controlled by the cultural Left than by the Right. The culture will continue to be a terrain of sometimes overlapping, sometimes contending moral minorities, a landscape not of a single culture war but of multiple subcultures and subculture wars. Conservatives should abandon their defensive, apocalyptic rhetoric and adopt instead a "subcultural conservatism" aimed at

strengthening communities, above all faith-based ones, of character-forming values and ways of life. This leads Levin into exploring ideas like Rod Dreher's "Benedict Option" or other spin-offs of philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre's "melancholy vision" in *After Virtue* of cultural chaos.

Family, faith, work, community, education, direct citizen participation: concern about the "hollowing out" of these mediating and character-forming institutions standing between the state and the individual is at the heart of Levin's argument. Public policy, according to Levin and other Reformicons, should work to strengthen and not replace these institutions. It should respect their diversity and, whenever possible, their autonomy. Market mechanisms like vouchers vest choices in families and may increase job opportunities. Federalism and local control enhance civic participation. What can be done for religious communities is not so clear except "do no harm." Levin fears that the freedom of religious groups to maintain institutions abiding by their own standards at odds with secular culture is under threat. Unlike many of my fellow liberal Catholics, I believe his fear is warranted.

Of course, defending mediating institutions in principle is one thing. Deciding whether specific public policies would help or hollow them out in practice is quite another. That cannot be decided in the abstract. In fact, the Reformicons are a notably wonkish bunch, insisting, with Levin in front, that conservatives must offer detailed proposals in place of sweeping slogans. Unfortunately, *The Fractured Republic* relegates such well-developed examples to references in the endnotes.

The most comprehensive of those references is *Room to Grow*, a 120-page collection of Reformicon essays (available online) examining middle-class anxieties, health care, employment, poverty, tax reform, schooling, energy, child care, higher education, and family stability. (Curiously missing, as in Levin's book, are discussions of climate change, foreign policy, defense spending, and national security. In the *Wall Street Journal*, the Brookings Institution's William A. Galston added that the essays also skipped "hot-button social issues such as same-sex marriage"; are "all but silent on the budget, trade, and immigration"; and touch on "tax reform and Social Security only tangentially.")

As Levin signaled, the emphasis is on market mechanisms, which are generally assumed to be free of the unintended consequences and potential abuses besetting government programs. The essays flaunt plenty of antiliberal, antigovernment, promarket boilerplate, perhaps to demonstrate their Republican bona fides, because a few ideas do challenge GOP orthodoxy—and have been duly denounced by libertarian and Tea Party stalwarts. One leading heresy is to abandon the party's fixation with cutting marginal tax rates in favor of tax credits for those raising children. And despite the boilerplate, there are quiet concessions to the value of government programs, as well as warnings against unfortunate conservative reflexes—e.g., blaming educational failure on teachers and their unions. The language is the language of ends and means, not of war to the death.

In fact, a good many left-of-center analysts and activists are well aware of the shortcomings of government programs and don't hesitate to propose ways, some including vouchers or market mechanisms, to make them more flexible and responsive. Levin admits as much, though he chooses to call them "a small band." One would imagine that such liberal and Reformicon reforms could be fought out, or compromised, on their merits if there weren't forces more entrenched than competing nostalgias.

A major problem is the Reformicon starting point. In theory, it should be the health of character-forming mediating institutions, like family and work and schools, and threats to that health coming from any direction, from the market, the culture, the government, or even other mediating institutions. In practice, the Reformicon starting point is almost always the threat from the federal government. As Galston notes, *Room to Grow* is essentially a Republican document that "colors within the lines."

Dionne's "Reformicon" label is a play on "neocon," the eventual shorthand for the neoconservatism that I analyzed at book length in 1979. At that time, while I was highly critical of neoconservatism, I was impressed with it enough to make a wager. In 1949 Lionel Trilling famously lamented that in America conservative impulses did not "express themselves in ideas but only in action or in irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas." It was a lament that might have once been unfair but seems timely again today.

In 1979, for all my differences with neoconservatism, I argued that it promised, on various grounds, to be "the serious and intelligent conservatism America has lacked." I was well aware that this conclusion was risky and sure to elicit scornful objections from many liberal friends. "Let me not hedge my bet," I wrote bravely.

Well, as I explained when my book was reissued with a new foreword in 2013, I not only lost that bet but lost it much more quickly than I could have anticipated. With the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, many neoconservative intellectuals, previously political outsiders and broad-gauged pragmatic social theorists, became Washington operators and, finally, sophisticated proponents of American unilateralism and military intervention. By 2003, when they were associated with the invasion of Iraq, pundits and headline writers had abbreviated their identity to neocons.

Now the same question is posed about the Reformicons. Any chance that they could offer the serious and intelligent conservatism America has lacked—and at this moment so sorely needs? For all the reasons given above, I'm not betting on it. I wish it were otherwise. ■

Peter Steinfels, *a former editor of* Commonweal, *is the author of* A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America *and* The Neoconservatives: The Origins of a Movement *(both published by Simon & Schuster).*

Andrew J. Bacevich

Now Shut Up and Shop

Tribe
On Homecoming and Belonging
Sebastian Junger
Twelve, $22, 168 pp.

This slight, yet very ambitious book posits that the PTSD epidemic currently afflicting American soldiers stems less from anything those soldiers may have experienced in combat than from what they encounter upon returning home. The essence of the problem, Sebastian Junger writes, "doesn't seem to be trauma on the battlefield so much as reentry into society." Rather than war per se, it's the emptiness of the American way of life that leaves so many veterans ill-equipped to cope with the after-effects of their service.

From an early age, Junger himself experienced that emptiness. Growing up in a comfortable Boston suburb, he found "the sheer predictability" of daily existence dispiriting. "Nothing ever happened," he recalls, "that required anything close to a collective effort." As a youngster, Junger longed for a "chance to prove my worth to my community and my peers." Yet doing so, he came to believe, required heroics of some sort, difficult to demonstrate on a quiet street "where people's homes were set behind deep hedges" and neighbors barely knew each other. "How do you become a man in a world that doesn't require courage?" he wondered. In search of an answer to that question, he embarked upon a journey that eventually led him to become a prize-winning journalist—and something of a war junkie.

Junger clearly identifies with the young Americans for whom wartime service signifies a comparable quest for manhood (*Tribe* implicitly accepts the traditional view of armed combat as an intrinsically male domain). As a witness to war and empathetic observer of soldiers, he came to the not-altogether-original realization that combat not infrequently forges a profound sense of solidarity among combatants. Members of a squad or platoon form a tribe of sorts, linked to one another by bonds that Junger believes have otherwise all but vanished from our hyper-individualistic, consumer-oriented society. For boys grasping at maturity, in other words, war offers a rite of initiation, all the more alluring given that elsewhere in American society such rites have fallen out of fashion.

Yet the tribal bonds enabling soldiers to cope with the stresses of combat survive only so long as the soldiers remain in the war zone. When they return stateside, cohesion dissipates. The disorienting plunge back into mass society renders some (by no means all) veterans susceptible to self-destructive pathologies. More than a few may even yearn to return to war, its brutal purposefulness contrasting favorably with the frantic, anxiety-generating, soul-emptying hurly-burly of everyday life.

Such a response, as Junger sees it, is not entirely irrational. "Given the profound alienation of modern society, when combat vets say they miss the war," he writes, "they might be having an entirely healthy response to life back home."

Sebastian Junger

Junger substantiates his worst-of-times-as-best-of-times hypothesis by referencing the experience of other "tribes." These include residents of European cities heavily bombed during World War II, Israeli Jews fearing imminent extermination, and even American gays during the height of the AIDS epidemic. In each case, a common threat engendered collective solidarity, individual complaints taking a backseat to communal peril. People under extreme duress, Junger contends, feel better about themselves and one another. Overall indices of mental well-being improve. In each instance, moreover, the passing of danger leaves in its wake a sense that something of value has thereby been lost.

Junger understands that war is a great evil. Yet labeling it as such and having done with it leaves out too much. We already know this. War can ennoble, a point made by Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. in his Memorial Day address of 1884: "In our youth, our hearts were touched with fire." It can also inspire and elevate, an argument advanced in 1905 by William James in his essay "The Moral Equivalent of War." Where it exposes sham and hypocrisy, war clarifies—a central theme of *The Best Years of Our Lives*, William Wyler's memorable Oscar-winning film of 1946. Although Junger cites none of these sources, his own views are more than slightly reminiscent of these earlier perspectives.

Indeed, Wyler anticipates Junger's central point. While not whitewashing the challenges that awaited returning World War II veterans, Wyler's film affirmed the feasibility of their reintegration into American society. They could do so thanks, at least in part, to the then-robust complex of domestic tribes—families, neighborhoods, churches—ready to receive them.

Today, Junger believes, these old tribes have faded to irrelevance. In place of communities, ours is a society consisting of market segments, delineated by personal consumer preferences. So when present-day veterans return from

Iraq or Afghanistan, they are duly welcomed and then duly expected to repair to their assigned niche in the marketplace. Thank you for your service. Now shut up and shop.

Interaction between warriors and society, therefore, has a unidirectional aspect, the former expected to subscribe to the imperatives of the latter, not vice versa. Thus do citizens simultaneously celebrate and devalue military service, an irony not lost on soldiers themselves. "It makes absolutely no sense to make sacrifices for a group that, itself, isn't willing to make sacrifices for you." Yet according to Junger, this describes the position in which soldiers today find themselves. Rhetorically, the nation honors their service. In practical terms, Americans are indifferent to soldierly values.

Accepting the narrow terms in which it is cast, there is much to be said for this line of argument. Broaden the terms, however, and its shortcomings become apparent.

"Contemporary America is a secular society," Junger writes. Well, yes—and also no. Contemporary America is also pervasively, if paradoxically, religious. One can classify this fact as quaint or astounding or absurd. But fact it remains. Yet Junger's analytical frame allows no room for religion. He is blind therefore to the possibility of faith providing an alternative path to a purposeful existence.

Even in contemporary America, danger and fear do not provide the sole mechanisms for nurturing a sense of belonging. Enclaves of community survive without drawing on primal experiences like war for sustenance. Some even thrive. Whenever I visit the Trappistine abbey that has been the home of my sister-in-law for the past half-century, I am reminded of this reality. Indeed, that reality inspires me—as it might Sebastian Junger. I can provide the contact information if he's interested in learning more. ■

Andrew J. Bacevich's *new book is* America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History *(Random House).*

Regina Munch

America On Top

Making the Unipolar Moment

U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order

Hal Brands

Cornell University Press, $29.95, 480 pp.

"The best a statesman can do," quipped Otto von Bismarck, "is listen to the footsteps of God, get hold of the hem of His cloak, and walk with Him a few steps of the way." Put in modern terms, the aperçu was an elegant way of saying that the shrewd policy strategist perceives the trend of history and positions himself accordingly. In *Making the Unipolar Moment*, foreign-policy historian Hal Brands investigates how such an outlook inspired American strategy as the Cold War era wound down, helping to create a world order that placed the United States alone at the helm.

Brands's inquiry begins in the 1970s, when American confidence had been shattered in the wake of numerous crises and embarrassments: oil-price shocks, a disastrous war in Vietnam, and increasing volatility in the Middle East, including the humiliating fate of fifty-two Americans held hostage in Iran for 444 days. Pundits proclaimed the end of American power, and a demoralized public doubted the nation's ability to lead the world. And yet by the 1990s, the United States was, as historian Melvyn Leffler puts it, the world's "preponderant power"; the Soviet Union had collapsed, leaving the United States not only the sole military and economic power of the world, but the leading ideological force on the global stage. How did such stability arise from the morass of the 1970s?

Ronald Reagan speaking in front of the Berlin Wall on June 12, 1987

To answer this question, Brands reinterprets received wisdom about that dreary decade. Although the United States faced serious—and obvious—challenges, he shows that the global environment was in fact becoming amenable to American interests in new and subtle ways. The Soviet economy was gradually imploding, new and more democratic governments were set to emerge, and the global capitalist economy was expanding. However difficult to discern at the time, global "undercurrents" were shifting in America's favor.

These structural potentials, however, required a strategy. In the Carter, Reagan, and Bush administrations, American leaders perceived the favorable trends and seized on them to construct a world order that benefited the United States. Brands sees Reagan as the architect-in-chief of the emerging post–Cold War order, arguing that Reagan deployed a variety of tactics designed to play to U.S. strengths and target Soviet weaknesses—increasing defense spending, arming third-world militias, and enforcing free-trade policies through the International Monetary Fund. As Brands tells it, "Reagan's strategic goal...was not simply to wage Cold War more effectively. What he sought was leverage that would allow him to wind down that conflict on advantageous terms."

While Brands allows that Reagan's strategies contained "moral failings"—alliances with brutal dictators and militias, for example—he believes that Reagan acted in the best interests of the nation by decisively establish-

ing American supremacy. His successor, George H. W. Bush, was able to reap the fruit sown by these actions. Orchestrating the unification of Germany, inviting former Soviet republics into the new world order, and bulking up NATO, Bush rode the accelerating wave of American success even as he contributed to its pace.

Brands wisely gives attention to the role of "soft power"—influence exercised through culture, diplomacy, or ideology, rather than military pressure—and makes a convincing case that American unipolarity was unlike anything the world had seen before. Not only did the United States dominate militarily and economically; with the collapse of communism, neoliberal democracy in the American style became the only workable global ideology. Yet Brands intends his narrative, with its emphasis on the making of the unipolar moment, to serve as a corrective to those triumphalist writers who, in the wake of the Soviet Union's disintegration, have viewed Western political ideas as unchallengeable and Western global dominance as inevitable. At the same time, he also admonishes those who treat the rise of American unipolarity as the result of mere chance. *Making the Unipolar Moment* deftly demonstrates that sophisticated and strategic policy interacted with international conditions to produce the post–Cold War outcome. Without one or the other, the story would likely have been different.

The bright portrait of Reagan that Brands paints will challenge liberals and others invested in a less rosy view. The seemingly unquestioned assumption behind this endorsement is that American leadership is obviously good for the rest of the world. And as much as Brands insists that we should resist an inevitablist view of American dominance, his writing actually encourages the opposite, suffused as it is with references to the "pace" and "flow" of history, the "acquired momentum" of historical trends, and policymakers' "riding the tidal wave of history." He states baldly that "if the United States did so well during the 1980s, it was because it had the impetus of history at its back." Although he does not say it explicitly, in congratulating Reagan for his prescience, Brands implicitly embraces something like the Hegelian "spirit of history," and views the United States' seizure and consolidation of global power as the fulfillment of this spirit.

If Brands believes that an American-led world order conduces to prosperous stability in the world, how does he make sense of today's global volatility? Did not many of the crises that plague us—international terrorism, violence in the Middle East, South American poverty—arise in part from the policies of the 1980s? Brands allows that "the reassertion of U.S. power had its contradictions," and that "American strategy helped lay the groundwork for crisis and conflicts to come." But he is undeterred in his ultimate view of the wisdom of these policies. "Successful strategies," he reminds us, "always have negative by-products." True enough. But a tree is known by its fruit; perhaps these crises aren't merely regrettable "by-products," but rather the consequences that necessarily result when a world is shaped by one dominant power.

Brands insists his book is not meant to be a global history, but he is to be credited for coming quite close. *Making the Unipolar Moment* weaves military power, economics, and cultural influence together compellingly. The scope of the book is impressive, and its thorough explanation and direct prose make it a pleasure to read. Yet while Brands capably demonstrates the interaction of structure and strategy in the creation of the post–Cold War order, he fails to question his own assumptions about the role of American power. Did U.S. strategy at the end of the Cold War truly grasp the cloak of God? Brands will likely convince the reader of the historical importance of an intentional grand strategy in shaping global events. But the desirability of this grand strategy remains in question. ■

Regina Munch *is* Commonweal*'s editorial assistant.*

Brian Davies

How God Befriends Us

Questions on Love and Charity

Summa Theologiae, Secunda Secundae, Questions 23–46.

Thomas Aquinas

Edited and translated by Robert Miner

Yale University Press, $25, 416 pp.

In 1567 Pope Pius V formally declared Thomas Aquinas to be a Doctor of the Church. In doing so, he was placing Aquinas in the company of people such as St. Augustine of Hippo and St. Gregory the Great. He was declaring that Aquinas is someone in whom Catholics can place trust when it comes to sound teaching concerning God and the ultimate end for all human beings. Yet Aquinas is also one of the greatest of Western philosophers. His philosophy largely comes down to us in writings whose chief interest was theological. But many of these theological works contain lots of philosophical arguments, and some of them offer what might be referred to as moral philosophy.

Aquinas, though, is not your average moral philosopher. His thoughts on human goodness and badness owe a great deal to Aristotle and his ideas about the good life for people. Like Aristotle, Aquinas thinks that there is indeed a good life at which people can and should aim. Again like Aristotle, Aquinas thinks that a good human being is one who is somehow happy and fulfilled because of being virtuous. Such a person possesses the so-called cardinal virtues of justice, temperance, courage, and prudence. Yet, unlike Aristotle, Aquinas also holds that the cardinal virtues, considered as things that we can take steps to acquire, are only able to lead us to an incomplete kind of happiness. When talking about the perfectly good life for people, therefore, Aquinas moves beyond Aristotle to insist on there being virtues that unite us to God.

Questions on Love and Charity offers a translation of what Aquinas has to say in his *Summa Theologiae* about what he considered the greatest of theological virtues: charity (*caritas*). Translations of the Leonine edition of this text, together with the original Latin, can be found in volumes 34 and 35 of the Blackfriars edition of the *Summa Theologiae*, now available from Cambridge University Press. However, as Robert Miner notes in his introduction to the present volume, the Leonine edition of the *Summa Theologiae* is not what scholars would today regard as a serious critical one. So Miner translates *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae, 23-46 using both the Leonine text and the much earlier Piana text, which has been republished by Collège Dominicain d'Ottawa in an edition that notes many of the differences between the two texts.

People trying to translate Aquinas face many challenges. Yet Miner has risen to them admirably so as to produce something that reads clearly while conveying the sense of what Aquinas has to say. It is very good to have this new translation of 2a2ae, 23-46 in one inexpensive volume, even if it doesn't include the Latin. It is also good to have the five interpretive essays—written by Miner, Jeffrey A. Bernstein, Dominic Doyle, Mark D. Jordan, and Sheryl Overmyer—that are appended to the translation. Miner describes these as offering "diverse but thematically connected approaches to reading Thomas on charity" and as "intended for the benefit of beginning and advanced readers alike." It seems to me that all the essays presuppose a background in philosophy that a "beginning" person might lack. That said, all of them have interesting and provocative things to say about Aquinas's views on charity.

Gustave Doré, Rosa Celeste: Dante and Beatrice gaze upon the highest Heaven, The Empyrean, 1868

And what does Aquinas say about charity? To begin with, he does not consider it a moral virtue that we can acquire by effort. The second part of the *Summa Theologiae* has much to say about moral virtues. Yet Aquinas sharply distinguishes between moral virtues, considered along the lines of Aristotle, and theological ones. He takes Aristotelian moral virtues to be things that we can

strive to acquire so as to gain happiness of a certain limited kind in the world in which we were born. By contrast, he thinks of theological virtues, and infused moral virtues, as poured into us by divine grace. He thinks of them as virtues that make us God-like. Aquinas is clear that ultimate human happiness lies in the beatific vision, considered as knowing and being with God after we have died. He is equally clear that naturally acquirable moral virtues do not bring us to this, or even set us on the way to it. What leads us to the beatific vision, says Aquinas in 1a2ae, 62,1, are the theological virtues "infused in us by God alone" and "made known to us by divine revelation contained in holy scripture."

In one passage, Aquinas defines virtue as "a good quality of mind by which one lives righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us without us." He says this definition perfectly comprises the full notion of virtue. As soon becomes clear, however, he seems to think that the full notion of virtue applies only to infused virtues. Aquinas does not think charity is only a matter of giving to the poor or displaying politeness. He thinks that it might well include such things—together with much that contemporary secular thinkers would likely list under the heading "charitable works"—but, for Aquinas, we have charity not just because we are actively concerned with the welfare of other people, but because we love what God loves and as God loves it. In 2a2ae, 23,2, Aquinas writes: "The divine essence itself is charity, just as wisdom is, and just as goodness is. So that just as we are called good by the goodness that is God, and wise by the wisdom that is God—since the goodness by which we are formally good is a certain participation in divine goodness, and the wisdom by which we are wise is a certain participation in divine wisdom—thus even the charity by which we formally love our neighbor is a certain participation in divine charity" (Miner's translation).

For Aquinas, then, charity is much more than a naturally acquirable moral virtue. It derives from God's grace. And it is something had by those who believe that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that God has become incarnate in Christ. This thought leads Aquinas to speak of charity as a matter of friendship (*amicitia*) between God and us. Aquinas typically takes friendship to be a relation between equals. He would say that I can be friends with you, but not with my cat or goldfish. Yet he also insists, quoting John 15:12–15, that those with charity are friends of God. So, he can observe that, since "there is a sharing of some kind between man and God, according as God shares his blessedness with us, it is necessary that upon this sharing some friendship be founded.... Now love founded upon this sharing is charity. So it is clear that charity is a certain friendship of man with God" (Miner's translation of 2a2ae, 23,1). Immediately after this, Aquinas writes: "Charity itself surpasses the power of nature. What surpasses the power of nature can be neither natural nor acquired by natural powers.... So charity can be in us neither naturally, nor by natural powers that are acquired, but only by an infusion of the Holy Spirit, who is the love of the Father and the Son, whose participation in us is created by charity."

Aquinas might be wrong about charity, since his account of it depends so heavily on certain theological beliefs to which he is committed. It also depends on the premise that "infused virtue" is a concept that makes sense, as it does not to many people. If he is right about charity, however, then what he says about it is of more than passing interest, and one can easily see why he prized it so greatly. ■

Brian Davies *is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Fordham University. His books include* Thomas Aquinas's 'Summa Theologiae': A Guide and Commentary *(2014) and* Thomas Aquinas's 'Summa Contra Gentiles': A Guide and Commentary *(2016), both published by Oxford University Press.*

Blind Spots

Gordon Marino

It seems like eons ago, but in early March, during a CNN Democratic presidential debate, Don Lemon threw a knuckle ball, asking Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, "What racial blind spots do you have?" Clinton dodged the question. Stumbling, Sanders spoke as though "black," "ghetto," and "poverty" were synonymous. As one commentator observed, Sanders answered a question about blind spots by revealing his blind spots. It was tempting to chuckle at these consummate politicos awkwardly reciting the party line or nervously blubbering. But the question of racial blind spots is one we should all ask ourselves.

A few minutes after I watched the exchange between Lemon and the candidates, some painful memories surfaced. Twenty-plus years ago, when I had just begun teaching philosophy, I walked up to the desk of an African American student who was working on an in-class assignment and quietly let him know that I was available for extra help. Of course, that would have been fine—had the student asked for help or shown signs of needing it! Then there was the night when I was giving a talk in Minneapolis about ethics. I came out to the parking lot and was groping for my car keys when, behind me, a black man went quickly walking by. Unconsciously, I tapped my wallet. As my brain caught up with my hand, I could have banged my head against a wall. Then again, I grew up in an era when the men in my neighborhood actually argued about whether or not blacks could be successful NFL quarterbacks. While I was on the right side of those debates, being bombarded with that kind of malarkey has to infect your hard drive.

Though we like to think of racism in binary terms—either one is or isn't racist—it is actually more like a poison that most white people carry around at different levels. Of course, the way we treat this poison is revelatory. Some claim to be immune to it and fume that reverse racism is the real issue; others go around jabbing accusatory fingers; still others detect a tincture of the toxin in themselves, sigh, maybe pray for help, and hope for a colorblind future.

There are controlled studies aplenty demonstrating the impact of our poisonous racial history on social cognition. Distortions and blind spots should come as no surprise. Yet, no one has brought me to my senses more than President Obama. In the early chapters of his memoir, *Dreams of My Father*, Obama reflects on his high-school years. Living with his grandparents in Honolulu, he was confused about many things, including his racial identity. At night he would sometimes go over and chat with Frank, an African American who was an old friend of Obama's white grandfather. After a couple of drinks, Frank remarked that Obama's grandfather was basically a good guy, but then added:

> But he doesn't know me…. He can't know me, not the way I know him. Maybe some of these Hawaiians can, or the Indians on the reservation. They've seen their grandfathers humiliated. Their mothers desecrated. But your grandfather will never know what that feels like. That's why he can come over here and drink my whiskey and fall asleep in that chair you're sitting in right now. Sleep like a baby. See, that's something I can never do in his house. Never. Doesn't matter how tired I get, I still have to watch myself. I have to be vigilant, for my own survival.

Barack Obama with his grandparents in New York City in the 1980s

For me, this passage occasioned a shock of recognition. I train boxers, most of whom are undocumented Mexicans. When I go to their homes, I can relax, sit on the couch, bounce their kids on my knee, maybe even catch a few winks. And yet, for all the years we have been together, and despite the many times I have told them smilingly "*mi casa es su casa*," they are stiff, almost formal when they come through the threshold of my home. It's painful to admit it, but as comfortable as we are in the gym together, they are not about to flop on the couch and watch TV at my place. As Obama's friend Frank said, they have to be vigilant. It is a matter of the "double consciousness" that W. E. B. DuBois wrote about in 1903: "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness."

Maybe the question of who is comfortable in whose recliner is one of the best ways to start a conversation about race. But there are others. Not long ago, a student taught me another lesson. We were talking about Jamar Clark, the unarmed black man who was shot and killed by Minneapolis police. Soon our conversation widened into broader discussion about race and racism. After a moment of silence, this soon-to-graduate senior nervously chuckled and said, "Hey Doc, guess what? Not every student of color gives a damn about how they are seen from the normalizing white-middle-class perspective." I flinched. Another shock, another blind spot revealed. ■

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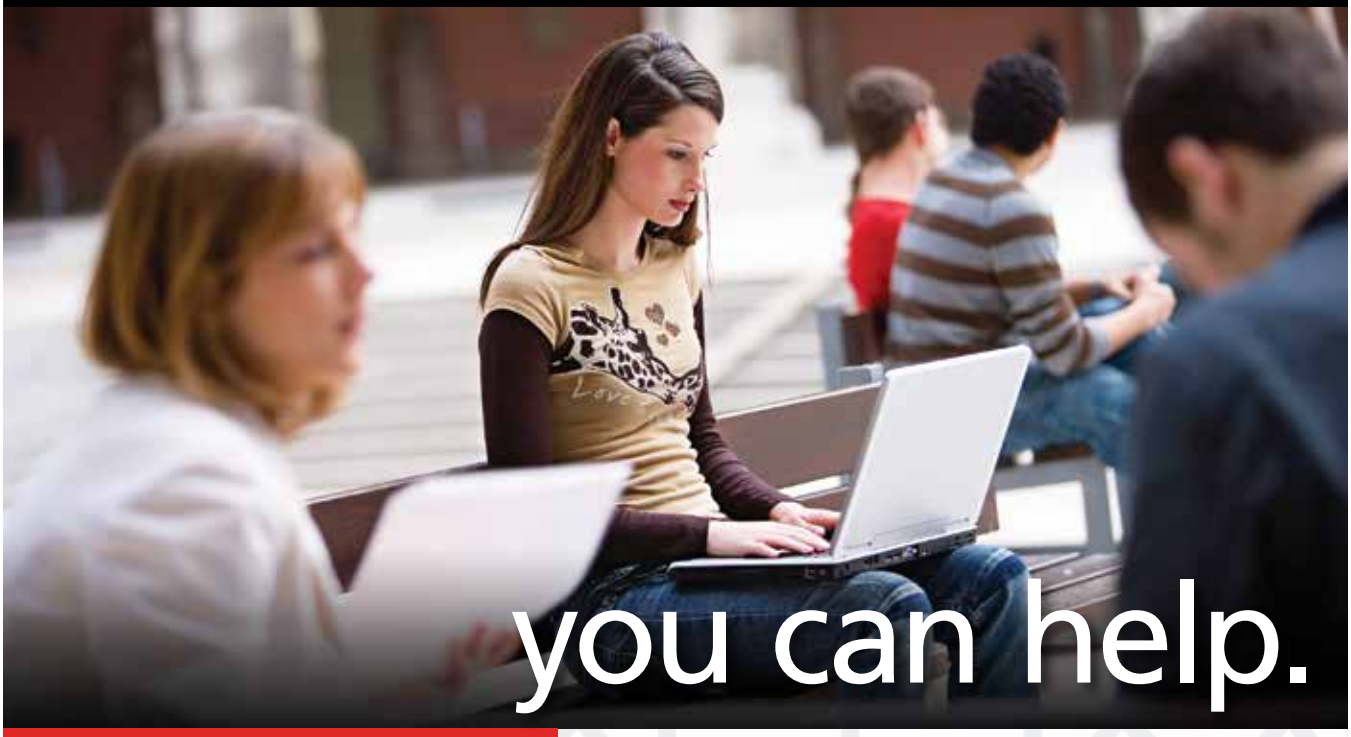

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