BOOK REVIEWS

Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics by Christopher J. Eberle. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. x, 405. $75 (hardcover), $28 (paperback); *Religion and the Obligations of Citizenship* by Paul J. Weithman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. xi, 227. $55 (hardcover).

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The sheer amount of literature on the "religion in the public square" debate has become overwhelming, but these two cutting-edge books are welcome additions indeed, since they perceptively analyze the most important previous contributions and also make genuine advances in the discussion. It is appropriate to review them together; they share a deep appreciation for some of the main moral aims of political liberalism, as well as sharp but measured dissent from it. Also, they can be put into dialogue with each other, and not just because the authors thank each other in their acknowledgements.

I begin with Paul Weithman's book, which is less encompassing and briefer, though refreshingly distinctive in its significant use of empirical evidence for its criticism of the "liberal restraint principle," or what Weithman calls "the standard view," what Christopher Eberle calls "justificatory liberalism," and what the late John Rawls made a defining characteristic of "political liberalism." A generic version of the restraint principle is that conscientious citizens ought to restrain themselves from using non-public reasons to advocate coercive legislation unless they also are willing and able to provide public reasons for it. Rawls has been the main instigator and target in this debate, and in his last published discussion of public reason, he credits Weithman for increasing his sensitivity to the role of religion as an important contributor to democracy.[1] One wishes Rawls could have read this book, because Weithman marshals an impressive array of empirical research (chapter two) to show just how important religious convictions and institutions have been in enabling people—especially minority and low income people—to achieve what he calls "realized citizenship" and "full participation" (carefully defined in chapter one) in their society. Since Rawls would agree that the latter is a great good for a democracy, and since it comes as a package with the tendency to use religious arguments in the public square, Rawls would have had a better appreciation of the tradeoffs for the health of democracy that his

restraint principle would impose. Whether the restraint principle would undermine the healthy roles of religious institutions and convictions in nurturing good citizenship, or whether it at least would cost significant frustration and alienation (given the religious source of much good citizenship) is, to a large extent, an empirical issue, and anyone who enters this debate should read Weithman's book.

Of course, there is also the normative side of the issue; even if political liberals agreed that there are significant social and political costs to the restraint principle, they may claim that the duty of civic respect requires that we pay it. So in the rest of his book, Weithman directly takes on the relevant normative issues. First, some conceptual ground clearing. Chapter five rebuts two concepts of what "votes" are and advocates a third: they are neither simply expressions of preferences (they are counted and determine political outcomes) nor exercises of power (when is the last time your vote was decisive?). Rather, a voter is "voluntarily doing his part in a role-specific collective undertaking: citizens' collective undertaking of determining political outcomes" (103). And that is why it must be done responsibly; to vote irresponsibly is to "fail the universalizability test" since "I would want to know that my interests have been properly taken into account" by other voters (104). With the other concepts of voting, I may want to know only that my vote counted equally, but in a collective undertaking, especially one in which the government is seen as our *agent* (114), I have not only "liberty interests" at stake, but also "reputational interests" (116). Weithman concludes that responsible voting and advocacy requires citizens having "what they reasonably take to be adequate reasons for impinging on" (109) others' interests.

And what are these adequate reasons? What sort of restraints, if any, should responsible citizens impose on themselves? Here Weithman proposes what might be seen as a middle ground between the liberal restraint principle, on the one hand, and a radically inclusive, "anything (legal) goes" view (sometimes called "agonistic," from Greek for "contest"), on the other. Here are his two central principles:

> (5.1) Citizens of a liberal democracy may base their votes on reasons drawn from their comprehensive moral views, including their religious views, without having other reasons that are sufficient for their vote—provided they sincerely believe that their government would be justified in adopting the measures they vote for. (5.2) Citizens of a liberal democracy may offer arguments in public political debate which depend upon reasons drawn from their comprehensive moral views, including their religious views, without making them good by appeal to other arguments—provided they believe that their government would be justified in adopting the measures they favor and are prepared to indicate what they think would justify the adoption of the measures.

Notice first that the bar is lower for voting than for advocacy—voters need not be prepared to say what they think justifies the measure. For one thing, when I am voting in private I may reliably remember that I was once convinced by an excellent argument that I should vote a certain

way, but I have now forgotten the argument itself (127). So I know I have a good reason, but *cannot* (not just *will* not) say what it is. On the other hand, when I am publicly advocating for a particular vote, I need to have the details of the argument; I cannot expect other citizens to trust my memory that I had a good one while I admit that I forgot what it was. As one who has reached the point of knowing *that* I hid my own Easter eggs without knowing *where*, I am charmed by Weithman's position here. But Eberle, who is younger, will have none of it: "A citizen's obligation to respect his compatriots imposes on him an obligation to do his best to *address* [them] . . .to *inform* them about his reasons for coercing them" (95). Weithman says that the sort of sentiment that Eberle articulates is an *excellence* of citizenship, but insists it is not a *duty* (129).

Notice second that Weithman's proviso differs from the liberal restraint principle in insisting only that advocates be prepared to indicate what *they* think justifies the measure; they need not be prepared to appeal to considerations they reasonably think *others* could reasonably accept as justifying the measure. His examples include Jerry, who votes for legislation and candidates just because they agree with his religious doctrine of natural law (and thereby, he sincerely believes, promote the common good), and Sarah, who justifies voting for particular candidates just because they are endorsed by her pastor and she sincerely believes her pastor is an authority on the relevant issues. The liberal restraint principle would ask them to be prepared either to give some additional—public—reasons for the decision, or at least to give some public reasons for accepting natural law or the pastor's credentials as a political authority. Weithman insists that even if it would be ideal to give public reasons, it is not an obligation. He thinks political liberals mistakenly "begin by trying to determine what justifications or reasons citizens are obliged to offer one another" or "begin with intuitions about civility" and then let these considerations set the benchmark for political civility (135). But his "collective undertaking" analysis of voting and advocacy implies that the political liberal puts the cart before the horse: citizens "cannot determine . . . [what is responsible citizenship] . . . without knowing what arguments they can reasonably expect others to offer them" (135). This "reasonably expect" (applied not just to arguments from others, but also to expectations of how they vote and how they treat others) can be interpreted either as "what a reasonable person can expect," which is largely an empirical issue, or as "expectations regarding reasonable arguments and conduct," which is largely a normative one. The empirical interpretation clearly distinguishes itself from the normative approach of the political liberal. But, given the quality and types of arguments (and voting habits and ways of treating the opposition) actually used in American politics, it seems an unpromising route to political wisdom. So I think Weithman takes the normative route: "What expectations are reasonable depends, in turn, on how it is reasonable for citizens to think of their role and on what citizens can reasonably expect others to believe about the reasons they owe each other" (135). Now, using a normative filter for what is reasonable seems similar in spirit to the above rejected strategy of political liberals. So probably Weithman is simply pleading for a wider sense of "reasonable": "If there are reasonable disagreements about what kinds of reasons are accessible . . . then it would

be unreasonable for some citizens to expect others to offer them reasons they [the hearers, presumably] regard as accessible" (135). Here Weithman may be underscoring a possible circularity in political liberalism when it distinguishes "reasonable" from "rational" and perhaps conceptually builds right into the former the restraint principle itself: "Reasonable persons . . . desire for its own sake a social world in which they, as free and equal, can cooperate with others on terms all can accept."[2] Depending on what is meant by "terms all can accept," one probably needs some more premises to get to the restraint principle, but such premises are sometimes treated as explications of "free and equal" or as obviously embedded in "fair" or "civility." At any rate, it would seem to beg the question for the political liberal to have a notion of reasonable that is so morally loaded that it entails the restraint principle.

Weithman's final two chapters consist of criticism of Robert Audi's[3] and Rawls's versions of political liberalism. Both Weithman and Eberle present data and considerations aimed at showing that Audi's worries about religious fanaticism are overblown. Moreover some of the very "totalizing" features of religious commitments that Audi underscores are a recipe for resentment and alienation in those believers who are asked to refrain from integrating their non-public doctrines into their political arguments while seeing controversial secular doctrines carry the debate (Eberle, 183).

Weithman's final chapter concludes that Rawls's restraint principle "is an attractive liberal democratic ideal" (211), but he insists throughout that "it is not immediately clear how moral ideals can impose moral requirements" (186). This brings us to Eberle who, I think, disagrees on both counts, but does so because of a "pursuit principle" that is consistent with the spirit of Weithman's book. Eberle gives clear-headed and fair-minded summaries of most of the major writings in this area over the past few decades, and he integrates them into his own perceptive critique of the main views and his original contribution to the debate. The latter includes notably his distinction between the *principle of pursuit*—his proposal that citizens should respect each other by pursuing the ideal of conscientious engagement—and the *doctrine of restraint*, which he rejects.

Eberle introduces his distinction in Part Two, after discussing in Part One some of the important empirical research about religion, citizenship, and pluralism and also introducing what he calls "justificatory liberalism" and its restraint principle. With his distinction, Eberle addresses two very different audiences. First, he "has no interest in providing aid and comfort for a mindless or intransigent sectarianism" (187), so he tries to persuade the "anything goes" crowd that they are morally obliged "to exit their parochial worldviews, to do what is within their power to inhabit the respective points of view of their compatriots, and to attempt to articulate reasons . . . that are convincing to their compatriots" (82). Second, he wants to persuade the political liberal that, if citizens have sincerely pursued public justification but have failed to find public reasons, then they are not morally bound by the restraint principle, and they may in good conscience vote and advocate for coercive legislation based only on their distinctive religious beliefs.

The six constraints for the pursuit principle add up to an "ideal of conscientious engagement" (104) that is rigorous indeed: 1. Pursue a high

degree of rational and moral justification for the favored coercive policy. 2. Withhold support from a policy for which one does not find a sufficiently high degree of rational justification (which by itself seems to imply Weithman's 5.1 and 5.2 principles cited above). 3. Attempt to communicate to compatriots the reason for the coercive policy. 4. Pursue public justifications for it. 5. Listen to and try to learn from compatriots' critiques.[4] 6. Avoid any rationale that denies the equal dignity of compatriots. Eberle justifies this list not so much as an indirect moral duty based on the pragmatic considerations that it will help achieve one's morally important cause (though it will) or that it will enhance civil peace (though it will) but mainly as a matter of "recognition respect" toward persons, which he patiently and at great length unpacks as implying a prima facie obligation to refrain from coercion and hence an obligation to justify it when it is necessary (85–104).

With what Eberle calls "the argument from Bosnia," some liberals call for privatizing religion in order to avoid war and conflict. Eberle argues that this consideration is not relevant to the United States today. He agrees that there are regions today where the argument is (and times in history when it would be) "compelling" and "privatization is essential" (158). Since the most volatile areas, such as Bosnia and Palestine, are ones that include believers with the "overriding and totalizing obligation to obey God" (149) that Eberle uses to reject the inclusive restraint principle in the United States, it is worth noting that in other circumstances he sees this commitment as compatible with a privatization that is even more restricting than the restraint principle. So the overriding and totalizing duty to God yields only a prima facie duty to integrate one's religion with one's political advocacy.

Liberals also use what Eberle calls the "argument from divisiveness," which he rebuts by claiming that any divisiveness caused by using distinctive religious arguments seems outweighed by the divisiveness caused by trying to privatize them. He cites some significant costs of privatizing; for example, where would we be without the abolitionists, and would it not be better to have people be open—and criticizable—about their religious politics instead of secretive?

Eberle makes a very important and, I believe, astute observation in claiming that too often people collapse the pursuit ideal into the restraint principle, thinking too hastily that any obligation to *pursue* public reasons implies the obligation of *restraint* if one cannot find them. I think he is also right in thinking that if integrated religious believers, who feel deeply obliged to inform their politics with their religious identity, were disposed to satisfy the pursuit ideal, resentment toward religiously-based coercion would be reduced, acquiescence toward it would be more palatable, and many political liberals should and would be more sympathetic to the overriding of the restraint principle when public reasons for coercive legislation cannot be found. I think he is perceptive in surmising that much of the offense that political liberals feel comes when fundamentalists reject both the pursuit ideal and the restraint principle, especially on hot-button issues like homosexuality (111).

One argument I worry about involves Eberle's claim that "a citizen who respects his compatriots is forbidden to treat them as a means *only*, but he

isn't forbidden from treating them as a means *at all*" (125). Eberle sees this as implying that if citizens trying to coerce me engage the pursuit ideal, they are treating me as an end, and when they reject the restraint principle, coercing me without providing arguments they reasonably think I reasonably could accept, they are simultaneously treating me as both an end and a means. Let's say I try to persuade you with public arguments that you should give me the money in your billfold (you are rich and I am poor; I need the money to help my children; you are intending to spend it on golf; etc.) but I cannot find any that I can reasonably expect you can reasonably accept (you have a thing about property rights; you already tithe; golf is central to the meaning of your life; etc.). So, while continuing my efforts to persuade you, I also pull my concealed gun, perhaps saying with sadness and pity for you that God tells me to help my children. Imagine my trying to convince Immanuel Kant that I am not treating you as a mere means. He would point out that what's relevant to that issue is not just what I *do* but what I do *not* do to have my way with you. In particular, I do not coerce you without your explicit or implicit informed consent, as when students use teachers, and vice versa. And the details of what democratic compatriots do or should consent to by way of political decision-making are exactly what this debate is all about.

Even if Eberle dropped the above argument, he could still maintain that those who fulfilled the pursuit principle are sometimes justified in going against the restraint principle. How often this would happen depends on the availability of public reasons, which Eberle addresses in the third and final part of his book. Eberle claims that "public reason(s)" suggests a set of considerations that would appeal to all reasonable audiences, and he quickly locates trouble for the *populist* understanding of public justification (204–05). By relying on what people actually accept, it does respect people as they actually are, but it needs qualification, since there are likely (almost) no beliefs that every person in the country accepts. At a minimum, political liberals will have to rule out young children and the mentally incompetent. And any stronger qualifications get dicey. The most influential view has been that of Rawls: public reasons are those that reasonable citizens can reasonably believe the other citizens can reasonably accept. Note that others need not actually accept them, since they may be making a mistake in logic or failing to recognize some part of the public culture that they *could* recognize. Of course, "could" cannot be interpreted as "logically possible" or even "causally possible," since my accepting the thickest and most distinctive parts of my comprehensive doctrine implies that others theoretically could as well. So the scope of public reason must include what reasonable people could assent to within their distinctive comprehensive doctrines. As Rawls lately put it, we should be able to think inside another's moral identity enough to be able, in a sincere and non-manipulative way, to "conjecture . . . [from] other people's basic doctrines, religious or secular, and try to show them that, despite what they might think, they can still endorse a reasonable political conception that can provide a basis for public reasons" (*Law of Peoples*, 156). Eberle thinks that, since reasonable persons accept Rawls's burdens of judgement, (including the recognition that reasonable people will weigh different types of values differently, having lived different kinds of lives), this route leads

to agreement on little but "the most platitudinous claims" (215). In fact, says Eberle, given that John Calvin reasonably believed that agreements on fundamentals is essential to social order, he reasonably rejected religious freedom and reasonably burned Servetus at the stake. Eberle thinks that the alternative to his analysis here is that Rawls builds a commitment to religious freedom right into his conception of "reasonable," in which case the latter "would be utterly without interest" (383, n.48). But recall that in his evaluation of the argument from Bosnia, Eberle discounted worries about religious freedom in the United States today, partly because (as he had argued earlier) even fundamentalists, to say nothing of Calvinists and evangelicals, see that they have a vested interest in it, since conflict fosters group cohesion (43). Rawls would add that it has become part of our "public culture." "We collect such settled convictions as the belief in religious toleration and the rejection of slavery and try to organize the basic ideas and principles implicit in these convictions" (*Political Liberalism*, 8) into what he lately agrees is "a family of political conceptions of justice, and not just one," that will yield "many forms of public reason . . . [including] Catholic views of the common good and solidarity when they are expressed in terms of political values" (*Law of Peoples*, 140–42). So into "reasonable" Rawls builds the willingness to appeal to one among several versions of public reason that are a plausible interpretation of the public culture. This latitude allows a fair amount of flexibility, but surely it requires in a nontrivial way that any reasonable United States citizen have a version of public reason that includes lip service to religious freedom. In fact, one wonders how even Christian Reconstructionists today can have Calvin's "stability belief" in their "evidential set" of beliefs that meet minimal standards of rationality. So I do not think Eberle's appeal to the burdens of judgement shows that there are only a few Rawlsian public reasons. Indeed, Rawls's above ecumenical talk of many forms of public reason could invite an inordinately wide reflective equilibrium in interpreting "public culture," yielding a rather bloated but debatable set of public reasons. However we are talking about civic virtue here, a moral internal restraint rather than a legally precise external constraint, and I see no reason why political liberals cannot appeal to the sort of sincerity and discernment that is a necessary part of any appeal to virtues and ideals.

The alternate to Rawlsian looseness is to make the category of public reasons more precise by building an epistemological filter into the reasoner ("adequately informed" or "fully rational") or the reason ("publicly accessible, or intelligible, or replicable, or confirmable," etc.). In chapter eight, Eberle's obvious enjoyment of and skill at analytic philosophizing shows that all of the usual suspects by way of epistemological restrictions either throw out the public wheat or else let in the private chaff. Using William Alston's highly regarded work in religious epistemology, he argues that mystical perception (or Christian Mystical Practice—CMP) satisfies most of the plausible normative filters, and the ones that it has trouble with are ones that also trip up the moral beliefs necessary to political liberalism. Did you know that "I perceived God telling me to do it" is in the same public intelligibility boat with "I perceived my mother telling me to do it"? Before you roll your eyes, read his argument (252–54). Justificatory liberals who shun the looseness of the above Rawlsian approach will, no

doubt, do some nit-picking on some of Eberle's arguments, but I think this chapter should be required homework for them.

Eberle concludes with a critique of the theistic argument for the re-straint principle, given by Audi and Robert Perry, among others. They argue that since an all-good and all-powerful God would see to it that normal people know their moral obligations, at least the basic ones that should be encoded into law, theists should be suspicious of any religious demands for coercive legislation that cannot be backed by public reasons. As Eberle points out, this assumes a lot of optimism about how people use their God-given reason, and even theists who reject the doctrine of total depravity can argue that, given human nature and what we know about how our cognitive faculties can fail and be abused, sometimes believers may and even must trust religious convictions that contradict worldly wisdom. His example is legalizing heterosexual monogamy; other exam-ples could be legislation against divorce or the pre-1965 legal prohibition of contraceptives. If these examples are problematic, that just underscores his realism when he concedes that "many of the policies citizens support solely on the basis of religious grounds will be misguided, foolhardy, or muddleheaded" (333). But that is the price of democracy. Interestingly, Audi's case for what he calls "Theo-ethical Equilibrium" is, I think, quite compatible with much of what Eberle says. Audi says that the pursuit of equilibrium is a prima facie obligation of civic virtue, and that when a conflict occurs, we should rethink both our religious and our secular convictions, and then decide which ones, if any, to adjust (Audi, 136–37). Given Eberle's pursuit principle, there is common ground here: failure to find public reasons should stimulate some (re)searching of one's political and moral beliefs as well as one's Biblical exegeses and even hermeneutics. There are texts such as Exodus 31:14–15 that demand death for anyone working on the Sabbath, but most contemporary Christians who integrate their politics and religion have found ways of interpreting these texts without advocating blue laws (much less the death penalty for violating them), and it would be no sign of religious laxity if they raised the same sort of considerations about texts regarding homosexuality.

This point raises the larger question of just how far apart Eberle and Weithman are from political liberals such as Audi. The latter concedes that integrated believers have a moral (to say nothing of legal) *right* to vote and advocate solely on religious grounds, and that what the restraint principle proposes is an ideal that yields only a prima facie obligation, the consci-entious overriding of which is excusable (Audi, 95, 114, 203). Meanwhile, Weithman agrees time and again that political liberalism proposes an ap-propriate ideal or excellence of citizenship (129, 151, 211) but at the same time raises the important question of how one moves from ideals to obli-gations, since "there are times when it is *permissible* to behave irresponsi-bly even if it is not good or ideal to do so" (100). Even Audi's "merely pri-ma facie" (161) responsibilities need moral justification as *obligations* (163), Weithman points out. Eberle does not debate the issue; he just goes ahead and makes the move: the "ideal of conscientious engagement" consists of "constraints . . . that each citizen ought to obey" (84) because, "as Robert Audi has helpfully argued in this context, a citizen who doesn't violate anyone's moral rights might nevertheless be morally criticizable" (105) for

disobeying an ideal that they are "morally obliged to obey" (188). Eberle explicitly recognizes that Audi's restraint principle is a prima facie one (56), and he ecumenically makes his proposed right for religious citizens to go against it a prima facie one: even though they have the moral (and, of course, legal) right to reject the restraint principle, they "ought to be extremely reluctant to impose coercive laws on their compatriots" (188).

Well, a reader can be excused for wondering if what we have here is mainly a difference in emphasis. I suspect that if Audi, Eberle, and Weithman (and the spirit of Rawls) could discuss a suitably nuanced approach to levels of moral responsibility, they might find some convergence in the debate over debates in the public square.

NOTES

1. "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," in John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 154.
2. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 50.
3. Audi's view is summed up in *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Reviewed in this journal by Francis Beckwith, January 2002 (19/1).
4. Because one can be a fallibilist about one's politics without being a fallibilist about one's deepest religious commitments (103—there must be a "not" missing in the fourth line from the bottom).

Democracy and Tradition, by Jeffrey Stout. Princeton University Press, 2004. Pp. xvi + 348. $35.00 (cloth).

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Pessimists about democracy worry that contemporary democracies cannot foster the qualities their citizens must have if these societies are to remain democratic.[1] This is a worry most commonly voiced by American neo-conservatives. It is very different from two charges leveled at democracy by other thinkers who are also sometimes called "conservative" but whom Jeffrey Stout more aptly labels "neo-traditionalists": the charge that democracies are not societies in which the good life can be led, and the stronger charge that the social forces at work in democracies make their citizens bad people.[2]

In this highly intelligent and challenging book, Stout directs a forceful combination of arguments against neo-traditionalist criticisms of democracy. The concluding pages of the book suggest that Stout thinks those arguments also provide him the material he needs to address the neo-conservative worry (307–08; see also 12). *Democracy and Tradition* is therefore not only an intelligent and challenging book, but a very ambitious one as well. It is a book in which Stout tries to lay out grounds for the hope he places in democracy, and to hold those grounds against the doubts and objections of a wide range of thinkers. Indeed, showing that hope in democracy is—to paraphrase Kant's remarks about reasonable

faith—a "reasonable hope" for us to have (306) is one of the central aims, if not *the* central aim, of Stout's book (see 57ff., 91).[3]

What is it to hope in democracy? Why is it important to ground that hope?

"Democratic hope," Stout insists, is not the hope that democracy will bring us redemption or save our souls (cf. 40). It is merely "the hope of making a difference for the better by democratic means" (58). Stout wants to provide his readers, especially those attracted to religious versions of neo-traditionalism, with enough reasons for such hope that they will "identify with the democratic process" (75). Put somewhat differently: Stout wants to convince his readers that they should think of themselves as members of a large and heterogeneous national community which is committed to living democratically. He especially wants to convince religious readers drawn to neo-traditionalism that they should think of themselves this way rather than as "resident aliens" in a society from which they are distanced by their faith.[4]

This aim is well chosen for, as I shall note again below, hope in and commitment to democracy may need some shoring up in societies that are all too tempted to trade off liberty for security. Moreover, democracy—Stout thinks—faces grave threats from the increasing concentration of wealth and power in the hands of elites and corporations. Countering the more virulent strains of neo-traditionalism among American citizens of faith, and contributing to the revival of an American religious left are laudable goals. If Stout has in fact done all that he sets out to do in this book, then he will have accomplished a very great deal.

Stout's attempt is wide-ranging and nuanced. It shows a deft and subtle command of very difficult philosophical material. I cannot begin to do the book justice in a brief review. Fortunately for readers of Stout's book, *Democracy and Tradition* has already received a great deal of critical attention. It has been the subject of at least one full-length conference.[5] Those who want detailed treatments of Stout's arguments should be able to find them quite easily. My own discussion of the book is more modest. I begin by asking whether Stout can consistently both dispel the neo-conservative worry about democracy and rebut neo-traditionalist critiques of it. Pressing this question raises the further questions of whether Stout has confronted the reasons for neo-traditionalism's appeal and whether he has provided those attracted to neo-traditionalist critiques with reasons to "identify with democratic processes."

Stout discusses three neo-traditionalists in some detail: Alasdair MacIntyre, John Milbank, and Stanley Hauerwas. He singles out these three because of their influence, particularly their influence "in the seminaries, divinity schools, and church-affiliated colleges of the wealthier democracies" (75). It is there that neo-traditionalist critiques of democracy reach church-workers and clergy. They, in turn, spread these critiques "in countless sermons throughout the heartland of the nation" (76). Thus it is because neo-traditionalist critiques of democracy ultimately reach—and threaten to win over—so large an audience that Stout is concerned to answer them. What is Stout's answer and how does he defend it?

The weaker of the two neo-traditionalist charges against democracy is the charge that democracies are not societies in which the good life

can be lived. The argument for that charge, I believe, depends upon the claims that:

(1) A society is one in which the good life can be lived only if it is a society whose members engage in collective public reflection about the good life.

and

(2) Liberal democracies occlude such reflection.

Though neither Stout nor the neo-traditionalists' lay out the argument for the weak neo-traditionalist criticism in just this way, the imputation of the argument to neo-traditionalists has some textual support. MacIntyre, who seems to endorse the weak neo-traditionalist criticism of democracy, argues for (1) in *After Virtue*.[6] He argues for (2) in, among other places, his essay "The Privatization of Good."[7] One way to answer the argument would, of course, be to show that (1) is false. Stout takes a different tack. He chooses, in effect, to rebut the argument by granting (1) but contesting (2).

Note that (2), as phrased, might seem to express a generalization about liberal democracies that is only contingently true. Read this way, (2) is not strong enough to support the weak traditionalist criticism of democracy, which is a claim about the nature of democracy. The neo-traditionalist thinks that democracies *as such* are not societies in which the good life can be led. But to take (2) as the expression of a contingent fact is to misunderstand the neo-traditionalist. What the neo-traditionalist really means by (2), I think, is that liberal democracies *as such* occlude collective public reflection about the good life.

When the neo-traditionalist says that liberal democracies *as such* occlude such reflection, she means to imply at least three further claims. She means to imply, first, that insofar as societies faithfully embody the theory of liberal democracy, they occlude such reflection; second, that societies occlude such reflection *because* they embody that theory faithfully; and third, that in the ideal liberal democracies envisioned by theorists of liberal democracy, there will be no such collective public reflection precisely because they are ideal liberal democracies. Understood as a claim about liberal democracies as such—and as a claim with these three further implications—(2) does indeed support the weak neo-traditionalist criticism of liberal democracy as such. This is how Stout takes (2), and it is this construal of (2) that he tries to undercut.

Stout thinks that (2) derives much of its plausibility from neo-traditionalists' equation of liberal democratic theory with the accounts of liberal democracy provided by John Rawls and presupposed by Richard Rorty. According to Rorty's account, religious and moral arguments about the good life simply have no place in the public deliberations of a liberal democracy. According to Rawls, arguments which appeal to comprehensive accounts of the human good need to be made good by what Rawls calls "public reasons," at least when the most important issues are stake. Rawls's requirement has the implication that claims about the human good may not have reason-giving force in public debate. Thus both his account of liberal democracy and Rorty's arguably do occlude collective public reflection on the good life. In a very interesting and careful chapter,

Stout tries to rob (2) of its plausibility by arguing that neither Rawls nor Rorty has an adequate account of liberal democracy.

But Stout wants to do far more than undercut the argument for the weak neo-traditionalist criticism. He wants to provide his readers reasons to commit to liberal democracy. To do so, I believe that he would like to provide them reasons for thinking—contrary to the claims of neo-traditionalists—that democratic societies *are* societies in which human beings can lead good lives. In pursuit of that end, Stout tries to recover an account of democracy that is deeply indebted to Dewey and to contemporary Hegelianism. Stout's discussion of Hegelianism, in particular, is accessible and sophisticated. For my purposes, it suffices simply to sketch the most important features of the "alternative public philosophy" (296) that Stout tries to portray in detail.

According to Stout, democracy is not in the first instance either a method of governance or a form of sovereignty. It is a culture (195). Stout follows Whitman in thinking of a culture as

> an enduring collection of social practices, embedded in institutions
> of a characteristic kind, reflected in specific habits and intuitions, and
> capable of giving rise to recognizable forms of human character. (28)

A society is presumably democratic, in Stout's view, when a democratic culture prevails there. Its mode of governance is democratic when that culture is "embedded in [political] institutions of a characteristic kind."

Not every culture is democratic. Democracy, in Stout's view, is distinguished from other cultures by the social practices of which it consists and by the way those practices are conducted. Stout is quite clear about what those practices are. "The social practices that matter most directly to democracy," he writes "are the discursive practices of ethical deliberation and political debate" (293). Of course, as Stout recognizes, the mere presence of these practices does not itself make a culture democratic. Deliberation and debate take place in virtually every culture. A culture is democratic, Stout thinks, when citizens' deliberation and debate prominently includes holding one another accountable and demanding reasons from one another "for commitments, deeds and institutional arrangements—without regard to social status, wealth or power" (226).[8]

Stout has no illusions about the inadequacies of contemporary societies that purport to be democratic, but he is optimistic about what deliberation and debate in a democratic society can be. He thinks public debate in democratic societies can and should include explicit moral reflection that is deep and productive. Stout thinks this in part because he thinks that in the processes of holding one another accountable and of exchanging reasons in good faith, citizens will make explicit the norms on which they rely. He also thinks it because he thinks democratic societies can and should debate "the important question of character" that Whitman posed in *Democratic Vistas*—the question, as Stout puts it, of "what sort of people we can reasonably aspire to be" (p. 19). Stout insists that this is a question about what virtues we can aspire to and what virtues we can reasonably expect to acquire (29). And he thinks it is a question about which citizens of a democratic society can have meaningful public exchanges.

As I indicated earlier, Stout's treatment of Rawls and Rorty is meant to undercut the reasons neo-traditionalists have for accepting (2). In light of what Stout says about the subject matter of public deliberation in a democracy as he conceives it, I believe he would maintain that he has not just undercut the argument that was supposed to support (2). He would also say he has shown that (2) is false. And so he thinks he has shown that democratic societies *can* be societies in which, as (1) says, "members engage in collective public reflection about the good life."

One problem with Stout's argument is that it is not clear exactly why he thinks public discussion of "the question of character" can be meaningful and productive, rather than superficial and shrill. A more serious problem is that even showing that it can be will not be enough to convince neo-traditionalists and their followers that the weak neo-traditionalist criticism of democracy is mistaken. That is, it will not be enough to convince those drawn to neo-traditionalism that democracies are societies in which the good life can be led. It will not be enough because (1) states a necessary but not a sufficient condition on such societies. It states one condition that neo-traditionalists think a society must meet if the good life can be led in it. But it does not state all the conditions they think it must meet.

Suppose that in addition to (1), neo-traditionalists also accept:

(1′) A society is one in which the good life can be lived only if it is a society whose members agree on a conception of the good life.

Stout has not shown that the deliberation and debate characteristic of democracy as he conceives it will lead to any such consensus. Indeed, he says it would be a "grave mistake" to think that a "nation like ours" can be "bound together by agreement on its highest values, a religious visions of the good, or a big story about the origins and destiny of a people" (303). So Stout seems to doubt that democracies as he thinks of them will satisfy the condition imposed by (1′). Since this is a condition many neo-traditionalists arguably *do* impose, Stout needs to do more to convince them that their weak criticism of democracy is misplaced.

Of course, (1′) strikes many of us as highly implausible; for those who find it so, neo-traditionalism has little appeal. The question of whether those of us who are not neo-traditionalists should think we can lead the good life in the democratic society Stout envisions is an interesting one. Instead of pursuing it, I want to turn to the neo-conservative worry about democracy that Stout tries to address in the closing pages of his book. The neo-conservative worry is that democratic societies may not be able to foster the traits of character their citizens must have if those societies are to remain democratic. What are those traits? Neo-conservatives typically cite a traditional list of virtues including piety, self-restraint and frugality. I would like to ask about some other traits instead.

Consider the possibility that in the face of standing terrorist threats, the democracies of the West will gradually become "National Security States." Suppose, that is, that in the name of national security, they become societies in which the governmental surveillance of private citizens is increased, in which civil liberties, privacy rights and freedom of movement are gradually restricted, in which an increasingly large portion of government revenues are spent on the security apparatus and on military

adventures, and in which legislative and judicial authorities cease to serve as checks on the executive because the public demands that those authorities uncritically acquiesce in the executive's national security and military initiatives. Such a society might not have ceased to be a democracy altogether, but it would be one in which what we ordinarily think of as liberal democracy is significantly eroded. The possibility of such a transformation certainly seems to be a live one.

What qualities of character must citizens have if they are to prevent their society from devolving into a National Security State? I suggest that they must regard themselves and their fellow citizens as the bearers of very strong civil, political, and privacy rights. Only if they have such a sense of themselves and others, I suggest, will they be prepared steadfastly to resist encroachments on their liberties when they are tempted by a state apparatus that offers them protection in exchange for lesser associational and political freedom.[9]

Can democracy as Stout conceives it encourage this important trait in citizens, this sense of themselves as rights-bearers? Here Stout seems to face a dilemma. For suppose that his answer is "no." Then Stout will not be able adequately to address the neo-conservative worry about democracy. He will not be able to maintain that democracy as he conceives it can foster a trait citizens must have if they are to maintain their democracy against the temptations of a National Security State. If, on the other hand, Stout claims that democracy as he conceives it *does* foster the trait, then he will leave himself open to the strong neo-traditionalist criticism of democracy. According to that criticism, the social forces at work in liberal democratic societies make their citizens bad people. One of the things that some neo-traditionalists like Stanley Hauerwas find most objectionable about liberal democracies seems precisely to be that they encourage their citizens to think of themselves as bearers of rights.[10]

Stout may reply that what neo-traditionalists find objectionable about liberal democratic culture is not just that it encourages citizens to think of themselves as rights-bearers. It is that citizens who think of themselves in this way tend also to be selfish or self-centered individualists. Stout's own version of democracy, he may remind us, is a solidaristic enterprise. It is "likely to thrive only where individuals identify to some significant extent with a community of reason-givers" (293). If a society demands and reinforces this communal identification, Stout may claim, then it can encourage its citizens to think of themselves as bearer of rights without fostering the individualism neo-traditionalists deplore. Thus, Stout may say, his version of democracy can go some way in responding to the neo-conservative worry—by fostering the trait I have said citizens need to preserve democracy—while evading the strong neo-traditionalist criticism.[11]

But I wonder whether many of those attracted by neo-traditionalism would be satisfied with this response.

I suspect that when neo-traditionalist critiques of democracy are preached from pulpits or taught in seminaries, they do not fall on fertile ground simply because congregants and students are disturbed by the culture and the character-types for which they are told liberal democracy is responsible. Those critiques take root, bear fruit and spread because those who hear them think American democracy has reached the wrong

political outcomes—prohibiting prayer in public schools, mandating the teaching of evolution, permitting abortion, legalizing assisted suicide in some jurisdictions and enacting domestic partnership statutes in others. In short, I suspect that—whatever wide-ranging cultural critiques its proponents may offer—the popular appeal of neo-traditionalism depends upon the beliefs that democratic processes are legitimated by their outcomes, and that the outcomes those processes have yielded are morally suspect.

Of course not everyone who disapproves of some or all of the outcomes I just listed will accept neo-traditionalism *tout court* when it is taught or preached to them. Some, ambivalent toward their society anyway because it has reached these outcomes, may find that neo-traditionalism expresses or crystallizes some of their attitudes toward it. These citizens may hold on to what Stout calls "democratic hope." They may demonstrate their hope by continuing to vote in large numbers. That they may do so suggests that they are not ambivalent about central features of democratic governance, such as campaigns and elections. They are, however, ambivalent about identifying with the larger "community of reason-givers." Their identification with that community may be conditional on its reaching the outcomes they prefer. If the community shows no sign of moving toward those outcomes, then these citizens may be increasingly disaffected from democracy. In that case, they may find that neo-traditionalism provides a compelling vocabulary in which to express their disaffection.

If this is so, then many of those Stout wants to win over to his version of democracy will be convinced only if he can argue persuasively that democracy as he conceives it will reach those outcomes. Stout offers no such argument. Indeed, he says very little about what he thinks the outcome of "ethical deliberation and political debate" in a democratic society is likely to be or about what principles of political morality constrain the outcomes. I therefore think it unlikely that he will persuade many of those attracted by neo-traditionalist critiques of democracy that those critiques are fundamentally unsound.

The problem Stout faces in winning over those drawn to neo-traditionalism is not just that he does not say enough about what the outcomes of political and ethical reflection are likely to be or about what moral and political principles constrain it. It is that, given Stout's perfectionism, it is not clear what more he *could* say. Elucidating his Emersonian perfectionism, Stout writes:

> Emerson and Whitman are committed to an ethics of virtue or self-cultivation that is *always* in the process of projecting a higher conception of self to be achieved and leaving one's achieved self (but not its accumulated responsibilities) behind. The force of "always" here is to cancel the fixed telos of perfection toward which earlier perfectionisms directed their ethical striving. The Emersonian self is constantly being reshaped. (29)

It is surely an open question whether this form of perfectionism—with its rejection of a "fixed telos"—will be of wide appeal. Whether or not it will be depends upon just what a "fixed telos" is supposed to be, what the rejection of it comes to and what personal and associational liberties contin-

uous self-transformation demands. More to the present point, it is hard to see how Stout could know in advance of actual political deliberation what the outcome of debate would be when the debate includes citizens who are constantly reshaping themselves. If he cannot, then it seems doubtful that he can provide assurance to those whose commitment to democracy is at least to some extent conditional on the outcomes it reaches.

Stout's own hope for democracy seems ultimately to rest on the faith he has in the goodness of his fellow citizens. Perhaps he would respond that those drawn to neo-traditionalism should have faith that their fellow citizens are good enough to reach the right outcomes when they engage in democratic practices.[12] Or perhaps he would respond that those drawn to neo-traditionalism should attach far less importance to reaching the political outcomes they favor and simply cast their lot with their compatriots. The problem is that both of these replies seem to depend upon a mutual trust that is currently lacking or at least severely strained. It is not clear what grounds Stout can provide those drawn to neo-traditionalism for placing as much faith in others as he does.[13]

Defenders of democracy face a formidable challenge. That is the challenge of convincing citizens who believe they will lose on what they regard as the most important issues that they should remain firmly identified with those who continue to defeat them and that they should remain steadfastly committed to the democratic processes by which that defeat is handed to them. In Stout's terms, it is the challenge of instilling "the hope of making a difference for the better by democratic means" in those who think that, on the issues that matter most, things are getting worse. The challenge may be insurmountable, at least under current conditions. It is a credit to this splendid book that its author has identified that challenge so clearly and made so fine an attempt to meet it.

NOTES

1. I received helpful comments on earlier drafts from Jennifer Herdt, Jean Porter, and Jeff Stout.
2. Stout puts the stronger criticism somewhat less baldly. "Do we have reason to be happy with the kind of people we have become under the influence of modern ideas, practices and institutions? The traditionalist answer to this question, of course, is no" (118).
3. Note that Rawls has a similar aim. He says the task of political philosophy is the vindication of reasonable faith—"reasonable faith," he says, "in the real possibility of a just constitutional regime." See "The Idea of An Overlapping Consensus" in John Rawls, *Collected Papers*, ed. Freeman (Harvard University Press, 1999) 420–48, 448.
4. The phrase "resident aliens" is Stanley Hauerwas's.
5. The conference was held at the University of Tennessee in October of 2004. For some background information on the conference, see: http://web.utk.edu/~religion/symposium/background.htm
6. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), pp.
7. Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Privatization of Good", *Review of Politics* 52 (1990): 320–48.
8. I am not sure even this is enough to make a culture democratic, but let that pass.

9.   At 291ff., Stout discusses "three 'formidable constituencies' that are currently contending for control of the American state." He remarks that "[d]emocracy will face unpromising odds at the national level so long as the three entrenched constituencies jointly control the political landscape" (292). I would add that the state itself is a formidable political actor which can pose its own distinctive threat to democracy.

10. See, for example, the interview with Hauerwas posted at: http://www .beliefnet.com/story/146/story_14666_1.html.

Speaking of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the interviewer said to Hauerwas "But his beef with liberal democracy seems more philosophical and thoroughgoing. He says that the language of rights and liberties, as you write in your book, 'cannot help but lead to godlessness and the subsequent deification of man, which is the proclamation of nihilism.'" Hauerwas replied "That's right, and in noting that, I hoped some people would see a parallel to the present day in this country."

11. See 289, where Stout says "Assuming, as I do, that democratic individuality is a good thing, not to be confused with atomistic dissolution of social life."

12. See 308: "we should not imagine the life-giving sources on which we depend as something alien to American democratic modernity. That stream is in us and of us when we engage in our democratic practices."

13. Stout seems to treat his faith in his fellow citizens as basic. It seems to be on the basis of such faith that he puts his hope in democracy. In moving from faith in his fellow citizens to faith in democracy, Stout reverses what I believe to be the more plausible order of argument followed by Rawls. Rawls argues first (and at very great length) that it is possible for human beings to sustain a just liberal democracy. He then argues from this conclusion to the conclusion that human beings have a moral nature; see *Political Liberalism*, lxi–lxii.

Clearly Rawls can proceed as he does because he has substantive standards of justice available to him: he takes a liberal democracy to be just only if its political outcomes are constrained by reasonable principles of justice. Since Stout does not endorse principles of justice or any other criteria for just political outcomes, he is not in a position to say much about what a just liberal democracy would be like. If he cannot say what a just liberal democracy would be like, then it is hard to see how he can argue that it is possible for people to sustain a just liberal democracy except by appeal to faith in his fellow citizens. In that case, the Rawlsian order of argument may not be open to him.

Freedom and Anthropology in Kant's Moral Philosophy, by Patrick R. Frierson. Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. x + 211 pages. $55.00 (hardback).

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Patrick Frierson's book fits into a series of recent Kant publications devoted to challenging the stereotype that Kantian philosophy is a purely abstract enterprise, largely disconnected from human experience. The most famous formulation of that stereotype, which itself was already brought up by some of Kant's contemporaries, is Hegel's allegation that the Kantian moral law remains "something empty which can never become reality." However, like Onora O'Neill, Allan Wood, Paul Guyer, and

Robert Louden (to name only a few) Frierson demonstrates that Kant's moral philosophy does in fact connect with the real world. In order to account for that connection, anthropology plays a crucial role. For Kant, anthropology represents empirical knowledge about human beings in the broadest sense, encompassing a range of different disciplines, such as physiology, psychology, education, history, and even facets of what later will be called sociology. Thus, taking anthropology into account can make a big difference for a more comprehensive understanding of Kant's moral philosophy. It adds dimensions, often neglected in traditional Kant literature, such as emotions, feelings, education, character building, or the rules of politeness.

Whereas there seems to be a general agreement among Kant scholars that anthropological knowledge, as Kant himself has pointed out, can have a bearing at least on the *application* of the categorical imperative, Frierson goes an important step further. Rather than merely facilitating a more appropriate use of an already existing moral will, he claims that anthropology is significant for understanding and promoting the very *development* of the moral will. Empirical factors, he contends, can have an influence on the cultivation and stabilization of the moral will. They can provide assistance for defending the moral will against temptations to transgress the moral law. Besides supporting the cultivation of one's own will, they can also serve as devices for the moral education of others. Hence Frierson concludes that empirical anthropology, rather than belonging merely to the margins of applied ethics, affects the very center of Kant's moral philosophy.

At the same time, Frierson is anxious to keep the systematic insights of Kant's practical philosophy uncompromised. He criticizes some Kant scholars for having sacrificed the specific features of Kantianism in order to make Kant's philosophy more persuasive to common sense. What is distinctive in Kant's moral philosophy, according to Frierson, is his conception of *freedom* as something *beyond theoretical deduction as well as empirical fixation.* As Kant argues, freedom reveals itself via the awareness of the moral law, an awareness which due to its peculiar obtrusiveness can be compared to *a fact.* However, it is a *non-empirical fact* which Kant calls the "fact of reason" that "forces itself upon us of itself as a synthetic a priori proposition." In order to underline the trans-empirical dimension of the awareness of the moral law, Kant repeatedly speaks of the "inscrutability" of freedom. Unlike those Kant scholars who more or less replace the philosophy of transcendental freedom with an empirical ethics that certainly cannot do justice to Kant's philosophical aspirations, Frierson sticks to the insight into the inscrutability of freedom as one of Kant's most important contributions to an understanding of morality: "What makes Kant both distinctive and attractive remains his emphasis on freedom from empirical influence in determining the content of the moral law and acting on the basis of it" (163).

Now, the question naturally arises how to reconcile these seemingly opposing claims: the significance of empirical anthropology for a comprehensive account of Kant's moral philosophy on the one hand, and the Kantian emphasis on the trans-empirical "inscrutability" of freedom on the other. This exactly is the question Frierson wants to tackle—no doubt

an ambitious project because, as he maintains, "no one has yet offered a sufficient integration of Kant's moral anthropology with his conception of freedom" (8).

In the first part of his book Frierson gives a detailed analysis of the problem. By insisting on (1) the non-empirical status of freedom, (2) the truly empirical character of anthropological knowledge, and (3) the substantial importance of anthropology for a full understanding of Kant's moral philosophy, Frierson bars all easy ways out of the dilemma. In the second part of the book he finally claims to come up with a solution.

A concept that frequently occurs in part II of Frierson's book is the notion of *hope.* This and similar terms are of strategic significance, because they allow for bridging the gap between trans-empirical freedom and empirical anthropology without simply merging these two dimensions of analysis. Although the moral will is not, strictly speaking, dependent on any hope, since it has its own motivating force (i.e., respect for the moral law), the factual development of a moral character would be a purely heroic endeavor likely to fail, unless human beings could find some reasonable encouragement in the empirical appearances of their behavior that indicate that they are actually on the right track. It is in this sense that hope or encouragement is pragmatically needed both in one's moral self-education as well as in the moral education of others. Such a pragmatic need for hope even extends into a religious dimension without which the human propensity to "radical evil" would likely lead to despair and thus the collapse of any attempts to moral self-cultivation. The tension between the unconditioned claims of morality on the one hand, and the experience of human frailty and even wickedness, on the other, may lead human beings to invest hope in divine grace as a complement to their never-ending moral endeavors.

However, hope differs from knowledge. It is highly important to keep that difference in mind. Were human beings able to acquire definitive knowledge about their own moral progress, they would likely end up in complacency, i.e. an attitude that corrupts the earnestness of the moral will altogether. The ultimate non-knowledge in questions of moral performance therefore deserves to be appreciated as something positive. Likewise, moral encouragement in education differs from all forms of empirical manipulation that might accomplish certain behavior but will eventually fail to bring about a genuinely moral will. Again, the lack of direct pedagogical knowledge and influence on the development of a pupil's moral will is something positive. Generally speaking, the integration of empirical anthropology into moral philosophy has to be *a critical integration* of such a kind that the insight into the final *inscrutability of freedom remains uncompromised.* This, however, is to say that the precise way in which empirical forces can exercise some influence on the moral will ultimately goes beyond empirical investigation. Or, to put it a bit provocatively, what Kant writes about divine grace is symptomatic also of the more "mundane" aids to the moral will, namely, that their actual functioning remains philosophically unfathomable.

In fact, the "solution" that Frierson offers in part II of his book does not really "solve" the problem of how exactly empirical anthropology can make a difference for the development of the moral will while at the same

time leaving the autonomy of the will intact. Instead, part II of the book in a way operates as a continuation of part I by giving a detailed and careful description of the *problem*—together with an intention to bar easy solutions. Thus, Frierson goes on arguing against the possible misunderstanding (at times to be found in the Kant literature) that an empirical assistance to the development and stabilization of the moral will, although certainly "needed" in a general way, could be taken as a strictly "necessary" precondition for the very possibility of a good will: "The need for empirical aids to combat radical evil does not mark an exception to Kant's principle of `ought implies can'" (135).

Does Frierson succeed with his project to integrate Kant's anthropology into his moral philosophy? The answer is yes and no. At the conclusion of the book Frierson claims to have shown that "Kant can reconcile his strong conception of freedom with a robust moral anthropology" (p. 166). Such reconciliation, however, is not tantamount to a full integration. As Frierson himself repeatedly emphasizes, empirical anthropology and the concept of freedom cannot be reduced to one another, and the way in which they relate to each other finally remains opaque. This is not a bad result since it enhances the awareness of the limits of any empirical inquiry, an insight which, as Frierson persuasively argues, remains relevant as "a Kantian legacy for today" (165).

Symbolic Representation in Kant's Practical Philosophy, by Heiner Bielefeldt. Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. 202. $60.00 (cloth).

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Symbolic Representation in Kant's Practical Philosophy is a sweeping book, covering a wide variety of important topics in Kant's practical philosophy, ranging from Kant's categorical imperative to his accounts of history and religion. The book has eight chapters. In the first, Bielefeldt introduces the overall purpose of the book in two ways. First, he explains that "the general purpose of this book is to show that Kant's practical philosophy can help us to develop an appropriate language of liberal ethics in the broadest sense" (3). Second, the book's "purpose . . . is to reconstruct the role that symbolic representation plays in the *entire architecture* of Kant's practical philosophy" (10). Although Bielefeldt has some provocative hints in his introduction and conclusion regarding the first point, the second is really the focus of the book. With the exception of occasional references to the political dangers of dogmatic or overly skeptical approaches to ethics (e.g., "bigotry" on p. 32 or "ideological witch hunts" on p. 103), liberalism does not appear in the core of the book. And Bielefeldt makes no systematic effort to show how the specific way in which Kant uses symbolic representation is well suited to liberal ethics.[1] Still, this frame sets a context of political and ethical relevance for what might otherwise be a book of interest primarily for Kant's scholars.

The second task, of reconstructing the role of symbolic representation in the whole of Kant's philosophy, provides Bielefeldt with a rubric

within which he stakes out his position on an extremely wide variety of issues within Kant's practical philosophy. In chapter 2, "Kant's Socratic Enlightenment," Bielefeldt lays out the overall contours of his approach to Kant's practical philosophy. He compares Kant to Socrates in several respects, but the most important is that Kant, like Socrates, seeks to oppose "sophistry," which Bielefeldt connects with both skepticism and self-deception—"a temptation to push aside . . . the claims of morality by imposing sophistic objections" (24). Bielefeldt rightly suggests that Kant seeks a way to combat this skeptical sophistry without falling back into what he calls a "blind defense of virtue" (28), one that would simply insist upon the rights of virtue without reflection. Kant's "Socratic Enlightenment," Bielefeldt claims, "takes up the skeptical questions raised by the sophists, but puts them into the broader framework of a systematic scrutiny of morality, a scrutiny that itself presupposes a systematic critique of all faculties of human reason" (28). This Kantian-Socratic systematic scrutiny of morality leads, Bielefeldt claims, to the Kantian recognition that morality is something "unconditioned" and therefore "incomprehensible" (31), and this, for Bielefeldt, leads to the question, "How can we respect the non-graspability of the unconditioned and, at the same time, connect it with our daily moral practice?" (32). Bielefeldt's claim, naturally, is that "Kant's answer . . . relies on the deliberate use of symbolic representation" (33). The rest of the chapter explains how Bielefeldt uses the term "symbolic representation" throughout the book. He offers a very broad definition of this notion, identifying it with any form of "indirect discourse" which "points to something that itself remains out of the reach of direct understanding" (35) as well as with any reasoning of an "as-if" variety in Kant.

Chapters 3–7 take up different themes in Kant's practical philosophy, showing how indirect discourse and/or as-if forms of reasoning enter into Kant's views. These chapters can be divided in terms of general themes as well as the primary Kantian texts to which they most apply. Thus Chapter Three focuses on the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. It discusses the status of the "fact of reason" (Kant's assertion that "the moral law constitutes . . . a reality that we experience as a kind of facticity" [41]), the nature of "respect for the moral law," and two of Kant's formulations of the categorical imperative. Chapter 4, which focuses on the *Groundwork* and the *Doctrine of Virtue*, draws on recent work on maxims to show how the moral law applies in concrete moral practice. Chapter 5 offers a "symbolic" reading of Kant's political writings, especially the *Doctrine of Right*. Chapter 6 examines Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and historical essays. Like the *Critique of Judgment*, this chapter covers a range of issues, from Kant's treatment of the beautiful and sublime to his notions of moral progress in history. Chapter 7 will likely be the most interesting chapter for many readers of *Faith and Philosophy*. Here Bielefeldt turns to Kant's philosophy of religion, and he covers the full range of Kant's treatment of religion, from Kant's familiar rejection of "theoretical attempts to prove God's existence"(154) to the variety of "symbolic" treatments of religion, including religion's basis in moral autonomy and the way in which God is thought of as an author of nature.[2] Bielefeldt also goes considerably further than most scholars in taking seriously the details of Kant's "Critique

of the Christian Church" (170), including Kantian treatments of "the Bible, religious dogmas, and religious worship" (171).

Throughout, Bielefeldt seeks to connect his specific treatments of these themes with symbolic representation. Thus his discussion of the first formulation of the categorical imperative—"act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law" (Kant's *Groundwork* 4:421, Bielefeldt p. 47)—focuses on the way in which "the unconditionality of the moral command manifests itself symbolically in that strict universal lawfulness that also characterizes the law of nature" (47–48). This symbolic reading helps Bielefeldt make sense of why Kant would recast this formulation of the categorical imperative in terms of the laws of nature, and it helps him connect the moral law more explicitly to Kant's reflections on nature and beauty. Again in his reading of Kant's political philosophy, Bielefeldt sees "the order of rights as a *symbol* of human dignity (96, my emphasis), and more specifically recasts the "general will" as "a *critical symbolism* in which the united law-giving will of the people is applied merely in the as-if mode of indirect representation" (108).[3]

In his conclusion, Bielefeldt brings his diverse discussions together into a brief summary of his overall account:

> Rather than presenting a systematic theory or typology of symbols, Kant clarifies the general status of symbols as an indirect mode of representation. Whereas in many cases we have different options to express insights in a direct or an indirect way, the indirect mode of representation is *indispensible* whenever it comes to rendering something "supersensible" accessible to the human mind. . . . [T]his general function of symbolic representation unfolds in very different ways. . . . Summing up the main results of this book, I . . . focus . . . on four essential purposes that the use of symbols is supposed to fulfill in Kant's practical philosophy: (1) giving guidelines for moral judgment, (2) expressing the apodictic force of the moral law, (3) strengthening a reasonable moral hope, and (4) rendering societal institutions [including the Church] transparent to their underlying normative functions. (181)

As should be clear from this summary, Bielefeldt's conclusion is not the "systematic account of symbolic representation" (10) that was promised in his introduction. Rather, his book ends up giving something more like a typology of various diverse sorts of indirect discourse, a typology that allows Bielefeldt to survey virtually the whole of Kant's practical philosophy.

The advantage of this typological approach is that Bielefeldt contributes his perspective to almost every major debate in contemporary discussions of Kant's practical philosophy, and the book can serve as a resource for non-experts to get up to speed on some of the little known gems of Kant's practical philosophy. For example, Bielefeldt draws attention to the role of maxims and moral judgment as a way of responding to Hegel's "charge of emptiness"—that Kant's categorical imperative has no moral content. Bielefeldt briefly lays out the claim—developed in more detail by Barbara Herman and Onora O'Neill—that maxims and moral judgment help

"mediate between the universalizability requirement on the one hand and the concrete lifeworld on the other" (68–69). Another important aspect of Kant that Bielefeldt highlights is the role that "empirical feelings" such as "compassion or empathy" play in morality: "Although [they] can never serve as the normative *basis* of morality . . . , they should be cherished as support provided by nature to foster our moral obligations" (83). Bielefeldt does not give much detail about *how* these feelings function as support, but he does point out an aspect of Kant's thought that is increasingly gaining attention among Kantians (see especially work by Nancy Sherman). Both of these "hidden gems" are hidden only to those outside of Kantian circles. The importance of moral judgment and empirical feelings is widely recognized by those whose reading of Kant extends beyond the *Groundwork*. But Bielefeldt also discusses some important aspects of Kant that have not yet been widely noticed even among Kantians. His discussions of Kant's religion still fall into this category, as does his treatment of the important role of "politeness as symbolic role playing" in Kant (88).

But Bielefeldt's broad scope also has an important disadvantage, in that it is difficult for the reader to figure out specifically how "symbolic representation" is supposed to unify the book. Partly this is a stylistic problem, as there are discussions—such as his interesting but apparently tangential discussion of "what Kant's political philosophy can contribute to contemporary debates on separation of powers" (114)—that seem interesting but have no apparent relevance to symbolic representation. But the problem goes beyond merely the presence of tangents that are insufficiently connected to the overall thread of Bielefeldt's argument. It is clear from his discussions that Bielefeldt does not limit his use of the term "symbol" to Kant's own fairly specific (though admittedly underdeveloped) definition of the term in the *Critique of Judgment* (cf. 5:352).[4] Kant's account there makes clear that merely negative judgments, though they may point to something out of reach, are not symbolic; pure judgments of practical reason are not symbolic since they do not appeal to any "empirical intuitions" (5:352); and paradoxes and antinomies are not symbolic since they do not point to anything at all but only highlight a problem. Yet Bielefeldt makes reference to all three sorts of judgment as forms of indirect discourse that his book will investigate but, alas, not sufficiently distinguish from one another.

By subsuming all of his quite different topics under the rubric of symbolic representation or indirect discourse, Bielefeldt often makes it harder, rather than easier, to see how they relate to each other. Early in his book, for example, Bielefeldt offers this case of "as-if cognition," which in this context seems to be identified with symbolic representation:

> In the *Groundwork*, for instance, Kant compares the "good will" of human beings with the "holy will" of an absolute being, *as if* he could conduct a comparative analysis between man and God, which, as he has pointed out lucidly in his first *Critique*, is in fact completely impossible. It would thus be a grave misunderstanding to read Kant's proposition about the divine will as standing beyond all imperatives as a theoretical proposition concerning the nature of God. (36)

Bielefeldt is certainly correct that interpreting Kant's claim that the divine will stands beyond all imperatives as a *theoretical* proposition about God's nature would be a grave misunderstanding. This is true, first, because *any* claim about whether one stands under imperatives is a *practical* claim, not a theoretical one. But this hardly makes these claims *symbolic*, even if it shows that they are not *theoretical*. To conflate the "non-theoretical" with the "symbolic" makes the task of finding symbolic representation in Kant's practical philosophy trivial. Likewise Bielefeldt is correct that the first *Critique* rules out any theoretical proofs of the existence or nature of God or human wills, but this does not rule out comparative analyses of the two. In the case of human and holy wills, in fact, Kant quite clearly *does* compare these two wills; he does not simply conduct himself "as if" such a comparison is possible. He specifies precisely how the wills are different, and what practical consequences that has. Of course, his discussion of the difference in wills is a practical rather than theoretical discussion, and he makes a practical point with it, but this does not make the discussion less of a direct comparison.

In another example, Bielefeldt discusses the connection between morality and religion as "a relationship of an *indirect (symbolic) connectedness* of different perspectives of meaning" (161). In support of this claim, Bielefeldt argues (rightly) that for Kant "moral obligation does not depend on religion" (159).[5] But this hardly shows that the connection between the two is indirect, especially since Kant makes quite clear that "morality . . . leads inevitably to religion" (6:6, Bielefeldt p. 159). Bielefeldt seems to be using the notion of an "indirect" or "symbolic" connection to refer to any connection other than the one against which he is arguing. That is, unless the connection were such that morality depended upon religious belief, the connection must be "indirect." But for Kant, there is a quite *direct* connection between the two, in that morality justifies belief in God and immortality. And the fact that this justification is practical rather than theoretical does not in itself imply anything "indirect" or "symbolic" about the connection between morality and religion, nor about the claims of either.

These are just two (of many) examples that show how Bielefeldt's treatment of Kant's practical philosophy does not isolate a specific strand of "symbolic representation" in anything but a deeply equivocal set of senses of that term. Although he defines "symbolic representation" in terms of indirect discourse early in the book, the best overview of what Bielefeldt actually means by this term comes in his taxonomy in the conclusion to the book. Readers are advised to read this conclusion—perhaps even before reading the rest of the book—as an overview of the central concept of the book.

Despite this criticism, there are three aspects of the book that will be of particular interest for readers of *Faith and Philosophy*. First, Bielefeldt connects symbolic representation to the more theologically loaded issue of human fallibility and finitude (e.g., 63, 82, 85, 129, 140, 165). Bielefeldt's concluding sentences provide some hint of how this focus on human finitude leads to a healthy reading of Kant as proponent of modesty in practical life: "As finite beings, we are . . . unable directly to understand how such an interconnectedness [of human experience and self-understanding] may come about. The critical reflection on moral autonomy, at any

rate, can give rise to a comprehensive philosophical orientation, which by confining itself to the *modest language of symbolic representation*, may be well suited for preserving the conundrum of the human being's moral vocation" (187–88).

Second, Bielefeldt is one of very few serious Kant scholars to take Kant's religious writings seriously. And Bielefeldt does not investigate only the classic Kantian contributions to the philosophy of religion narrowly construed, Kant's arguments against traditional metaphysical argument for the existence of God and his moral "proof" of God's existence. Instead, Bielefeldt joins a small but growing contingent of Kantians—including Kantians as diverse as Allen Wood, John Hare, Philip Quinn, and myself—who see philosophically important arguments in the details of Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, and who read this text as particularly important for a clear understanding of Kant's practical philosophy as a whole. I would especially encourage readers of *Faith and Philosophy* to scan Bielefeldt's seventh chapter to get a sense of the range of issues in philosophy of religion about which Kant has something important to say.

Finally, and of particular interest for Christian philosophers in particular, Bielefeldt offers a relatively significant treatment of grace in the context of his overall discussion of Kant's views on religion. Bielefeldt misses some important aspects of Kant's account of grace, such as the role that grace plays in dealing with radical evil (as described, for example, by Philip Quinn in the pages of this journal and by myself in *Freedom and Anthropology in Kant's Moral Philosophy*). And Bielefeldt reads grace in what I see as an overly symbolic way, saying that "grace is none other than the nature of the human being insofar as he is determined to actions by a principle which is intrinsic to his own being" (178). Still, the very fact that Bielefeldt draws attention to this central Christian doctrine as a central Kantian doctrine is worth attention.

NOTES

1.   Bielefeldt's general contention in his opening discussion of liberalism is that liberals need a way to engage in "a discussion of 'values,' 'virtue,' and 'faith'" without dogmatism (3). Bielefeldt here picks up on critiques of contemporary liberalism by thinkers such as Charles Larmore (not references in Bielefeldt, but cf. Charles Larmore, "The Moral Basis of Political Liberalism" in *The Journal of Philosophy*, December 1999, 96: 599–625). Bielefeldt, like Larmore, argues that liberalism has a moral basis that is often not articulated for fear of dogmatic moralizing. Unlike Larmore, though, Bielefeldt suggests that Kant's use of symbolic representation can provide the language that liberalism needs to avoid the twin shoals of blind dogmatism and empty skepticism.

2.   Bielefeldt does not survey Kant's criticisms of traditional metaphysics here. (Such surveys are common elsewhere, however. See, for example, Allen Wood's *Kant's Philosophical Theology*, which has a detailed treatment of these criticisms.) Instead, he seeks to show how these theoretical arguments for the existence of God "far from lending strength to religious belief, actually lead into an abyss of skepticism and unbelief" (154). Thus his focus is on the symbolic—which here means anti-dogmatic—role of these arguments, rather than their details.

3.   Bielefeldt somewhat overstates the contrast between this approach and what he calls "Rousseau's totalitarian ideology of political salvation"(108),

but his general point is to emphasize the symbolic nature—by which he here means "as-if" mode—of Kant's political theory.

   4.   Bielefeldt references (6–7) Kant's key treatments of the concept of symbol, but he only very briefly discusses (37) the treatment in the *Critique of Judgment*.

   5.   Bielefeldt goes a bit further than Kant himself, though, when he argues that "An atheist is, no less than a religiously committed person, able to listen to the voice of his or her conscience as well as to actually perform its commandments"(159). Although it would take me too far afield here, Kant's discussion of Spinoza in the *Critique of Judgment* strongly suggests that without religious belief, one will be considerably less likely to obey the moral law.