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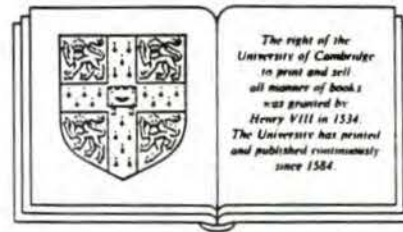
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Liberal purposes

Goods, virtues, and diversity in the liberal state

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Chapter 10

Liberal virtues

I

For two generations, scholarly inquiry has been dominated by the belief that the liberal polity does not require individual virtue. On the theoretical plane, liberalism has been understood by many as the articles of a peace treaty among individuals with diverse conceptions of the good but common interests in self-preservation and prosperity. On the level of basic institutions, the liberal constitution has been regarded as an artful contrivance of countervailing powers and counterbalancing passions. In the arena of liberal society, individual behavior has been analyzed through the prism, and public policy guided by the precepts, of neoclassical economics.

The conclusion that liberalism could be severed, in theory and in practice, from the concern for virtue was shared by scholars of widely divergent orientations. Although Leo Strauss was on the whole sympathetic and C. B. Macpherson hostile to the liberal polity, they converged on an interpretation of Locke that stressed his effort to liberate individual acquisitiveness from traditional moral constraints.¹ Martin Diamond and Gordon Wood could agree on the essentials of the interest-based "new science of politics" that displaced civic republicanism and undergirded the Constitution.² The understanding of modern liberal society as an agglomeration of self-interested individuals and groups formed a common point of departure for defenders of pluralism (such as Robert Dahl in his 1950s incarnation) and its critics (led by Theodore Lowi).³

Liberalism without neutrality

Although the various analysts of liberalism were not in agreement on a specific conception of virtue, they united in the belief that liberal theory and practice stood in tension with virtue however conceived. For Strauss and many of his followers, liberalism placed in jeopardy both the restraints on passion that should govern the daily life of the many and the striving for excellence that should guide the activities of the few. For J. G. A. Pocock and his allies, liberalism represented the evisceration of republican virtue, understood as the disposition to subordinate personal interests to the common good.⁴ For Charles Taylor and his fellow communitarians, liberalism undercut the very possibility of community and thus the significance of the virtues, understood as the habits needed to sustain a common life.⁵ To the extent that virtue could nonetheless be found in the actual practices of liberal society, it was to be understood, argued Irving Kristol and many others, as the residue of an older moral and religious tradition at odds with – and under relentless assault by – liberalism's most fundamental tendencies.⁶

The proposition that liberalism does not rest on virtue is not the arbitrary invention of contemporary scholarship. Albert Hirschman has traced the emergence in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century social thought of the thesis that republican government could best be secured not through civic virtue but, rather, through the liberation of the commercial, acquisitive "interests" of the middle class in opposition to the politically destructive "passions" of the aristocracy.⁷ The most famous *Federalist* papers (numbers 10 and 51) contain memorable formulations of the need to counteract interest with interest, and passion with passion. Immanuel Kant, who was at once the profoundest moral philosopher and the most devoted liberal theorist of his age, argued vigorously for the disjunction between individual virtue and republican government:

The republican constitution is the only one entirely fitting to the rights of man. But it is the most difficult to establish and even harder to preserve, so that many say a republic would

have to be a nation of angels, because men with their selfish inclinations are not capable of a constitution of such sublime form. But [this is an error: republican government] is only a question of a good organization of the state, whereby the powers of each selfish inclination are so arranged in opposition that one moderates or destroys the ruinous effect of the other. The consequence . . . is the same as if none of them existed, and man is forced to be a good citizen even if not a morally good person. The problem of organizing a state, however hard it may seem, can be solved even for a race of devils, if only they are intelligent.⁸

In spite of the considerable evidence for the proposition that the liberal-republican polity requires no more than the proper configuration of rational self-interest, this orthodoxy has in recent years come under attack from scholars who argue that liberal theory, institutions, and society embody – and depend upon – individual virtue. Judith Shklar has traced the emergence of liberalism to a revulsion against the cruelty of religious wars – that is, to a decision to replace military and moral repression with a “self-restraining tolerance” that is “morally more demanding than repression.”⁹ Rogers Smith has found in Locke a core conception of “rational liberty” on which a distinction between liberty and license and an account of individual excellence are based.¹⁰ Summarizing a painstaking reexamination of the neglected *Thoughts Concerning Education*, Nathan Tarcov concludes that “instead of a narrowly calculating selfishness, Locke teaches a set of moral virtues that make men able to respect themselves and be useful to one another both in private and in public life.”¹¹ Ronald Terchek extends this thesis to Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill, whom he interprets as recommending “the cultivation of those habits which turned us toward the practice of virtue.”¹² J. Budziszewski offers a general argument for the proposition that liberalism and the cultivation of the virtues can be logically compatible and even mutually supportive.¹³ In Harvey Mansfield, Jr.’s striking re-reading of the *Federalist*, the “automatic or mechanical” view of our constitutional arrangements is replaced by a focus on

well-ordered souls as the foundation of sustainable republican government: "Not only are the people expected to be virtuous but also those who run for office."¹⁴ James Q. Wilson's survey of contemporary public policy dilemmas concludes that economic diagnoses and prescriptions, which treat individual dispositions as fixed and exogenously determined "tastes," are at best one-sided. The challenge of social policy is not just the manipulation of incentives but also the formation of character: "In almost every area of important public concern, we are seeking to induce persons to act virtuously. . . . In the long run, the public interest depends on private virtue."¹⁵

If this line of argument is correct, there is a tension at the heart of liberalism. The liberal state must by definition be broadly inclusive of diversity, yet it cannot be wholly indifferent to the character of its citizens. As Thomas Spragens, Jr., has noted, "A citizenry without public spirit, without self-restraint, and without intelligence accords ill with the demands of effective self-governance."¹⁶ To quote Judith Shklar once more: The alternative before us

is not one between classical virtue and liberal self-indulgence . . . Far from being an amoral free-for-all, liberalism is, in fact, extremely difficult and constraining, far too much so for those who cannot endure . . . the risks of freedom. The habits of freedom are developed, moreover, both in private and in public, and a liberal character can readily be imagined.¹⁷

The challenge, then, is to give an account of individual virtue that supports rather than undermines liberal institutions and the capacious tolerance that gives liberal society its special attraction.

The thesis that liberalism rests in some measure on virtue is not the palpable absurdity that the liberal polity requires an impeccably virtuous citizenry, a "nation of angels." Nor is it incompatible with the mechanical-institutional interpretation of liberalism, for clearly the artful arrangement of "auxiliary precautions" can go some distance toward com-

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pensating for the "defect of better motives." Nor, finally, does this thesis maintain that the liberal polity should be understood as a tutelary community dedicated to the inculcation of individual virtue or excellence. The claim is more modest: that the operation of liberal institutions is affected in important ways by the character of citizens (and leaders), and that at some point, the attenuation of individual virtue will create pathologies with which liberal political contrivances, however technically perfect their design, simply cannot cope. To an extent difficult to measure but impossible to ignore, the viability of liberal society depends on its ability to engender a virtuous citizenry.

While this requirement is not unique to liberal societies, it poses special difficulties for them. The liberal way of life frees individuals from traditional restraints and allows them to pursue their own conceptions of happiness. To the extent that the liberal virtues are not simply consistent with individual self-interest, processes of forming and maintaining them will come into conflict with other powerful tendencies in liberal life. The liberal virtues are the traits of character liberalism needs, not necessarily the ones it has. Yet these virtues need not be imported from the outside, for they are immanent in liberal practice and theory. The tension between virtue and self-interest is a tension within liberalism, not between liberalism and other traditions.

II

The classical conception of the relation between virtue and politics was elaborated by Aristotle. Individual virtue (or excellence – the Greek *arete* bears both meanings) is knowable through everyday experience, definable through philosophical inquiry, and always and everywhere the same. For Aristotle, the virtues are not just Greek but, rather, human virtues. Political life must be seen in large measure as a means to the attainment of virtue, understood as an end in itself. Once the threshold conditions of physical and material security are met, the political community should structure its

institutions and policies to promote virtue in its citizens, and its worth as a community depends on the extent to which it achieves that goal.

Aristotle was under no illusion that the communities of his day were actually organized in pursuit of virtue. Some, like Sparta, were devoted to military victory; others, to commercial prosperity; most had no single discernible goal. Each nonetheless had a largely tacit, operative conception of the virtuous individual as the good citizen whose character and conduct were most conducive to the preservation of the community and of its way of life. In this understanding, the relation of politics and virtue is reversed: Virtue becomes the means, and the political community provides the end.

This reversal gave rise to the question explored by Aristotle in Book III of the *Politics*: Are the virtues of the good human being and of the good citizen identical or different? It turns out that they are nearly always different, a conclusion that generates a double dilemma. If a community is notably imperfect, citizens who shape themselves in its image and devote themselves to its service will undergo a kind of moral deformation. Conversely, the virtues of good human beings *simpliciter* may not only not promote but may actually impede the activities of the particular communities in which they happen to find themselves.

Liberal theorists were not unaware of this dilemma, and they responded to it in two very different ways. Some, such as John Stuart Mill, retained a place for the Aristotelian conception of virtue as an intrinsic good but argued that the practice of virtue, so understood, would also be supportive of the liberal polity. In a liberal order, the same virtues are both ends and means: The good human being and the good citizen are identical.

The other liberal strategy was to cut the knot by denying the very existence of intrinsic virtue, that is, by reinterpreting virtue as purely instrumental to the nonmoral goods that constitute the true ends of liberal politics. Thus Hobbes:

It would be surprising, however, if on closer inspection the liberal canon of the virtues turned out to mirror the classical enumeration. Indeed, I shall argue (*pace* Hobbes) that it does not. The liberal virtues are not simply the classical virtues justified on a different basis. They are in important respects different virtues.

III

I begin by examining the liberal virtues understood instrumentally, as means to the preservation of liberal societies and institutions. To fix terms, let me characterize the liberal polity as a community possessing to a high degree the following features: popular-constitutional government; a diverse society with a wide range of individual opportunities and choices; a predominantly market economy; and a substantial, strongly protected sphere of privacy and individual rights. And to avoid misunderstanding, let me briefly characterize the status of the propositions I am about to advance.

1. The discussion of the instrumental virtues in this section is a catalog not of logical entailments within liberal theory but, rather, of empirical hypotheses concerning the relation between social institutions and individual character. I offer at most fragmentary evidence in support of these hypotheses, an adequate test of which would require a far more systematic historical and comparative inquiry.

2. When I speak of certain virtues as instrumental to the preservation of liberal communities, I mean not that every citizen must possess these virtues but, rather, that most citizens must. The broad hypothesis is that as the proportion of nonvirtuous citizens increases significantly, the ability of liberal societies to function successfully progressively diminishes.

3. The fact (if it is a fact) that the instrumental virtues are socially functional does not mean that they are individually advantageous. To be sure, there is some overlap between these two objectives. The liberal virtues demand less self-discipline and sacrifice than do the virtues of classical antiq-

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uity, of civic republicanism, or of Christianity, and the simultaneous practice of many of these social virtues makes it easier for individuals to succeed within liberal communities. Still, these virtues are not reducible to self-interest, even self-interest "rightly understood." Thus, while the liberal virtues do not presuppose a specific moral psychology, they do at least imply the rejection of any comprehensive egoism.

General virtues

Some of the virtues needed to sustain the liberal state are requisites of every political community. From time to time, each community must call upon its members to risk their lives in its defense. Courage – the willingness to fight and even die on behalf of one's country – is thus very widely honored, even though there may be occasions on which the refusal to fight is fully justified.

In addition, every community creates a complex structure of law and regulations in the expectation that they will be accepted as legitimate, hence binding, without recourse to direct threats or sanctions. The net social value of a law is equal to the social benefits it engenders minus the social costs of enforcing it. As the individual propensity to obey the law diminishes, so does a society's ability to pursue collective goals through the law. Law-abidingness is therefore a core social virtue, in liberal communities and elsewhere. (This does not mean that disobedience is never justified, but only that a heavy burden of proof must be discharged by those who propose to violate the law.)

Finally, every society is constituted by certain core principles and sustained by its members' active belief in them. Conversely, every society is weakened by the diminution of its members' belief in its legitimacy. Loyalty – the developed capacity to understand, to accept, and to act on the core principles of one's society – is thus a fundamental virtue. And it is particularly important in liberal communities, which tend to be organized around abstract principles rather than shared ethnicity, nationality, or history.

Beyond the virtues needed to sustain all political communities are virtues specific to liberal communities – those required by the liberal spheres of society, economy, and polity.

Virtues of liberal society

A liberal society is characterized by two key features: individualism and diversity. To individualism corresponds the liberal virtue of independence – the disposition to care for, and take responsibility for, oneself and to avoid becoming needlessly dependent on others. Human beings are not born independent, nor do they attain independence through biological maturation alone. A growing body of evidence suggests that in a liberal society, the family is the critical arena in which independence and a host of other virtues must be engendered. The weakening of families is thus fraught with danger for liberal societies. In turn, strong families rest on specific virtues. Without fidelity, stable families cannot be maintained. Without a concern for children that extends well beyond the boundaries of adult self-regard, parents cannot effectively discharge their responsibility to help form secure, self-reliant young people. In short, the independence required for liberal social life rests on self-restraint and self-transcendence – the virtues of family solidarity.

I turn now from individualism to diversity, the second defining feature of liberal society. The maintenance of social diversity requires the virtue of tolerance. This virtue is widely thought to rest on the relativistic belief that every personal choice, every "life plan," is equally good, hence beyond rational scrutiny and criticism. Nothing could be further from the truth. Tolerance is fully compatible with the proposition that some ways of life can be known to be superior to others. It rests, rather, on the conviction that the pursuit of the better course should be (and in many cases has to be) a consequence of education or persuasion rather than of coercion. Indeed, tolerance may be defined as the ability to make this conviction effective as a maxim of personal conduct.

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Virtues of the liberal economy

The liberal market economy relies on two kinds of virtues: those required by different economic roles and those required by liberal economic life taken as a whole. In a modern market economy, the basic roles are those of the entrepreneur and the organization employee. The entrepreneurial virtues form a familiar litany: imagination, initiative, drive, determination. The organizational virtues are very different from (and in some respects the reverse of) the entrepreneurial. They include such traits as punctuality, reliability, civility toward co-workers, and a willingness to work within established frameworks and tasks. As economic units evolve, one of the great management challenges is to adjust the mix of entrepreneurial and organizational practices. Sometimes this takes the form of an organizational displacement (or routinization) of entrepreneurial charisma, as in the ouster of Steven Jobs as head of Apple Computer. Sometimes it requires just the opposite, as when a large, stodgy organization replaces a centralized structure with semiautonomous units and loosens individual task and role definitions in an effort to encourage more entrepreneurial practices on the part of its employees.

There are three generic (as distinct from role-specific) virtues required by modern market economies. The first is the work ethic, which combines the sense of obligation to support personal independence through gainful effort with the determination to do one's job thoroughly and well. The second is the achievement of a mean between ascetic self-denial and untrammelled self-indulgence; call it a capacity for moderate delay of gratification. For although market economies rely on the liberation and multiplication of consumer desires, they cannot prosper in the long run without a certain level of saving, which rests on the ability to subordinate immediate gratification to longer-run self-interest.

The third generic economic virtue is adaptability. Modern market economies are characterized by rapid, sweeping changes that reconfigure organizations and occupations. Pat-

terns of lifelong employment within a single task or organization, common for much of this century, are being displaced. Most individuals will change jobs several times during their working lives, moving into new occupations, new organizations, and even new sectors of the economy. To be sure, collective political action can help regulate the pace of change, ameliorate its consequences, and share its costs. Still, domestic and international pressures combine to make the fact and basic direction of economic change irresistible. Thus, the disposition to accept new tasks as challenges rather than threats and the ability to avoid defining personal identity and worth in reference to specific, fixed occupations are essential attributes of individuals and economies able to cope successfully with the demands of change.²¹

Virtues of liberal politics

I come, finally, to the sphere of politics, which calls for virtues of both citizens and leaders.

1. *Virtues of citizenship:* Some generic citizen virtues have already been identified: courage, law-abidingness, loyalty. In addition to these are the citizen virtues specific to the liberal polity. Because a liberal order rests on individual rights, the liberal citizen must have the capacity to discern, and the restraint to respect, the rights of others. (Invasion of the rights of others is the form of *pleonexia* specific to liberal political life.) Because liberalism incorporates representative government, the liberal citizen must have the capacity to discern the talent and character of candidates vying for office, and to evaluate the performance of individuals who have attained office. Liberalism also envisions popular government, responsive to the demands of its citizens. The greatest vices of popular governments are the propensity to gratify short-term desires at the expense of long-term interests and the inability to act on unpleasant truths about what must be done. To check these vices, liberal citizens must be moderate in their demands and self-disciplined enough to accept pain-

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ful measures when they are necessary. From this standpoint, the willingness of liberal citizens to demand no more public services than their country can afford and to pay for all the benefits they demand is not just a technical economic issue but a moral issue as well. Consistently unbalanced budgets – the systematic displacement of social costs to future generations – are signs of a citizenry unwilling to moderate its desires or to discharge its duties.

The liberal citizen is not the same as the civic-republican citizen. In a liberal polity, there is no duty to participate actively in politics, no requirement to place the public above the private and to systematically subordinate personal interest to the common good, no commitment to accept collective determination of personal choices. But neither is liberal citizenship simply the pursuit of self-interest, individually or in factional collusion with others of like mind. Liberal citizenship has its own distinctive restraints – virtues that circumscribe and check, without wholly nullifying, the promptings of self-aggrandizement.

2. *Virtues of leadership:* The need for virtue and excellence in political leaders is perhaps more immediately evident than is the corresponding requirement in the case of citizens. The U.S. Founding Fathers saw popular elections as the best vehicle for discerning and selecting good leaders. Thomas Jefferson spoke for them when he wrote to John Adams:

There is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents. . . . The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction, trusts, and government of society. . . . May we not even say, that that form of government is the best, which provides the most effectively for a pure selection of these natural *aristoi* into the offices of government? . . . I think the best remedy is exactly that provided by all our constitutions, to leave to the citizens the free election and separation of the *aristoi* from the *pseudo-aristoi*.²²

The leadership virtues specific to liberal polities include patience – the ability to accept, and work within, the con-

straints on action imposed by social diversity and constitutional institutions. Second, liberal leaders must have the capacity to forge a sense of common purpose against the centrifugal tendencies of an individualistic and fragmented society. Third, liberal leaders must be able to resist the temptation to earn popularity by pandering to immoderate public demands. Against desire liberal leaders must counterpose restraints; against the fantasy of the free lunch they must insist on the reality of the hard choice; against the lure of the immediate they must insist on the requirements of the long term. Finally, while liberal leaders derive authority from popular consent, they cannot derive policy from public opinion. Rather, they must have the capacity to narrow – insofar as public opinion permits – the gap between popular preference and wise action. The liberal leader who disregards public sentiment will quickly come to grief, but so will the leader who simply takes that sentiment as the polestar of public policy. Through persuasion, the liberal leader tries to move the citizenry toward sound views. But the limits of persuasion must constitute the boundaries of public action, or else leadership becomes usurpation.

As the authors of the *Federalist* insisted, and as experience confirms, there are also specific virtues required for the successful conduct of the different offices in a liberal-constitutional order: optimism and energy in the executive, deliberative excellence and civility in the legislator, impartiality and interpretive skill in the judge.²³ And, as Jefferson suggested, the ultimate test of systems of election or appointment is their tendency to select officeholders with the appropriate virtues. For that reason, it is appropriate and necessary to inquire whether particular systems of selection (e.g., presidential nominating primaries) tend on balance to reward the kinds of personal traits that their corresponding offices require.

3. *General political virtues*: There are two other political virtues required of liberal citizens and leaders alike. While not all public policies need be made in the full light of day, liberal politics rests on a presumption of publicity, that is, on a

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commitment to resolve disputes through open discussion unless compelling reasons can be adduced for restricting or concealing the policy process. Thus, a general liberal political virtue is the disposition, and the developed capacity, to engage in public discourse. This virtue includes the willingness to listen seriously to a range of views which, given the diversity of liberal societies, will include ideas the listener is bound to find strange and even obnoxious. The virtue of political discourse also includes the willingness to set forth one's own views intelligibly and candidly as the basis of a politics of persuasion rather than manipulation or coercion.

A second general political virtue is the disposition to narrow the gap (insofar as it is in one's power) between principles and practices in liberal society. For leaders, this means admitting and confronting social imperfections through a public appeal to collective convictions. For citizens it can mean either such a public appeal, or quiet acts that reduce the reach of hypocrisy in one's immediate community. For both, it can lead to a tension between social transformation and law-abidingness, which can be resolved prudentially only with reference to the facts of specific cases. (This is a tension rather than a contradiction between these two liberal virtues, because the virtue of law-abidingness embodies not the absolute priority of law but, rather, a presumption in favor of the law that can be rebutted in a narrow range of instances.)

IV

In the preceding section I tried to sketch a catalog of instrumental liberal virtues understood as empirical hypotheses about connections between individual character and social institutions. There is another approach that yields complementary results. The analysis of the liberal theory of the good can enlarge our understanding of the liberal virtues.

Many contemporary liberal theorists have sought to rely on a "thin" account of the good as means to the attainment of whatever objectives individuals may pursue. Critics have

wondered whether *any* means can really be equally serviceable for each and every goal. But the deeper difficulty lies elsewhere. As we saw in Chapter 4, neutralist liberalism presupposes individuals who value their earthly existence, who give positive weight to the achievement of their purposes, and who are prepared to accept rationality as a constraint on social action and principle. (This presupposition – the minimum content of the liberal good – may be regarded as a subset of the more expansive conception sketched in Chapter 8.)

This liberal theory of the noninstrumental good can serve as an independent basis for a range of instrumental liberal virtues. The worth of existence implies, first, severe strictures against cruelty and brutality as dispositions that tend to the needless destruction of existence; and second, an endorsement of the humanitarian disposition to act affirmatively to preserve the existence of others, at least when this can be done without excessive cost to ourselves. The value liberalism attaches to the fulfillment of individual purposes rests on a critique both of otherworldliness, which denigrates earthly striving in light of the hereafter, and of nihilism, which in the name of the absurdity of existence withdraws all moral significance from such striving. When combined with the empirical diversity of human purposes, the liberal account of purposiveness leads directly to the vindication of tolerance, interpreted as the settled disposition of each individual to minimize interference with the strivings of others. Finally, the liberal endorsement of social rationality provides a basis for a distinctively liberal account of moderation, that is, a critique of passions and desires insofar as they weaken the disposition to confine the pursuit of individual purposes to the limits set by rational social principle.

v

The thrust of the argument thus far has been to specify the virtues instrumental to the preservation and operation of the liberal polity. I turn now from considering liberal virtues as

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means to examining them as ends. The question is whether there is a conception of the virtuous or excellent individual linked intrinsically to liberal theory and seen as valuable, not instrumentally, but for its own sake.

It might be thought that the answer must be negative. After all, it is characteristic of both liberal societies and liberal theories to be open to a wide variety of life plans and to their corresponding excellences. Yet the liberal tradition is by no means silent on this question. Indeed, it suggests three conceptions of intrinsic individual excellence, overlapping yet distinct.

The first is the Lockean conception of excellence as rational liberty or self-direction. As persuasively reconstructed by Rogers Smith, rational self-direction includes the capacity to form, pursue, and revise life plans in light of our personal commitments and circumstances. But it is a substantive, not merely instrumental, standard:

If we value rational self-direction, we must always strive to maintain in ourselves, and to respect in others, these very capacities for deliberative self-guidance and self-control. Correspondingly, we must see the habitual exercise of these capacities as constituting morally worthy character and their enhancement as constituting morally praiseworthy action.²⁴

The second noninstrumental liberal conception of individual excellence is the Kantian account of the capacity to act in accordance with the precepts of duty – that is, to make duty the effective principle of personal conduct and to resist the promptings of passion and interest insofar as they are incompatible with this principle. Judith Shklar has offered a fine sketch of Kant's morally excellent individual in action:

At all times, he must respect humanity, the rational moral element in himself and in *all* other men. For his own sake, he must choose to avoid all self-destructive and gross behavior, and above all else, he must not lie. . . . To other men he owes no liberality or pity or *noblesse oblige* of any kind, because this might humiliate the recipients. What he does have to show

them is a respect for their rights, decent manners, and avoidance of calumny, pride, and malice. . . . This is a thoroughly democratic liberal character, built to preserve his own self-respect and that of others, neither demanding nor enduring servility.²⁵

The third liberal conception of individual excellence has been adapted in different ways from Romanticism by John Stuart Mill, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Walt Whitman. It is the understanding of excellence as the full flowering of individuality. As Mill expounded this thesis, the excellence of individuality combines the Greek emphasis on the development, through activity, of human powers with the modern realization that the blend and balance of these powers will differ from individual to individual. Because liberal societies allow maximum scope for diversity, they are the most (though not perfectly) conducive to the development of individuality. And because liberal societies rest on individual freedom, they tend to foster the self-determination that is at the heart of true individuality. As Mill put it, "He who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation. He who chooses his plan for himself, employs all his faculties."²⁶ Or, as George Kateb sums up the parallel argument within the Emersonian tradition:

One must take responsibility for oneself – one's self must become a project, one must become the architect of one's soul. One's *dignity* resides in being, to some important degree, a person of one's own creating, making, choosing rather than in being merely a creature or a socially manufactured, conditioned, created thing.²⁷

Can these three distinct, but recognizably liberal, conceptions of human excellence be made to cohere in a single unified view? Yes, to a point. They have a common core – a vision of individuals who in some manner take responsibility for their own lives. Each links excellence to a kind of activity.

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And all lead to a vindication of the dignity of every individual and to the practice of mutual respect. Beyond this common core, however, certain tensions become manifest. The exercise of Lockean rational liberty can lead to a wide range of deliberative outcomes, whereas Kantian duty usually prescribes a single course of conduct as generally binding. The pursuit of Emersonian individuality can tend toward a kind of poetic, even mystical self-transcendence at war with both the rationalism of Kantian morality and the prosaic, orderly self-discipline of Lockean liberty.²⁸

It is possible, of course, to resolve these tensions by giving one conception pride of place and requiring the others to maintain consistency with the preferred standard. (This is the course that Rawls, like Kant, follows when he subordinates the rational pursuit of individual life plans to the social requirements of moral right.) But it may be more advisable to accept a range of tension and indeterminacy, that is, to see the liberal polity at its best as a community that encourages all of these overlapping but distinct conceptions of individual excellence and provides an arena within which each may be realized, in part through struggle against the others.

VI

The fact that liberalism has accommodated conceptions of intrinsic as well as instrumental virtue raises the question of whether these broad categories are mutually consistent – whether (in Aristotle's terms) the liberal "good man" is the same as the liberal "good citizen." In important respects, it turns out, they are not. As Kateb observes, the Emersonian individual sees laws and institutions – including liberal-democratic institutions – as constraints on true individuality, even though these very institutions are the practical presuppositions for the emergence of the ideal self. On the Emersonian account, moreover, the virtues required to maintain the liberal polity fall far short of the highest human qualities.²⁹ Similarly, even though Kant himself prescribed law-abidingness as a moral duty, the possibility of laws that

command immoral action and challenge self-respect is ever present. In cases of conflict, the preservation of individual integrity and dignity would seem to require that positive law give way to moral law. Finally, the Lockean doctrine of rational self-direction stands in dual tension with the requirements of liberal citizenship. Self-direction, so understood, does not readily lead to, or easily cohere with, the willingness to die for one's country. And self-direction as a maxim of individual perfection is not obviously or always consistent with a maxim of social action, binding on each individual, that commands the maximization of self-direction for all individuals throughout the community. While optimistic empirical assumptions may narrow the disjunction between the imperatives of personal perfection and social solidarity, this gap cannot be fully bridged. Indeed, it would not be far-fetched to interpret some of the deepest tensions within liberal politics as a clash between means and ends – that is, between requirements of liberal citizenship and aspirations toward liberal excellence.

VII

It has been the burden of this chapter to argue that the health of liberal politics is intertwined in complex ways with the practice of what I have called liberal virtues. Now, assuming that these virtues are not innate, by what means are they to be engendered? And are they adequately developed in our own liberal community? A full examination of these issues lies well beyond the scope of the present discussion. But let me conclude with three alternative hypotheses.

The optimistic hypothesis claims that daily life in the liberal polity is a powerful if tacit force for habituation to at least the minimal requirements of liberal virtue. The sorts of things regularly expected of us at home, in school, and on the job shape us in the manner required for the operation of liberal institutions. And while hardly models of moral perfection, citizens of modern liberal communities are at least adequately

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virtuous – and not demonstrably less so than were citizens in times past.

The neutral hypothesis maintains that tacit socialization is not enough; that authoritative institutions such as families, schools, churches, the legal system, political leaders, and the media must deliberately and cooperatively foster liberal virtues; that these institutions are not now performing this task adequately; but that there is no reason in principle why they cannot do so once they come more fully to understand their responsibility.

Finally, the pessimistic hypothesis, associated with such thinkers as Daniel Bell, suggests that powerful strands of contemporary liberal culture tend to undermine liberal virtues, that in particular the various forms of liberal self-restraint have fallen victim to the imperatives of self-indulgence and self-expression.³⁰ From this perspective, the task of strengthening and renewing liberal virtues requires more than improving the formal institutions of moral and civic education. It requires as well a sustained effort to reverse corrosive tendencies fundamental to modern culture.

Evidence can be adduced for each of these hypotheses. Optimists can point to the demonstrable fact that our polity has generated, or at least has not thwarted the generation of, the minimal conditions for its survival over the past two centuries. Neutralists can argue that key social indicators – crime, drug abuse, family stability, and others – are headed in alarming directions and that the impact of major forces of socialization – in particular, television and popular culture – is on balance negative. And pessimists can observe that with the important exception of organized religion, most sources of social authority have a diminished confidence in their ability to establish, inculcate, and enforce social norms of conduct and character.

In a perceptive study of contemporary city government, Stephen Elkin has argued that the operation of urban political institutions has a pervasive, and predominantly negative, effect on the character of the citizenry. At the heart of the

liberal-democratic citizenry a commercial republic needs if it is to move toward the "commercial public interest" is "a disposition to think of political choice as involving the giving of reasons." Public choice is to involve "justification, not just the aggregation of wants and interests."³¹ Unfortunately, modern city governments systematically fail to foster this disposition, for three reasons. These governments are executive-centered and are therefore not geared to eliciting reasoned argument from individual citizens, or to listening attentively if it happens to be forthcoming. They induce citizens to relate to one another as interest bearers and as bargainers rather than as participants in a shared process of justification. And finally, many urban citizens relate to one another as "clients" whose interests are defined and mediated by bureaucratic experts.³² These negative consequences of urban public life cannot be reversed without systematic reform of the characteristic institutions and procedures of city governments.³³

Richard Dagger also looks to the city as the locus of citizenship, and he is equally discouraged by what he finds. In his view, three features of contemporary urban life are particularly destructive. The sheer size of most cities militates against individual interest in its affairs, and against the development of mutual trust. The fragmentation of governmental responsibility breeds "confusion, disorientation, and a sense of impotence." Rapid mobility loosens the ties that bind individuals to the community and erodes the disposition to participate and cooperate. Like Elkin, Dagger argues that the negative consequences for citizenship of the modern city cannot be reduced without systematic reforms that ameliorate their causes.³⁴

George Kateb takes a more optimistic view. He argues that representative democracy has a tendency to foster the kinds of character traits that liberal societies particularly need: independence of spirit, the democratization of social life, and a "general tolerance of, and even affection for, diversity."³⁵ Overall, liberal democratic society is taught, or teaches itself, a fundamental lesson about the nature of all authority:

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a pervasive skepticism . . . ; a reluctance to defer; a conviction that those who wield authority must themselves be skeptical toward their roles and themselves and that necessary authority must be wielded in a way that inflicts minimum damage on the moral authority of all people [and] a tendency to try to do without authority wherever possible or to disperse or disguise it, and thus to soften it.³⁶

While not insensitive to the very real difficulties inherent in such dispositions, Kateb is willing to defend them, not just as instrumentally necessary for liberal democracies but also as intrinsically preferable to the sets of dispositions associated with alternative forms of political organization – in particular, direct democracy.³⁷

Robert Lane has undertaken what is probably the most thorough and systematic effort to assemble and assess the empirical evidence concerning the effects of liberal-democratic life on character formation. He begins by defining, and defending, a model of "mature and developed personality," which has five components: cognitive capacity; autonomy; sociocentrism – the ability to understand and recognize the thoughts and claims of others as well as oneself; identity – some combination of self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and self-respect; and identification with normal values, as a necessary bulwark against sociopathic behavior.³⁸ Lane then examines in detail the effects of capitalist markets and democratic politics on the development of such a personality. His conclusion is a nuanced blend of hope and concern:

The market has taught us much, including cognitive complexity, self-reliance, and a version of justice where work or contribution to the economy is rewarded. Through its emphasis on transactions it has eroded some of the sources of sociocentrism. By its destruction of sources of humane values, its instrumentalism, it has made identity hard to achieve and its amorality has made difficult the identification with moral values. Democracy, too, has made people think; it has offered

a promise of fate control which it only partially fulfills. While it embodies a form of sociocentrism, it does not model morality for the public, although its form of justice allows for beneficence, the justice of need. And its complex diversity makes identity hard to achieve, but once achieved, all the more valuable.³⁹

In a parallel analysis focusing exclusively on the capitalist market, Lane examines – and largely rejects – recent pessimism about its effects. Consumerism has not perceptibly eroded the work ethic; modern industry requires as much cooperation as competition; individuals continue to have confidence in their efficacy, that is, in some nonrandom relation between the effort, contribution, and skill they display, on the one hand, and the rewards they receive, on the other; the capacity to innovate, and to take the initiative, is higher among workers in market economies than in command economies; and the ability to question authority by adopting a skeptical stance toward authoritarian morality remains high.⁴⁰

These findings help us focus the debate among optimists, pessimists, and neutralists. It is surely important, as the optimists insist, to take a long view – to recall that America has survived social conflict and dislocation as severe as any we are now experiencing, and to recognize that our current civic culture retains many healthy elements that help sustain personal liberty while warding off public oppression. But it is at least as important to give sustained attention to the phenomena on which neutralists dwell: rising rates of drug use, crime, and family breakdown; inadequate levels of public education, public provision, and public involvement; greed and shortsightedness in public and private affairs; and the growing barbarization and tribalization of American life. Nor can we afford to ignore the pessimists' thesis that these problems are structural rather than accidental – for example, that media-driven patterns of consumption and self-involvement are steadily breaking down the habits of restraint and responsibility on which the liberal polity (like any other) inescapably depends.

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I for one cannot avoid the conclusion that we have at least as much food for concern as for celebration. It is fashionable, and all too easy, to denigrate this stance by pointing out that cultural pessimism is a pervasive theme of human history in nearly every community and in nearly every generation. But the fact remains that political communities can move, and throughout history have moved, from health to disrepair for reasons linked to moral and cultural decay. In the face of this, I do not believe that contemporary American liberals can afford to be complacent. We cannot simply chant the mantra of diversity and hope that fate will smile upon us. We must try as best we can to repair our tattered social fabric by attending more carefully to the moral requirements of liberal public life and by doing what is possible and proper to reinforce them.

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THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF LIBERAL COMMUNITY

by William Galston

Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to explore the meaning and implications of "community" in contemporary liberal democracy. I want to make it clear at the outset what I am not attempting to do.

In the first place, this essay is not intended as a continuation of the long-running but frequently ill-conceived debate between "liberals" and "communitarians." Charles Taylor has written an essay entitled "Cross-Purposes" in which he distinguishes between two dimensions along which this debate could be conducted: an ontological debate about the basic nature and constitution of social life; and an advocacy debate in which various parties to the discussion offer competing analyses of, and moral judgments about, the adequacy of public life in contemporary liberal democracies. Taylor points out--absolutely correctly, in my judgment--that these two debates are very different. One can agree to the thesis of the social constitution of individuals without necessarily being led to adopt a particular stance concerning practical issues. In talking about communitarianism and liberalism, one is not necessarily talking about liberalism versus community. It is not at all oxymoronic to speak of "liberal community"; indeed, that is how I characterize my own theoretical position and the kind of practical politics I hope to bring about.

Nor do I intend to fall into what the stern anti-communitarian

Stephen Holmes has dubbed the community trap. "Community" is not and must not become an honorific term. One cannot read much Aristotelian political theory, or experience much of practical political life, without realizing that not all communities are equally valuable and that some are actually destructive of the human good.

Nor, finally, do I intend to conduct an exercise in nostalgic utopianism. The point is not the Greek polis, or the medieval city-state, or the Swiss canton . . . or, for that matter, the nineteenth century rural American small town. The point (or at least the point of departure) is our current situation, which has contributed at least as much to the rising interest in communitarianism as have the theoretical debates that fill the pages of so many learned journals.

Why "community" today?

What, then, are the practical problems to which the theory and practice of community are a response?

First: as a society we have unduly neglected the conditions of individual nurturance and growth. It is worth reminding ourselves that we are not born citizens, we are not born virtuous, we are not even born knowing how to be parents. We must learn these things through specific processes lodged in specific institutions. From a communitarian perspective, lip service to these institutions is not enough. We need an enhanced focus on families, neighborhoods, schools, voluntary associations, and religious institutions (among

others) as key sources of character formation. That is one reason why communitarianism is typically linked to an appreciation of what is called "civil society"-- the dense network of voluntary attachments that stand between individuals and the state and that help connect us to one another and to the polity's public institutions.

The second problem is what I will call "economism": the tendency, for purposes of political analysis, policy formulation, and institution-building, to believe that social and public behavior can be understood as guided only by a narrow calculus of self-interest. That perspective is simply inadequate as a way of understanding human action, and from a political standpoint is entirely self-defeating. Our public institutions do not possess enough carrots or enough sticks, enough incentives or disincentives, to induce appropriate individual behavior. If a well-ordered society is to arise and persist, most of its members must do the right thing most of the time because they believe that it is right--or at the least, out of ingrained habit rather than conscious calculation. That principle applies not just to the political sphere, but to the economy as well. The economy is not just the concatenation of individual self-interest; it is also a structure of rules that must be obeyed, for the most part not because they are enforced by some external authority but because the players believe that it is appropriate to obey them. Similarly for the virtues of the workplace. There is no business that can observe its employees so carefully as to terrorize them into

maximum productivity or prevent them from sabotaging the business or stealing from it. In the workplace as elsewhere, most people have to behave appropriately because they believe it is right, or out of habit. And here again, these beliefs and habits are not innate and do not arise spontaneously. They need to be created, and we must therefore concern ourselves with the social processes by which that occurs.

Another practical problem driving communitarianism is what I will call hyperindividualism. (For now, let me simply list some of the manifestation of this error; I will return to these points later.) First, the tendency to assert rights without accepting responsibilities. Second, the tendency to ignore or avoid responsibility for the consequences of our individual behavior for others, starting in our neighborhoods with simple issues--whether we mow our grass, paint our houses, repair broken windows, attend to litter on the streets. We are resources--positive or negative--for those around us; what we do or fail to do for ourselves affects them as well. And the fact that we affect people in that way is a source of moral connection with them that must be examined systematically. Another manifestation of hyperindividualism is the desire to gain the benefits of social cooperation without accepting the burdens of the shared activities that are needed to produce those benefits. A final manifestation is the tendency to assert our freedom at the expense of connection with other human beings. Communitarianism is in part a response to the perception that the kinds of behavior to which hyperindividualism characteristically

leads can make it very difficult to sustain a well-ordered society, and in particular a well-ordered liberal democracy.

A final category of practical problems giving rise to the communitarian impulse is a loss of confidence in the definition, acceptance, or enforceability of a shared national identity. We have endured an extended period in which the vociferous discussion of plurality has all but drowned out the quiet contemplation of unity, to the extent that we are no longer sure of the meaning of the ancestral phrase "e pluribus unum" or of the terms on which it might be reasserted.

Let me offer some examples, drawn from the daily newspaper, of specific problems that reflect the kinds of concerns just sketched. A large number of young people growing up without even rudimentary training in the core virtues of human beings and citizens. An epidemic of teen violence and sociopathic behavior. An equally troubling epidemic of individuals whose biological responsibility for children is decoupled from the emotional, economic, and moral responsibility to remain connected to them and care for them. The high percentage of people who cherish the right of trial by jury but who are themselves unwilling to serve as jurors. In a similar vein, one of my favorite anecdotes from the savings and loan scandal: when it became clear that the our country would be compelled to pay billions of dollars to resolve the crisis, one man stood up in a crowded town meeting and said, "I don't understand why the taxpayers have to pay for this; why doesn't the government do it?" A final example: in state after state, it has proved

almost impossible to draft public school curricula in such a way as to pass muster with the various political forces arrayed as judges, jurors, and executioners of any publisher brave enough to come forward with an eight-grade history textbook. This is the symptom of something gone seriously awry--the loss of balance, moderation, and unity in our common life.

Community: broad themes

Some much for the problems that evoke a communitarian response. Now let me sketch that response, beginning with the general concept of community.

Adapting Aristotle, I think of community as a sharing association involving two or more human beings. This simple definition directs our attention to some key dimensions of analysis. Communities will reflect what it is that their members actually share--frequently shared purposes or aspirations, but in other cases something different. There are important distinctions concerning how something is shared. Sharing can take the form of participation in a good that is collectively produced, such as national defense. Alternatively, sharing can take the form of participation in a common activity that would be diminished without the co-participation of others. The homeliest example of this would be the telling of a joke. Telling a joke to oneself is not the same (and hardly ever as good) as telling it to others--particularly if they laugh. But regardless of the response, the presence of others generates a qualitatively different experience.

This distinction between collective production and sharing in a common activity reflect the classical Aristotelian distinction between poesis and praxis--making and doing: there are communities of making, and also communities of doing. I do not mean to suggest that one is more primary or important than the other, but only that they represent different forms of community.

Based on this general definition of sharing association, we can see that communities range from the small to the very large: friendships, families, neighborhoods, voluntary associations, religious institutions, cities, regions, national political communities. There are even transnational communities: for example, the international community of scientists with its own membership, rules, and purposes. This underscores the broader point that it is meaningful to talk about individuals separated by vast distances who nonetheless share things important enough to constitute communities in the full and proper sense.

Many communities are brought together and held together by shared purposes. Here are some instances of this: sports teams, political campaigns, scientific laboratories, orchestras. These examples, among many others that might be offered, have some common characteristics. They have tolerably clear goals (which is not to say that they are lacking in complexity). These goals structure a range of debates over appropriate strategies and tactics for carrying them out. They orient common enterprises that do not in any way entail uniformity--the absence of differentiation or individuality among their members--but are consistent with a wide

range of individual goals and expression and do not require the subordination of individuality to collective purposes.

In groups so constituted, there is a place for legitimate self-interest and even intragroup competition. There is a tolerable midpoint in all these groups between self-effacement on the one hand and what in sports is called hot-dogging on the other. There is a certain point of self-promotion and self-display beyond which members of communities of shared purposes are expected not to go, and are subject to disapproval if they do. Nonetheless, up to a point the display of individual distinctiveness and excellence is fully consistent with the pursuit of the shared purposes of the group.

The final point about community, so understood, is that the shared purposes constitute a basis for defining the common good. The common good is not some theoretical notion floating in moral hyperspace. It is a practical reality. It is what the members of the groups have in common. It is what they accept and pursue in common.

I do not want to suggest that shared purposes or overlapping interests are sufficient to define a community; if so, a wide range of commercial relations and transactions would qualify. There must also be some combination of the following. First, there must be some ingredient of what Aristotle called fellow-feeling, a kind of emotion connecting the different members of the community. There must be some special moral weight accorded to the particular family or party or country to which one is affirming a connection.

And finally, there must be a sense of shared fate with the other members of the group. This can take a number of forms: the sense that we are all in it together, that what happens to the person across the street in a sense happens to me as well; or a kind of sympathetic identification, of being able to say about misfortunes befalling other members of the community, There but for the grace of God go I. These reflections in turn lead to the idea of what might be called nonpurposive sharing as an alternative (in some cases) and an adjunct (in others) to the idea of shared purposes. This second kind of sharing can involve history or myth, ethnicity or race, religion or faith, even strongly held sentiments or feelings.

Whatever their other features may be, communities also require some stability of attachment over time, that is, some continuity. That suggests that processes of very rapid change--economic, social, or moral--stand in tension with the maintenance of community, however constituted and understood.

This consideration raises an important practical question about the relationship between community and modern political economy. Many believe that the United States and other advanced industrial democracies need a multiplicity of vibrant communities along the lines just sketched. Many of these same people also believe that there is no serious alternative to an open global economic system, along the lines promoted by recently adopted treaties such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. The basic thesis is that

over time, we will all be better off (as measured by our income, opportunity, and standard of living) if we accept the need for openness. But the forces of openness are also the forces of what Joseph Schumpeter called creative destruction. In order for the promise of this openness to be realized, many forms of economic activity--and many forms of community, rural and urban, that have grown up around these activities--will be severely weakened in not undermined altogether.

What form of political economy is most compatible with the maintenance of community? This is an unresolved problem. It is made even more complex by the fact that given the basic assumptions of modern life, a period of prolonged economic stagnation is itself inimical to the maintenance of community because it unleashes highly conflictual forces among individuals and groups. So the conundrum is that we need economic growth to diminish conflict within communities, but at the same time the only way in which growth can be achieved under modern circumstances makes it difficult to sustain the stability of specific forms of economic production that lie at the heart of particular forms of community. This tension represents a grave challenge for all who take seriously both community and economic dynamism.

Community is among other things a cooperative endeavor. membership in community therefore entails the willingness to accept the burdens as well as the benefits of that cooperation. More generally, it embodies the principle of reciprocity, the willingness to do one's fair share to promote the community's

purposes and uphold its institutions provided most others do so as well.

A leading liberal theorist, John Rawls, has advanced versions of these proposition; one more bit of evidence that the phrase "liberal community" is not a contradiction in terms. From a communitarian perspective, two points must be stressed. First, if one views community as a cooperative endeavor to produce a joint product, then one's willingness to participate in that process of production affects the claims one can make on the community. One is not free to say, in Woody Allen's famous quip, that eighty percent of life is just showing up; you have to do something, and if you do not your legitimate claim on the community is thereby diminished. So Rawls's notion that individuals are sources of valid claims at least must be modified to include the dimension of relevant performance as well as bare existence. Second, the idea of reciprocity itself rests on an underlying sense of solidarity with other members of the community. It is this more primordial identification that makes it possible to accept and discharge the responsibilities of reciprocity.

Communitarian constitutionalism

The public purposes that constitute communities must be converted from abstractions into specific institutions and policies and specific understandings of citizenship and of relevant virtues. The next step, therefore, is to lay out what might be called liberal communitarian constitutionalism.

Consider the Preamble to the Constitution. The Constitution is admirably terse in every respect. The Preamble could simply have said, "We the people of the United States do ordain and establish this constitution of the United States." But it says more than that: "We the people of the United States, in order to"-- and following those words "in order to" is a long list of shared purposes that give the constitutional institutions their point. Our constitution is the model of a community based on broad shared purposes that are not so general as to be devoid of meaning or as to fail to distinguish our liberal democratic community from other forms of community.

A liberal democratic constitutionalism interprets public institutions and policies through the constitutional purpose as established in the Preamble. From this perspective, when Franklin D. Roosevelt interpreted the powers and responsibilities of his presidency in light of the need to preserve domestic tranquility and promote the general welfare, he was operating appropriately and not, as many conservatives allege, in a paraconstitutional manner.

The second key aspect of communitarian constitutionalism occurs at the other end of the constitution--namely, the specification of rights. John F. Kennedy's famous declaration, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country," represents one among an array of four basic options concerning the relationship between citizens and their government. Kennedy's notion of giving without receiving emphasizes sacrifice in a manner that draws on civic republican traditions. The

opposite option--receiving without giving--reflects the philosophy of entitlement or (as some would have it) dependency. The third option, which might be called libertarian, involves neither giving nor receiving. The fourth, the distinctively communitarian option, involves both giving and receiving--the path of reciprocity.

From this perspective, we can talk both about what's right about rights and also about what has gone wrong with the contemporary practice of rights. Rights represent claims of individuals against government. Pushing rights claims beyond due limits can undermine the appropriate relationship between citizens and government--the relationship of reciprocity. During the past generation, the multiplication and enforcement of rights has at the very least pressed up against these limits, a phenomenon that has evoked a communitarian response.

First, communitarians suggest a moratorium on the creation of new rights, not necessarily forever, but at least long enough to give our politics and society a chance to catch up, to contemplate what we have done, or to revise what seems excessive or unwise.

Second, communitarians emphasize that rights imply responsibilities and that a system in which everybody claims rights but no one discharges responsibilities will undermine itself, sooner rather than later.

Third, communitarians propose that rights be interpreted with an eye to the common good. For example, the fourth amendment to the constitution prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures. The word "unreasonable" is not self-defining; it needs to be

interpreted; the question is, interpreted in light of what? The communitarian answer is: in light of the requirements for maintaining one of the fundamental purposes of community as defined by the constitution--namely, domestic tranquility. It is one of the tacit thesis of the constitution that securing domestic tranquility is fully compatible with enjoying the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity and, more starkly, that if we do not secure domestic tranquility it will be very difficult if not impossible to enjoy the blessings of liberty. Today, there are millions of Americans who are afraid even to venture out of their homes at night. Whatever else may be true of their lives, they can hardly be said to be free.

This strand of the communitarian rights agenda can be pushed even farther, to the acknowledgment that there are some responsibilities and duties without corresponding rights. An example: from the communitarian perspective it is meaningful to talk about our responsibility to future generations. This responsibility may confer a right on generations to come who will judge and criticize our activity, but we today enjoy no right that corresponds to that responsibility. One might well examine and reject the national fiscal habits of recent decades with that principle in mind.

The final element of the communitarian rights agenda is the recognition of the incompleteness of rights as a moral vocabulary. To say I have a right to do X is not the same as saying that X is the right thing for me to do, all things considered. There is a

gap between rights and rightness , a gap that can only be filled by a moral understanding that goes beyond the simple vocabulary of rights to include notions such as decency, integrity, honor, and care. During the past generation, I believe, we have been less concerned than we should have been with thinking through the meaning of that richer vocabulary and with making it effective in our personal and collective lives.

Communitarian public policy

Let me now move from communitarian constitutionalism to communitarian public policy. Here again, I want to sketch briefly a number of proposals.

Here is the first: children should not be having children. Too many of our children are being born out of wedlock: thirty percent overall, and nearly seventy percent within the African-American community. The figures for teen parents are even worse. On average, the consequences are devastating for the young parents and their children.

As President Clinton argued in his speech at a Memphis church, there is only so much to be done with public policies that work from the outside in unless they are complemented by moral changes that work from the inside out. Nonetheless, there are some steps that could help, starting with the all-out national campaign against teen pregnancy for which the President called in his 1995 State of the Union address. I and many others vividly remember the school-based anti-smoking campaign launched a generation ago. It

featured truly horrifying films: cadavers were cut open to show how the innards of people who died from lung cancer actually looked. These films proved remarkably effective in cutting the incidence of smoking by teenagers, not because the impulse to smoke and be "cool" had in any way diminished, but rather because young people were made to understand in a concrete way what the consequences of apparently desirable but, in fact, imprudent action could be. While teen pregnancy is a more complex phenomenon, it may nonetheless prove responsive to a comparably broad-based and serious effort.

Here is another example of communitarian public policy. Bill Clinton campaigned on the basis of the idea, which (to the astonishment of many) he articulated in his acceptance speech to the 1992 Democratic National Convention, that if you are biologically responsible for a child, you are morally and economically responsible as well. The world would be a better place if everyone intuitively accepted that principle and acted in accordance with it. But too many do not, as shown by the woeful statistics on child support collections. Here again we must act from the inside out, and also from the outside in. Public officials at every level must speak out, to begin to change the moral climate within which the responsibilities and duties of parenthood are understood. At the same time, public policy must act to shore up that responsibility. Accordingly, the Clinton administration has proposed an array of steps to make child support enforcement more reliable and enforceable for custodial parents and

their minor children while offering new incentives for noncustodial parents (usually fathers) to remain involved, emotionally as well as financially, with their children.

I emphasized earlier the principle of accepting the burdens as well as the benefits of community. One of the burdens (thought it is not only that) is the responsibility of doing productive work if one is able. If we are serious about that principle, we must be prepared to reinforce it through public policy. This poses a major challenge: millions of Americans are working full time throughout the year but are earning incomes below the poverty line for themselves and their families.

During the 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton argued that no family headed by a full-time worker should be in poverty and that if market mechanisms do not reliably operate to honor that principle, it is the responsibility of the community as a whole to make it real in the lives of its members. That is why the single largest domestic policy item in the five-year budget proposed by President Clinton in February 1993 and accepted by the Congress in August of that year was an expansion of the earned income tax credit available to low-wage workers. In effect, if there is a gap between the poverty line and what you earn through full-time work for yourself and your family, the government will send you a check at the end of the year to close much of that gap.

A fourth example of communitarian public policy, of government acting in a way that reinforces the reciprocal relations between individuals and the community. During the campaign, Bill Clinton

urged national service, invoking the memory of John F. Kennedy, the example of the Peace Corps, and the rewards from service that can accrue both for individual volunteers and for the community as a whole. In September of 1993, President Clinton signed a bill creating a new corporation for national service that enables 100,000 people to participate in a full year of full-time service to earn a benefit that can be applied afterwards to education and advanced training expenses. Once again, the principle of reciprocity: the individual accepts responsibility and makes a contribution to the well-being of the community that is honored in both moral and material ways.

Another example: communitarians typically focus on "civil society"--the network of voluntary institutions that stand between individuals and formal political structures. A number of sociologists and social theorists have pointed out the ways in which the activity of political institutions--especially at the national level--can have the inadvertent effect of undermining these voluntary associations, even when they are capable of carrying out valuable public purposes far better than government ever could. So an important principle of communitarian public policy is that we should not weaken such institutions and, where possible, we should strengthen them.

That is why it is important to find ways of bolstering institutions--such as Boys and Girls Clubs, the YMCA and YWCA, and others--that already run community-based centers by the thousands through the country. And that is why it is vital to protect the

liberty of religious institutions.

A 1990 Supreme Court decision seriously weakened the religious free exercise clause of the First Amendment by holding that the government did not have to discharge a heavy burden of proof in order to interfere with, or override, the practices of religious communities, but rather simply assert a legitimate public purpose served by the policy. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act, signed into law by President Clinton in 1993, reverses this decision. Under this act, the government must demonstrate a compelling interest in the goals served by policies that interfere with religion, and it must show that the proposed interference represents the least intrusive means available to promote that interest. At this signing ceremony, the President invoked the principle of individual rights of conscience as central to our constitutional tradition. But he also noted the importance of faith communities and the key role of ritual and practices in holding these communities together.

More broadly, communitarians are committed to inquire systematically into the appropriate social responsibilities of all sectors of our society. For example: television stations and networks don't just spring up like mushrooms; they exist and function because of a legal and regulatory system that has been described as a public license to print money for private purposes. The question arises whether there are any responsibilities that correspond to the rights of access and private use licenses confer upon television stations.

This is the question that underlies the current discussion about violence on television. Along with many members of Congress, the American people are concluding that this question must be answered in the affirmative. There are serious issues as to how our society can translate these concerns into practice without breaching constitutional guarantees of free speech. Nonetheless, the concerns are legitimate, and the anything-goes status quo regarding broadcasting decisions that affect the ability of parents to raise their children is not likely to persist indefinitely.

Another example of this broader inquiry into key social actors: corporations are created by, and act within, a structure of law. Questions can be raised as to whether corporations should make economic decisions with some regard for the communities these decisions affect so deeply. If a corporation chooses to close a plant in a particular community, does it have any responsibilities to that community, or can it simply say goodbye without further ado? The U.S. Congress examined that question a few years ago and responded with a law requiring corporations to give communities adequate prior notification of projected plant closings. It is not my purpose to defend that particular piece of legislation (which is not regarded as notably effective). What I am defending from a communitarian perspective is the propriety of raising that question.

That question cannot be raised in a void, of course. One must pay due attention to the facts of modern political economy, and to the general structure of law and regulation require for sustainable

economic growth and global competitiveness in the circumstances in which we find ourselves today. Nonetheless, taking all this into account, we are not free to ignore the impact of specific economic decisions on communities that are organized around, and depend upon, productive functions located in particular places.

Let me now turn from public policy to public morality. I would argue, in the spirit of Aristotle, that each regime requires specific kinds of habits and virtues, and that one can therefore talk meaningfully about liberal democratic virtues. As I noted earlier, these habits and virtues are hardly innate; they must be created; and that will not happen unless the institutions responsible for character formation are in good order. One of the underlying motives for communitarian thought and practice is the belief that these institutions are not working well today and that shoring them up is an urgent necessity. In this connection, we must address the special challenges confronting families, public schools, and voluntary associations as they struggle to serve as "seedbeds of virtue." We must focus on their capacity to reinforce, not particularistic class or ethnic agendas, but rather --underlying all of the matters we so noisily dispute--the moral basics on which we do agree.

This leads to what I call the "e pluribus unum question." A liberal democratic polity, particularly but not only ours, is an assemblage of diverse subcommunities. What, if anything, makes the broader polity a community? One answer is . . . nothing: any nation made up of diverse subcommunities with profound social and

religious difference must be understood as a Yugoslavia in the making, and as we become more conscious of the true extent of our differences, we will realize that only fragile and eroding habits are holding us together. This is the pessimist's answer. I do not subscribe to it. But there is certainly a quiet fear abroad in our land that it might just turn out to be the right answer if we continue down the road we have been travelling for the past generation.

In a more optimistic spirit, let us ask, if something rather than nothing holds us together, what is it? Three kinds of answers are typically offered. The first has been called "modus vivendi"--the Yugoslavian experience with a minus sign: what holds us together is the belief that we must find a way to live together because the alternative is bloody conflict. This is the principle articulated most memorably in recent times by Rodney King, who appeared on television and asked plaintively, in evident shock at the conflict his legal imbroglio had sparked, "Can't we all just get along?" No higher principle; just the negative proposition that the conflict is intolerable and disproportionate to our differences (in spite of the fact that they are profound).

The second answer invokes some shared conception of justice. This is the point of view that John Rawls has articulated for more than two decades; it is a view with an honorable ancestry that goes all the way back to Aristotle; and there is obviously much to it. It is what Abraham Lincoln had in mind when he declared that a house divided against itself cannot stand: if half the country

believes that slavery is just and the other half that it is unjust, the basis for permanent existence as a single political community may well have vanished.

A third kind of answer, related to but distinct from the second, invokes an ensemble of shared public purposes as the basis of national community. This is the point of invoking, as I do, the Preamble to the Constitution as the public purposes that guide our interpretation of the meaning and spirit of our national public institutions.

But let us reflect a bit more deeply on the liberal community as a community of subcommunities. What are the distinctive features of a liberal national community stemming from this internal heterogeneity? First, by definition, not all the purposes and commitments of the subcommunities will be shared. That is one of the considerations that leads a liberal democratic community to define a distinction between what is public and what is not. We need that legal and constitutional line in order to sustain the distinction between what the subcommunities are required to have in common and what they need not.

The metaphor of the line might suggest a neat division. The reality is less tidy, because there will be relationships of conflict as well as complementarity between public and nonpublic commitments. Consider the example of federal laws, binding on the states, concerning the prevention of "child abuse" or "neglect." But what is the meaning of these terms? In particular, is it child abuse or neglect when Christian Scientist parents acting out of

sincere religious conviction refrain seeking orthodox medical treatment for their seriously ill child? And if it is, what rights and duties of state action are implied? This is one of a family of problems that crop up in a liberal polity that is a community of diverse subcommunities. In many instances, the effort to define a public purpose in common terms will run up against some subcommunity's conception of these same terms.

This fact raises an even broader question about the relationship between subcommunities (religious or otherwise) and the broader national community. Sociologists and neoconservative social theorists have long talked about these subcommunities as "mediating institutions." The question is, do they simply connect individuals to political institutions, or do they also function as sources of potential opposition to those institutions? In my judgment, the latter is clearly the case. In practice, this will always raise the question of when it is appropriate to accept this opposition and when it is necessary to override it. I have argued that our practical maxim ought to be "maximum feasible accommodation." But that does not mean unlimited accommodation, and the line I would want to draw is as contestable as any other.

Conclusion

Let me conclude these remarks on a less than celebratory note by sketching some of the dangers of community. First, there is the oft-expressed fear that the communitarian approach to rights can end by diluting key democratic liberties; witness the ongoing

debate between leading communitarians and the American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU's argument is that by strengthening the voices and forces of community, we are in fact inviting the very majority tyranny that our institutions were founded and designed to prevent.

That is not a frivolous objection. The response is that the kinds of public purposes communitarians invoke do not typically override established rights. Indeed, it is a misunderstanding of the communitarian impulse to describe it as the desire to retract or weaken a regime of rights. The point, rather, is to ask what we must do to strengthen and sustain such a regime. That is why communitarians emphasize what the sociologist Amitai Etzioni has called the "moral voice"--processes of persuasion and dialogue as alternatives to both tyrannical coercion and permissive indifference.

Consider the much-debated issue of campus speech codes. There are two extremes that typically govern this debate. One is that college authorities ought to create a framework of legal or regulatory coercion within the campus community. The other is that the authorities ought simply to disregard what goes on when students hurl epithets at one another (an example of what I earlier called "permissive indifference"). But there is an alternative to both coercion and indifference. It involves mobilizing the campus community to learn in a systematic way from instances of the abuse of speech--to create organized forums within which the kinds of passions that these abuses evoke can be discussed in a way that

changes attitudes and behavior.

The second danger of community is that the focus on what is shared can promote conformity and weaken individuality. This is a fear that can be traced at least to Humboldt and John Stuart Mill. And once again, it is not a frivolous objection. The communitarian response is that individuality can only be cultivated within a framework of discipline and a structure of rules. The classic analogy is to artistic forms. The sonnet in poetry, the sonata in music--they simultaneously shape activity and provide framework for the enactment of genuine individuality. Communitarians contend that individuality does not arise spontaneously; in order for individuality to be expressed from the inside out, there must be a process of character formation from the outside in that habituates us to the processes of self-discipline.

Third danger: there is a risk that the quest for increased connection and solidarity within the sphere of politics can heighten conflict and even produce brutality. This is the danger of what might be called the politics of fraternity, which first became evident during the French revolution and which has been episodically glorified ever since. The politics of fraternity leads to a quest for constant peak experiences of communal activity, experiences such as war and insurrection. This quest is dangerous because (pace William James) there really is no moral equivalent of war. The pursuit of heightened fraternity implies, and engenders, a craving for strife.

In this regard, as in so many others, Aristotle was on the

right track: there is a permanent distinction--inscribed, if you will, in the nature of things--between the kinds of ties and experiences and emotions that are characteristic of friendship on the one hand, and those characteristic of everyday citizenship and politics on the other. That does not mean that the experience of politics lacks profundity and compelling power. But it does mean that the longing for connection and meaning that has so often disfigured politics during the past two centuries represents an unwise transposition of desires from one sphere to another, very different one.

From this standpoint, an essential task of a communitarian politics is to nurture forms of solidarity that do not shade over into fanaticism and xenophobia. I would suggest that an enlightened patriotism compounded of particularistic nation loyalty and universal human principle offers our best hope for achieving this result. That is the highest possibility of a regime that takes its bearings from the Declaration of Independence.

William A. Galston

February 1995

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Beyond the Murphy Brown Debate

Ideas for Family Policy

By William A. Galston

Deputy Assistant to the President

White House Domestic Policy Council

Institute for American Values

Family Policy Symposium

New York City

December 10, 1993

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Introduction

The debate over the American family is entering a new stage. After twenty years of polarizing discourse, there is growing consensus that family fragmentation is responsible for much of the recent decline in child well-being. This consensus is supported by a large and complementary body of social scientific evidence.

The essential policy implication of this emerging consensus is clear. The only plausible way to reverse the trend of declining child well-being is to reverse the trend of family fragmentation. Similarly, the essential policy goal is clear. We must seek to increase the proportion of children who grow in stable families with two married parents and to decrease the proportion who do not.

What do we do with this new understanding? In a speech delivered at the Annual Family Policy Symposium of the Institute for American Values, William Galston, Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Public Policy, offers some promising ideas for translating this consensus into action.

David Blankenhorn
President

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead
Vice President

Beyond the Murphy Brown Debate

Ideas for Family Policy

By William A. Galston

David Blankenhorn's introduction, and his account of the Institute for American Values, was in my judgement sorely defective, because he committed an important sin of omission. He talked about everybody but himself. I think we all ought to recognize that he has been the pioneer, the entrepreneur, the idea broker, the bringer together of people. He has made all of this possible. Thank you, David.

In my judgement, the Institute for American Values and the people associated with it have been important pioneers in this area. And so you certainly have some sense of how difficult it is to create an arena for a reasonable discussion of family issues across lines of party, ideology, race, and all the other things that divide us as a society. But perhaps even you did not fully realize how truly difficult it was going to be. Indeed, perhaps it was this splendid ignorance that made all of this possible.

If you had really foreseen all the slings and arrows -- if you had imagined them in your mind's eye before they happened -- you might have said: "There are easier ways of spending a decade. I can spend more time with my family, with more tranquility, and fewer barbs from the press." So I am delighted to be here with you. I like to think of myself as pushing the edge of the envelope in our public discussion. But what I particularly admire about the Institute is that you bust straight through that envelope. In doing so, you create an important space in which the rest of us can follow with more of a sense of safety. That's very important.

My message today contains both good news and bad news. The good news is that, in my judgement, we are measurably closer to sensible family policy -- much closer than we were ten years ago. Ten years ago, or even five or three years ago, we would have been arguing vigorously about basic facts and basic premises. That argument, of course, is not over completely. But it is a lot closer to being over than when I got into this business four short years ago.

To begin, there is more agreement about the basic facts. And more agreement about one fact in particular: namely, that the family disintegration that we are currently experiencing -- in some respects, at an accelerating pace -- is harming our children. It is harming them deeply. It is harming them dreadfully. I do not think we have to argue that point anymore.

Everybody has a favorite statistic in this area. Here is mine. It is drawn from an annual source book called *Kids Count*, issued by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. They compared two groups of people. Group one was composed of people who finished high school, got married before their first child, and waited at least until age 20 to have their first child. Group two was composed of parents who did **none** of these three things. They did not graduate from high school, did not get married before having their first child, did not wait until they reached age 20.

Of children in the first group, only 8 percent were living in poverty in 1992. Of children in the second group, 79 percent were living in poverty. That's 8 percent versus about 80 percent. A 1 to 10 ratio! Thus, if we look purely at the economics of bringing up children and giving them a chance in life -- even setting aside the psychological, the emotional, and the developmental issues, and looking only at economics -- that single statistic tells the tale.

Another thing about which we are not arguing much anymore is the relative importance of race and ethnicity on the one hand, and family structure on the other. Even before Charles Murray wrote his piece in the *Wall Street Journal* -- which the President of the United States, I assure you, has read carefully, even though he does not subscribe to the entire argument -- it had become quite clear that the effects of family structure were swamping the effects of race in generating social problems.

Once again, let me give you my favorite statistic. Compare black two-parent families to white families headed by a single mother. I just got these data from the Census Bureau, just before the Tom Brokaw interview with the President. The family income of black two-parent families is almost three times the family income of white single-parent families. Not surprisingly, children in white single-parent families are two-and-a-half times more likely to be living in poverty as are the children in black two-parent families. These statistics do not come from some wacky research group; these are from the Census Bureau. Quite simply, there can no longer be serious disagreement on this point. All of the numbers run in this same direction.

Moreover, we are no longer arguing very much about how we feel about these trends. Consider the results from a recent poll conducted by the Family Research Council, a dedicated organization with which I agree in part and disagree in part. Their public opinion surveys provide interesting snapshots of where we are as a country on family issues. On the question of whether families in America are simply "changing" -- as some experts were accustomed to saying until quite recently, when they clammed up altogether -- or in fact

degenerating, 72 percent of those surveyed said that families in America are indeed changing for the worse. Then they were asked what I believe is the crucial question: namely, do you think it is easier or harder to be a child today? Is it better or worse to be a child today than when you were a child? The overwhelming majority said: it is harder and worse to be a child today than it was a generation ago.

We are also, thank God, no longer arguing about basic principles. As I suspect most of you have recently seen, there is no disagreement between the current President of the United States and the former Vice President of the United States, Dan Quayle, on the desirability of stable, intact, two-parent families. There is simply no disagreement. Moreover, 83 percent of the American people agree with that proposition.

That old debate is over. The new debate is why we are so far from where we want to be, and how we can move closer to it. That is the issue today. So let me turn my attention to that question.

My thoughts on this matter are divided into two categories: diagnosis and prescription. It is in my prescription, moreover, that you will hear the bad news. The bad news is that I do not have all the answers. I may have some modestly acceptable ideas. But if you ask do I have three blockbuster ideas to transform society by the time Al Gore assumes the presidency in the year 2001, the answer is: Maybe, if I work on it a bit longer. Maybe if I keep listening to my good friends in this room, reading what they send me and fighting for it on the second floor of the West Wing, maybe then something good will happen. We will see.

But let me offer a diagnosis. To begin, it is important that we take a broad, balanced view. We must resist the temptation to simply blame the economy, or blame the government, or blame the culture. It is easy to look only in one direction. Easy, but inadequate. We must combine these three areas together into a more comprehensive analysis. So let me try to do that.

The Economy

With regard to the economy, we are confronting a real catastrophe among a large cohort of younger and less educated workers. This is critical because these are the very people who are starting to have families. They are wrestling with very adverse economic circumstances. Again, a few statistics are quite telling. If you look at workers with no more than a high school degree in 1973 versus 1993, you will see in those twenty years a decline of 20 percent in the real family income of workers in that category. If you focus on young workers between the ages of 18 and 29 with minor children in the home, the income decline has been on the order of 30 percent. It is not because they are working less. It is because the environment in which they work -- technological advancement and global economic

competition -- is far less accommodating to their limited skills and training than was the economic environment of 30 or even 20 years ago.

In this regard, we must also recognize the diminished role of manufacturing and manufacturing jobs in our society. This decline is not the result of any ideology or government program. Nor is it confined to any one nation. According to the latest statistics, manufacturing jobs are dwindling as a percentage of total employment throughout the industrialized world. This is an inexorable trend, similar to the trend of producing more and more food with fewer and fewer agricultural workers. There is not a thing that the government of the United States can do to turn that trend around, although we can check and guide it at the margins.

Yet those manufacturing jobs, especially in urban areas, provided the first steps up the ladder of opportunity for lots of people who were not well trained, but who were willing to work hard to provide for themselves and their families. Urban areas have been particularly hard hit by the disappearance of those manufacturing jobs. It is not as though these jobs have been taken to the suburbs or sent overseas. They are gone. We are getting better and better at producing more and more manufactured goods with fewer and fewer workers. We did not export the jobs of agricultural workers in this country. Through technology, we abolished them. And, regrettably from some standpoints, there is no way of blocking that basic trend.

So those two great facts about the contemporary economy -- declining real wages and the loss of manufacturing jobs -- are shaping the opportunity structures and incentives for lots of younger workers who are also actual or potential parents in our society. We have to take that seriously.

The Government

The second category is government policy. Here I can be brief. Let me simply summarize. If the point is to strengthen families, particularly families with young children, government policy has been very, very ill-conceived in many respects. It is getting harder to argue with this fact. The tax code, for example, for reasons deliberate and accidental, has been increasingly tilted against families with children. We should turn that around.

Or consider the welfare system. From the standpoint of endorsing the social values that we share -- from the standpoint of seeking to promote those values in national practice and in family life -- the welfare system has clearly been counter-productive. How counter-productive? Is it responsible for all the ills in the family that we see around us? Absolutely not. Is it responsible for none of those ills? Again, absolutely not. I do believe that a small but measurable fraction of family disintegration can be attributed to the effects of the welfare system. Perhaps as much as 15 or 20 percent; certainly not 80 or 90 percent. But

15 or 20 percent, if you are looking at millions of adults and children living in misery, is not to be sneered at. We should pay attention to it.

David Blankenhorn spoke about the two great forces contributing to family disintegration. One is out-of-wedlock births, which are of course sky-rocketing. The other is divorce, which rose by 250 percent between the early 1960s and the mid-1980s. Now it has stabilized at the highest level by far of any nation in the industrialized world. This divorce epidemic did not just happen. The legal codes of the states aided and abetted it through the institution of no-fault divorce.

I could describe other detrimental governmental policies. If government -- and I'm not recommending this idea, since it would mean another million bureaucrats -- if government were compelled to issue a family impact statement before adopting economic or social policies, then I suspect that three-quarters of what government has done on those fronts in the past two generations would either not have been done at all, or would have been done very differently.

The Culture

The third category is cultural change. As a temporarily defrocked political theorist, I have to admit that I harp on this issue. I believe that cultural change is not simply derivative. It is not just a superstructure residing on top of an economic base. Culture possesses what the theorists call "relative autonomy." Cultural change may be set in motion initially by economic change, but it can take on a life of its own. Good social scientists, like William Julius Wilson of the University of Chicago, are confirming this truth through current research.

Two features of cultural change are the most damaging from the standpoint of families. The first is the rise of what might be called the entitlement culture. This is a culture of rights without corresponding responsibilities. Or more precisely, without responsibilities that are taken as seriously as the rights themselves. Many people associated with the Institute, such as Mary Ann Glendon and also Amitai Etzioni and others, have written definitively about this particular dimension of recent cultural change.

The second family-damaging feature of recent culture change is the ethos of instant gratification. I think we all see how this trend relates to family well-being. Now, I am not saying that getting married, staying married, becoming a parent, and taking family life seriously are activities without gratification. But we all recognize that many of those gratifications are the reverse of instant.

To use a metaphor, you must plant all sorts of seeds, water them patiently, and wait patiently -- sometimes it seems like forever -- before those little sprouts stick their heads

above the ground. When I was a young boy, I had a garden; I just could not wait for that garden to grow. So after I planted the seeds, I waited three days, which seemed like an eternity. Then I took my shovel and dug up the seeds to see what was happening. The answer was: not much.

When I got to be a little older, I had a little better capacity for delayed gratification. But as soon as little green sprouts stuck their heads above the ground, I pulled them up. Attached to the sprouts were mini-carrots. My father is a biologist, so fortunately there was a microscope in the house and we were able to put them under the microscope and see that carrots were forming. But clearly, I had made a serious mistake. I do not mean to sound like Chauncey Gardener here, but do I think much of life is like that. In order to get the good things, you have to be prepared to wait. Patience is a virtue in virtually every religion, and for good reason. A culture of instant gratification makes it very difficult for young people to assume and complete their roles as parents.

A third, terribly alarming feature of current cultural change is the relaxation of social, cultural, and moral stigma against out-of-wedlock births. This relaxation is one of the most dramatic moral and cultural changes of the past generation. And it is going on today, before our eyes. Here is a remarkable fact from a recent poll. About 56 percent of all Americans believe that people who generate a baby out of wedlock should not be subject to moral reproach of any sort. But it gets more interesting. If we look at the views of different generations on this question, we find something truly remarkable. Among young people age 18 to 34, fully 70 percent say: no reproof, no judgement. But among people age 55 and older, only 29 percent say that.

These data provide us with a snapshot of dynamic cultural change. I wish I could take comfort from the 29 percent. But what really concerns me is the 70 percent of all young people. The older people are nearing the end. But these younger people will dominate our culture through much of the first third of the 21st century. And unless they change their minds about this particular matter, I fear that we will soon become a society that can no longer maintain the basic norms that are necessary for a free society -- a society with sound economic policies and less punitive or destructive government policies.

Prescriptions

That is my diagnosis. Now let me turn to prescription. And here I am speaking, for better or worse, as a representative of the Clinton Administration. In our judgement, there is no silver bullet. There is no single policy that will reverse these negative trends or abolish this problem. But we do believe that coordinated progress on all three fronts -- economic, political, and cultural -- is possible. And that, in some respects, progress is being made.

Regenerate the Economy

First, with regard to the economy, vigorous economic growth that generates jobs and puts people to work is important pro-family policy. A government that tolerates a prolonged recession with millions of Americans needlessly out of work is in fact -- whether it knows it or not, whether it wants to or not -- weakening America's families. That is why restarting economic growth, and doing so in a sustainable way, was so important to this presidency and to this President. That is why it was job number 1. Almost the entire first year was focused on that. Naturally, economic growth is not the be all and end all. But if we do not start there, virtually nothing else is possible.

Also, it is not simply a question of economic growth across the board. For reasons mentioned earlier, it is vitally important to improve life prospects for the forgotten half: those young people who in the past have not gone on to college or have not received advanced training. Unless we do something, their life prospects in the contemporary economy are dismal. That is why I have been spending much of my time on an education and training agenda designed primarily for them. That seed was planted in 1993. With patience, it will sprout in 1994. Let me thus predict that 1994 will be the year of education and training for this Administration. And let me add, in perhaps my only partisan swipe of the day, that I believe that I am working for the real "Education President."

We must also look at some place-specific economic policies, since not all parts of the country will participate equally in the economic recovery. That is why the President's five-year budget plan included authorization for about 100 empowerment communities and enterprise zones. These specially disadvantaged communities need the advantages of federal programs, of tax advantages, and of waivers on burdensome regulations and laws, in order to become attractive as places where capital can flow, entrepreneurs can find incentives, and jobs can be generated. I should also emphasize here that because you cannot have capitalism without capital, it is totally intolerable that, in some regions of this country, people who represent bankable loans cannot get those loans because they are being red-lined. That is why the President directed us to come up with a program to assure that if you are qualified for a loan -- if you are as qualified as someone else who is getting a loan -- you should get one too. No racial or geographical patterns of discrimination should stand in the way of this goal.

Having talked about these economic policies, I do not want to go overboard on economic determinism. I do not want to suggest in any way that if we get the economy working well, somehow all will be right with our families.

Let me illustrate that point. Recently I had the opportunity to spend the afternoon with William Julius Wilson, who is in the middle of a remarkable research project on the South Side of Chicago. He has deployed an army of researchers to do solid ethnographic studies about how people think and feel about the labor market and how they get attached

to it. What got him started was his discovery that, if you compare young Hispanic males and young black males who are indistinguishable in terms of their socio-economic status and even their family background, the Hispanic males seem to be much better integrated into the labor market. Why is that? Well, he has a preliminary hypothesis which I can reduce to one word: uncles.

It turns out there is an informal social network whereby a young Hispanic male will get a telephone call from an uncle who is employed in construction work saying: "Turn up at the corner of 63rd and Greenwood at 7:30 in the morning. They are going to be hiring people to work next week at such and such a location." And the young man goes. And he has a reasonable chance to be hired -- if not for that week, then for the next week. If he had not gotten the call from the uncle, he would not have been connected to the labor market. And of course, if you do not have any uncles who are in the labor market, then by definition you are not going to get that telephone call. So it is not simply a question of government programs. It is an issue of reweaving the entire social fabric that connects individuals and families to the broader economic and social milieu.

Reverse Harmful Government Policies

The second set of prescriptions is the reversal of ill-conceived government policies. As yet, the Administration has not found it fiscally possible to carry out an across-the-board, pro-family shift in the tax code. Yet that issue is by no means dead, because there are those of us in the Administration who will not permit it to die. Moreover, as an interim step, something important has already happened in the budget plan proposed by the President and adopted by the Congress earlier this year. I am referring to the Earned Income Tax Credit.

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) represents a redemption of a promise the President made during the campaign. The promise said: if you work full time year round, you should not live in poverty and neither should your family. If the market does not generate enough income to lift you above the poverty level, then the community as a whole will accept the responsibility to do that. How can we say we honor work if full-time work leaves you in poverty?

The Earned Income Tax Credit represents the single biggest domestic policy proposal that the President made and that the Congress adopted: a \$21 billion increase in the EITC over the next five years. Every penny of that money goes to low-income working families and their children. The best news from the standpoint of family policy is that the EITC is scaled to family size so that the more dependents you have in the home, the larger your EITC payment. Is it a family allowance that many of us devoutly wish for? No, but I think it represents important practical as well as conceptual progress.

The second bad government policy that we are in the process of reversing is the welfare system. The President has not yet reviewed the options that have been prepared for him, so I am very constrained in what I can say about it today. But I can tell you that the plan will embody two key principles. First, personal responsibility. The new welfare plan will not be built on the idea that people are simply passive victims of life. It will be built on the principle that they have the capacity to take a large and expanding measure of responsibility for themselves. We will weave that principle into all of the different policies that we propose.

Second, welfare ought to be a bridge to work and to the capacity to provide for oneself and one's family. It should not be a permanent way of life. When the President talked in the campaign about ending welfare as we now know it, he was talking about ending the idea of welfare as a permanent way of life. The plan that we will put forward will redeem that pledge.

Now, there is no one way of redeeming it that is inscribed in the sky like some Platonic idea. There are many different ways. And no doubt when people look at what we put on the table, they will make additional proposals. We will then have a long-overdue national discussion. But that national discussion will occur within the framework of agreement on the basic proposition that we cannot tinker around the margins anymore. We must change this system fundamentally because the current system is destructive.

A third area where we should change destructive government policies is divorce law. Now, here is kind of stealth topic. For as the lawyers present know, there is no federal law of divorce. There are only the various divorce laws of the fifty states and some territories and other jurisdictions. But even so, there is a certain amount of jaw-boning we can do. I have already met with officials of the American Bar Association and the American Society of Matrimonial Lawyers and others. I have suggested to them that there is high level interest in reconsidering states' law of divorce and in asking whether those legal systems are as family friendly -- as committed to the idea that families are to be preserved and strengthened whenever possible -- as they ought to be.

I have politely suggested to them that they reconsider searchingly the basic idea of no-fault. I have made representations for counsel in a mediation concerning waiting periods and cooling-off periods. I have asked them to think about the possibility that maybe it should be a little harder, and a matter of more serious reflection, to get married in the first place. We talk about cooling-off periods after the fact, but maybe some cooling-off periods before the fact would be at least as valuable. And, of course, there are many religious institutions that have long embraced the principle that marriage is serious, marriage is a sacrament. They encourage couples to see their priest or rabbi or minister not just once but four or five times and really get acquainted with what marriage is all about and perhaps learn something about one another in the presence of a benign third party. I have talked to them about more child-friendly settlements in court orders and better enforcement of these orders. (This last point is also likely to find a place in welfare reform.)

Finally, I think we have to pay much more attention to the continuing role of fathers, even after the divorce has occurred. I hope that I have broken some ice in this regard by meeting with some fathers' rights groups at the White House. I do not agree with everything they have to say. As a matter of fact, when I hear some of their talk, I agree with hardly anything they have to say.

Yet the simple, one-sided image of the deadbeat dad who avoids child support is only a part of the truth. It is part of the more complex and poignant human truth where, too often, people who are legally responsible and who want to be emotionally connected as well find themselves suddenly, or not so suddenly, shut out of their children's lives.

So, as we strengthen the economic nexus between the non-custodial and the custodial parent and child after divorce, we also have to think as practically and as humanly as we can about strengthening the emotional nexus as well, because those are two sides of the same coin. If fathers don't feel emotionally connected -- and particularly if they feel shut out -- the social science research that I have reviewed indicates that they are much less likely to discharge their economic responsibilities. That is just a fact. We have to do something about that.

I am not saying I have the magic bullet here. I do have about fifty different recommendations from these fathers' rights groups. It will take me some months to look through those recommendations and try to make some determinations. As a topic, it is a new and important arena of discussion that we unquestionably have to join in a spirit of good will, with no preconceptions as to what is acceptable and what is not.

Culture Shift

Finally, let me talk about promoting a culture shift. I have talked about the economy and about reversing bad government policies. Let me talk now about taking on the cultural environment, which is so adverse, and trying to turn it around.

Step one is the President of the United States. This President -- I think he has already proved it -- is a passionate advocate for stronger families. I am sure you have all heard about the speech that he gave in Memphis. That is only the most visible representation, the most dramatic sign, of the President's deep concern. His belief is that unless families are strong, the United States is bound to be weak. And by strong families, he does not have in mind some sort of mushy definition. He believes -- and mind you this is someone whose father died before he was born and who grew up in a sometimes loving, sometimes troubled family -- he believes passionately that children would be better off if they were born into a stable, intact, two-parent family. He is not shy about articulating that opinion. It is very important for a president of the United States to go on record, not just once but repeatedly, to commit the government to the proposition that we ought to be in

the business of persuading everybody of the soundness of this proposition about the two-parent home.

Pursuant to that, I have long been an advocate for an all-out culture-based war against teen pregnancy, particularly out-of-wedlock teen pregnancy. By culture-based I mean using all of the marvelous resources of the media. The media have a capacity not only to convey damaging messages, but also to do good. By culture-based, I also mean the schools.

The model that I use is the anti-smoking campaign to which I was subjected as a young junior high school student and as a high school student. That campaign, in the most graphic way possible, said, "You are young and foolish. You will be inclined to make a decision now that will cost you dearly down the road, but you do not know that. So here is what the scenery looks like down the road." And they showed us. We viewed videos in which lungs were cut open and we saw what the lungs of people who died of lung cancer looked like. It was not pretty, and it was not a fun way to spend fifty minutes, but we remembered. And it made a difference.

Furthermore, there are statistics that demonstrate how effective that kind of society-wide intensive campaign can be if it is really taken seriously from top to bottom. I have sent out an "All Points Bulletin" for signs of states and localities that are doing this sort of work with regard to pregnancy and I have yet to find very much. In fact, I was surprised at how little I found. Yet there are places that are beginning to take it seriously. But if you ask whether we have committed ourselves in this area the way we committed ourselves against smoking 20 years ago or against drugs 10 years ago, the answer is: absolutely not. This kind of campaign, then, is long overdue. If things break right, we are going to be doing it before too many more months pass.

Finally, to strengthen the positive elements in our culture, we must refocus on the institutions of civil society. This is a very important theme in social theory. It has been very important in countries in Eastern Europe and it is increasingly important in the Soviet Union and elsewhere. So, I want to talk about civil society in this country and those voluntary institutions that stand between isolated individuals and families on the one hand, and the power of the state on the other. Although we have not talked about it yet in a very organized way, we are beginning to think about ways of taking civil society more seriously as part of a comprehensive effort to address the problems of families.

I have had discussions with national representatives of the YMCA, the YMHA, and other organizations which have thousands of community-based sites around the country. We have talked about what they could do to help make life better for kids and to strengthen families in their communities. I have talked with the senior leadership of the new Corporation for National Community Service, which the President talked about during the campaign and which he signed into law in September of this year. There are many ways in which young people dedicated to the idea of service are willing to help endangered children and beleaguered families in our country.

Lastly on this point, we must do this work in cooperation with perhaps the most important institutions of American civil society: namely, religious institutions. We cannot pretend that government can get the job done that we are talking about unless we learn how to cooperate more fully and more effectively with religious institutions. You may have noticed a few months ago that the President told us what he did on his summer vacation. He read Stephen Carter's book on the culture of disbelief. I think that was very important.

A month ago, the President signed into law the Religious Freedom and Restoration Act, which overturned the odious Smith Decision of the Supreme Court, the Majority Decision, which was written by an alleged conservative. That decision drove a stake through the free exercise clause and a stake through the hearts of many religious communities that had an existence stretching not just over decades but over centuries. The Religious Freedom and Restoration Act reversed that.

We now have a new opportunity in this area. The Supreme Court has just granted certiorari to a case involving a Hasidic community here in New York State and a special school district that was set up to accommodate the needs of disabled children for the members of that community. The Administration is well aware of the fact that this case presents an opportunity for us to revisit and, if possible, reconfigure the legal framework of church-state relations so that religious institutions and associations can carry out their vital work for civil society -- helping children and strengthening families -- without the unnecessary interference of the state. If you want a slogan for this policy, call it "maximum feasible accommodation" with the religious institutions that are so central to our civil society.

Let me conclude. The President has said often that the three great organizing principles of life are work, family, and community, and that these three are mutually reinforcing. None can be strengthened in the absence of efforts to strengthen the others. And what I have talked about today, in a halting and preliminary way, is not simply government policies, but also ways of thinking, that may conceivably enable us to foster that kind of mutually reinforcing process. For it is only in this way that the aspirations which bring us to this room today can be realized in our lifetime.

Questions and Answers

- Q:** My question is not only a question to Bill, but also an invitation to discussion by everyone. I offer it in the interest of "pushing the edge of the envelope." So I do not expect a ready and easy answer to this question, but it concerns your call for a culture-based war against teen pregnancy, and particularly a war to address some of the attitudes that we saw portrayed in that NBC News report. Before I ask the question, I would like to introduce one more piece of evidence into the record.

Among the most interesting set of letters I received recently was a batch of letters from a class of high school English students in New Mexico. A third of the children in that class were teen parents. The spirit of the letters was that I [in an article I had written] had it all wrong; that their decision to have a child was a matter of their personhood; that this was an entitlement. I want to read an excerpt that captures the attitudes of these children who wrote very respectfully to me. This was the sentiment: "I have chosen to become a parent as early as possible. I always felt that I could be a good parent. I also wanted you to know that I'm happy to have a child out of wedlock, but I am still with her father and we have a good strong relationship." And then she also goes on to say: "We are waiting to get married until we get older because he believes marriage is bad luck. In his family their marriages never worked. They are on their second marriage. He thinks we won't stay together. If we get married when we are old, we have no choice but to stay together for the sake of the grandchildren."

So my remark to you, Bill, and to all of us is that, if anything, the campaign you propose would be far more difficult than a campaign against smoking. Because I think this does involve these things you mentioned -- entitlement and instant gratification -- but it also involves the defense of single parenthood as an issue of personhood for these children. So my question is: how do we turn that around? What's the basic message of this campaign?

- A:** Well, to begin, the message has to be the most difficult of all messages to send to young people generically because it's the one they least want to hear: namely, this seems like a good idea now, but trust me, it is not going to work out. We have to do this in the same way that the anti-smoking campaign and the anti-drug campaign took that hard message and found a way of framing it so that it cut through, not to everybody, but to a substantial fraction of people whose attitudes were valuable and whose behavior was changeable in one way or another. I think we have to try that.

Now, based on the statistics that I see, we are going to have to start a lot earlier than we would have thought ten years ago. Ten years ago, I suppose we all would have

said, well, let's get this started at the age of 13, maybe 12. I now believe that for many of these children, that is too late.

A second principle is not just big people yammering at little people, but actually enlisting the service of peers as the framers and deliverers of the message. Setting aside what you heard from these kids in New Mexico, there are hundreds and thousands of people who have made this choice to have children who are not thrilled with the consequences. I bet we could figure out ways of getting them to deliver that message in a more effective bridge-building way than you and I and the people in this room possibly could, no matter how long we thought about how adults ought to talk to people who are biologically adults but not adults in any other respect.

Third, this will have to be a comprehensive effort, a domestic mobilization led by the President but involving leaders of the public sector, the private sector, and the institutions of civil society. It would have to be launched with the kind of fanfare that we do not often see on the domestic front. I am not saying it is the moral equivalent of war (I believe there is no moral equivalent of war). But it is certainly something approaching a domestic emergency. It would have to be treated with that kind of seriousness.

If I were choreographing the first stages of the campaign, the President would kick it off dramatically. The members of the Cabinet, Governors, and Mayors would fan out around the country. You would have simultaneous presentations in school classrooms -- fifth, sixth, and seventh grades -- with something that Hollywood would, at its best, be involved in preparing. And you would really try to cut through the background noise. The weight of the culture pulling in the other direction is so strong. So that without that kind of domestic mobilization, I do not think we would cut through the background noise.

Q: To respond to the previous speaker's question, many of us have long been convinced that re-creating social stigma is a great part of solving the puzzle. You basically create stigma by having a good that comes from doing something not good. Where the Murphy Brown speech went wrong was when, taken out of context, it was an attack on single mothers as opposed to a demonstration that there was a better good to be achieved through another way.

There has been a discernable effort in the last couple of years to address this problem through the indirect method of talking about harms to children. So that when you look back at the sociological literature of the 1940s and the 1960s, you find that people changed their behavior, in terms of marriage and in terms of which parent stayed home, based on what they understood to be best for children. I think the literature on infant mortality, on educational success, and on criminality is all at some level designed -- though maybe some people do not understand that this is its

effect -- to make us rethink the role of the parent in relation to outcomes for children.

The mere fact that we can be having this discussion today is remarkable. When I was in college, people would have told you that it would be impossible to get children to stop smoking cigarettes. That it was a right, that it was an entitlement, that it was a passage to adulthood, that trying to have an anti-smoking campaign was a complete waste of time. A similar case is the "Just Say No" campaign, which was considered a frivolity. Yet if you look at the actual data now, drug use has dropped measurably. So I think you will find that the mere fact that we are discussing this is the first and most important step to then getting peer groups to talk about the fact that this is not a good thing for the children of the 15-year-olds.

Bill, I want to thank you for an extraordinary speech. You did a phenomenal job of bringing together bits and pieces that we all knew, along with some data that I did not know of, and of breaking down something which is complex into something which was eminently sensible and hopeful. I would not be upset that you do not have any great big blockbuster ideas. It is a complex area and I do not think there is going to be a blockbuster solution to it. But the mere fact that you are proceeding on all fronts is in itself a huge advance in the right direction.

My concern is that there is a great temptation to talk about these issues in terms of the welfare of children as opposed to the well-being of families. It strikes me that we could get very much off in the wrong direction if we start looking at policies based narrowly on children's welfare. I wonder if you perceive that trend in the same way?

- A: This is a very practical answer. I believe with all my heart that the well-being of children is unattainable outside of the kinds of families that the people in this room cherish and want to strengthen. That is not the issue. The issue is how can the argument be advanced effectively in a public arena that is so filled with contestation. Elaine Kamarck and I thought hard before we entitled our monograph "Putting Children First." But we did it as a piece of highly deliberated political theater.

What we wanted to say is: "Let us set all of the arguments about gender roles and anthropological diversity and Margaret Mead and all of that to one side. Let us ask a very simple question on which we can bring to bear the full weight of accumulated evidence: namely, is what we are doing good for children or isn't it?" And it was our belief, which I don't think has been refuted by events, that we could catalyze more agreement, more practical progress, along that line, as opposed to taking on directly some of the much disputed issues of gender roles and family structure. If we could establish this beachhead regarding the well-being of children, we could then fan out from that beachhead and deal with some of the broader implications. I think

it is possible to do that without in any way suggesting that the well-being of children is detachable from the strengths of the families and the communities of which they are a part. It is just a question of what comes first as a matter of public discussion.

Now we may, in the long run, turn out to have been short-sighted about that tactic. But standing where I stand today, I am not sorry to have made that decision. It helped us, perhaps especially within the venue of our own political party, to develop this set of arguments.

Q: Bill, what an amazing speech you just made! It has such a wise and truly sensible approach to weaving the cultural with the economic, and it is exactly what we have been waiting for for some decades now. Today, for perhaps the first time in my adult life, the family has stopped being a political football.

But I also want to sound a small word of warning. I am in the process right now of trying to mobilize parents. I think you and the White House are obviously conscious of the difficulties of mobilizing the right kind of political clout. But let us think a little about the last twenty years. What we have basically done is: we have socialized the process of growing old and privatized childrearing. Not so much because of the specific ideology of the White House but because of the differential clout of those two generations. There are two trendlines out there that, together, are dangerous to any sensible policy. One is that the demographics are against families with children. Only 27 percent of households have dependent children. And secondly, parents are not voting. Last November, 53 percent of parents voted and almost 70 percent of the elderly voted. There is a real imbalance out there.

What I am suggesting is that when you consider how to mobilize people behind your incredibly sensible and balanced program, there is the issue of reaching out and really making things happen. So all I am saying is, look, we can have the most wonderful new vision, which is coherent and newly appealing to the center of our society, but somehow we have to get the political clout together, otherwise kids will remain at the back of the queue.

A: I agree totally.

Moderator: Let's take several questions in a row. Then Bill can answer them together.

Q: Can you take on teen illegitimacy without taking on the highly sexualized teen culture?

Q: My question goes back to your point about stigmas. Twenty years ago it was the anti-smoking campaign; ten years ago it was the anti-drug campaign; now it is an anti-drinking, anti-alcohol campaign. And the alcohol campaign has been interesting, because the campaign was originally pushed in terms of a designated driver. This idea was basically a parental way of trying to keep kids safe. But it was interpreted, obviously, by the kids as: everyone but the designated driver can drink. Consider the same point as regards sex education. Parents obviously do not want to encourage sexual activity. But parents who want to keep their kids safe support condom distribution. Can you possibly do something about reducing widespread early sexual activity while at the same time handing out condoms?

Q: Bill, this is just to heat it up a bit more. In terms of the anti-drug campaign that you're using as a model, do the Surgeon General's comments this week [early December 1993] suggest a retreat to the idea that the anti-drug campaign was not even worth it to begin with, or that that's not the solution, or that we have to do something else in any case?

Second, in terms of the specifics of what is the message of the cultural campaign against teen pregnancy, you have quoted some statistics about the general sense of lack of moral reproof on the part of young people. The recent book by Michael Medved, *Hollywood vs. America*, is generally an attack on the Hollywood culture: the cultural elite is anti-family. He cites a number of polls that say that teenagers feel the message is insufficient in terms of abstinence: that they are hearing too much about safe sex and not enough about abstinence. Now, if Medved's poll data are correct, doesn't that suggest a much more aggressive campaign? And is your administration capable of going beyond the message of safe sex and more toward the message of sexual abstinence?

Moderator: Let's let Bill take a shot at one or two of these.

A: A few months ago, when I was speaking to a meeting of the Carnegie Corporation's task force on the well-being of adolescents, the question of safe sex came up. I made a comment off the top of my head. I opined that there is no such thing as safe sex between 14-year-olds. That is my attitude. That's the basis on which I would proceed, at least as the first order of business. I think we have to take very seriously the fact that when we're talking about children, collectively speaking, these are our children. They were not born with the attitudes they are now expressing. They had to learn them from some place. They learned them collectively from us. And if they are going to change them, it will have to be because of something we collectively do.

As you know, there has been some pretty heated conversation between the entertainment industry and leading figures of the Administration, including the President of the United States, in the past few months. If you look at the analyses, it is not always easy to see whether Hollywood is leading or following the country. It's a very complicated question. But I think they do have a social responsibility. And those of us in Government ought to be unrelenting in persuading them to take it more seriously.

Too often in public policy we believe that the only two alternatives are coercion or commission. If the government chooses not to regulate it, then that is the end of the story. It is permitted, full stop. But there is something between coercion and commission. It is called persuasion. I think that some of the bills rattling around in the Congress to regulate violence and sex on television raise important legal and even constitutional questions. We are not free, even in the name of the general welfare, to disregard the Bill of Rights. We just cannot do that. But at the same time, I think the President, the Attorney General, and lots of other people can keep the heat on. They can persuade. So maybe this media cat can be walked backwards a considerable length. I do not think we have to have government coercion in order to restore a greater measure of decency in the media.

I have my own views regarding who are the worst offenders. The people who put together the Fox Network ought to search their souls very carefully, but they are not alone. And they have a very seductive product -- my nine-year-old son prefers Fox to the three established networks, and that is a continuing source of friction in our family. But there it is. I think we have to fight on that front.

Regarding the anti-drug campaign, the Surgeon General was not speaking for the Administration. I hope she was not even speaking for herself. I hope it was simply an ill-considered remark. Suffice it to say that everybody in the Administration who could have repudiated her remark [regarding the possibility of legalizing drugs] did repudiate it, starting with the President. That is not the direction we are going in. That would be a complete disaster.

Now, regarding condom distribution, I do not know the answer. I want to be frank about that. I believe that the first and principal message ought to be that there is no such thing as safe sex between 14-year-olds. It is not just a physical act. It represents an emotional relationship with all sorts of consequences that 14-year-olds are, for the most part, simply not equipped to deal with.

Having said that, if somebody persuaded me that there was a substantial chunk of the population that simply could not be reached in such a campaign -- but that there were other things that we could do to reduce dramatically their pregnancy rates and give them a chance to graduate from high school without a child or two -- I think that we would have to listen. We cannot rule it out dogmatically simply because it

is a mixed message, although it certainly is a mixed message. Sometimes the problems we encounter are too complicated for a simple and even a consistent message, so I'm just going to keep my eyes and ears open on that issue. Stay tuned.

Q: This relates to the content of the teen pregnancy campaign. It seems to me that, as usual, once we reach consensus, we are three or four steps behind the actual problem. Over the last ten years, out-of-wedlock teen pregnancy rates have been fairly stable. The tremendous increase in illegitimacy is coming primarily from white women over the age of twenty. Some 79 percent of women in the 18-to-34-year-old group now say there is nothing wrong with having a baby out of wedlock. And they are increasingly doing it. So if we define the problem as teen pregnancy, what are we telling these kids? That they should wait until they are older and then become out-of-wedlock mothers? I mean, are we yet at the point where we can actually whisper the "M" word to our children and say, "No, you should wait to have a baby, not just until you are older, but until you are married"?

Q: Just a quick report from the front. That was my piece that you saw. [An NBC News report on white unmarried teen mothers.] So I was recently in the field and I am still trembling from the profound dopiness of these girls. They **want** to have these babies. They think it's neat. All their friends have babies, so they want babies. Of course, there are profound social reasons that make them want to do this. But make no mistake, they don't want condoms. They want the babies. They were horrified when I brought up the question, "Did you think about getting an abortion?" Ohhhhhh, of course not. They want the babies. They think it's neat.

Talk to any worker in the field and they will tell you that these girls are not doing it for the welfare money. But if the money were not there, that would be a major disincentive. They know that the baby is going to be paid for. They know that their mother is not going to get too mad, because the baby will be paid for. Senator Moynihan says, of course you can't starve babies and so forth. But the experiment they are doing in New Jersey makes a lot of sense. [Denying additional welfare benefits for second children.]

But these girls want the children, and that's the frightening thing. It is not that they are just getting pregnant by accident, like in the good old days.

Q: I did a [newspaper] story on a program in Ohio that docked teen mothers' welfare checks if they did not go to school. I had a fascinating discussion with those girls in the classroom, in which very similar sentiments were expressed [they want the babies]. I wonder how your campaign will deal with the emotional needs of these kids? It seems to be not only a matter of economic calculation, but there also seems to be a huge emotional need to love someone, however deluded or crazy that is. Your campaign would have to come to grips with that.

Q: What the last speaker said is really the essence. Because a woman there [in the NBC News report] said, "I don't only want to love the child, but I want the child to love me back." What we are seeing here is hopelessness, despair, no goals, and very little self-esteem. So we have to address the emotional needs of families. In Texas, we are learning that 60 percent of our young women are experiencing depression. Many of them believe that having a child will get them out of that depression. So we have to bring hope and support and education to change the whole notion of the child as a solution to the problems of the mother.

A: Well, based on what I know, your reports from the front are absolutely correct. A couple of years ago I read a book by a *Washington Post* reporter, Leon Dash, who went into northwest D.C. and actually talked with these young women. And for very few of them was getting pregnant an accident. In most cases, it was a deliberate choice, driven as much by emotional needs as by economic calculation.

But if a young woman says, "I want a baby because I want someone who will love me," doesn't that say that there is no one else who is loving her? What we are seeing in the most graphic way is the inter-generational transmission of family disintegration. So the issue of teen pregnancy is not detachable, emotionally or analytically, from the prior disintegration of the family which has produced this unmet emotional need, which itself is acted out in a way that is counter-productive for both the child and the child who is having the child.

Yet here is where economics comes in through the back door. You talked about this sense of hopelessness as part of the emotional environment within which these decisions are carried out. In plain English, it means that you are not giving up anything. You think you are not giving up anything because you do not think you have a future that you are endangering through this act. And that is why the emphasis on culture shift and family structure and the rest has to be coupled with an emphasis on avenues of economic hope. Because it is vital to persuade young people, on the basis of fact and not on the basis of hype, that they do indeed have a future if they only will seize it. Now, in some cases that involves changing the actual opportunity structure. In other cases it involves changing their sense of what the opportunity structure actually is. I believe that the second is frequently as

important as the first: persuading them that there is a future if only they understand what it is and are prepared to take the steps that will get them there.

That is why, even though I recognize that social science findings are mixed on the question, I believe that dramatic gestures that send a signal of hope might be as important as anything else we do. I am thinking, for example, of Eugene Lang's promise to that famous class of kids in New York. That doesn't necessarily mean new public works programs. It means convincing people who are 12 years old that there are five things that they can do between the age of 12 and the age of 17, one a year, that will start moving them in the right direction.

Moderator: We've run overtime in a fascinating discussion. Let's take three more quick comments and then let Bill wrap it up. Bill, you might want to start with the question about focusing on out-of-wedlock pregnancy rather than teen pregnancy.

A: That's a very complex question. First, I read the statistics a little differently. I see a plateauing for teen pregnancy in the mid-1980s, and then in the past 7 or 8 years another dramatic surge upward that is fueling a new round of alarm, which I think is justified. So the demographics are complex.

Second, I am comfortable with the idea that this is not simply a question of age but legal status. My contribution to the Institute for American Values' symposium on marriage was called "The Reinstitutionalization of Marriage." There are centuries of social learning that lie behind the legal institution of marriage, and we have disregarded that.

Q: Thousands of years ago, the Lord said, the last days will be such that there will be a need to turn the hearts of fathers to their children. And children to fathers. And the word "heart" in the Hebrew suggests nurturing and emotional health. Which goes to the core of today's family problem. Now, I'm having a difficult time understanding how we can do that in an environment where, regarding fathers, we talk only about paychecks, and deadbeat dads, and other economic matters. How can we legislate, for example, in a human services environment that is anti-male, anti-father? The issue of the father and his child is the real answer to all of this.

Q: I am concerned about the focus so much on sex. By further solidifying that obsession by talking about condoms, by talking so much about sex, are we not missing the other issue? When you ask kids about just say no, the basic reply is, "Yeah, but what are we going to say yes to?" I have not heard you say anything about that in this teen

pregnancy campaign, about what these kids are going to say yes to, in terms of becoming good parents at some future date. Is there anything in the Clinton Administration policy which will teach fathering? Perhaps not in school but perhaps in partnership with the schools and churches and synagogues and Planned Parenthood and others that will teach fathering, that will teach parenting, that will teach child development as a requirement for getting out of high school. Perhaps, again, not in the high school, but in partnership with a community curriculum. Is there anything to say yes to in this plan?

- Q: What you said about uncles is so true. I did a study on the transition of athletes from the professional athletic world into the real world, and I found that the difference between the black athletes making it in the real world and the white athletes making it in the real world did not have anything to do with the way they were drafted or how much money they made when they were playing. What mattered was uncles and that social support network that surrounded those individuals when they were leaving the sport. It did not matter what strata or what level of success (except for the mega-stars, who already had a support network around them). It is so true that if there were more of a support network for those individuals, no matter what social and economic strata they were in, there would be a lot fewer problems.

My question regards the recent meeting of the President with mayors and other civic leaders. Has the campaign that you are been describing started yet?

- A: No, the campaign has not yet started. It is now under contemplation and development, which is one of many reasons why this meeting today has been so valuable for me. I have been listening carefully to some interesting ideas about the potential content and execution of such a campaign. I have many suggestions I will carry back with me to mull over and discuss with others.

With regard to the "yes" that is the antithesis to the "no," we have not even gotten to first base on the planning. But I think the idea of something to affirm is valuable. And a focus on what kind of person you need to be in order to be a competent, caring parent is as good a proposal as I have heard to date. I hope that we can continue this discussion because I think it is important and I think we are probably some months away -- that's an optimist's view -- from a fully fleshed out plan on paper. So we are going to have plenty of opportunities to pursue this further.

With regard, finally, to the comment on the importance of fathers, I have met with many of these groups. We have been talking not only about the rights of fathers but also the roles of fathers. And it is a complicated story because we have to talk about the reweaving of an emotional nexus. We cannot leave the economic connection

entirely out of the equation. We are not permitted to do that. The President campaigned on the basis of the principle that if you have biological responsibility for a child, you have a continuing moral, emotional, and economic responsibility to that child as well. We are not going to surrender that economic principle. It is a principle with some bite. It is a principle that requires, from time to time, the coercive hand of the state, where the good will of the individual to obey the law does not suffice. I make no apologies for that. If people are not carrying out their legally prescribed duties, then the state cannot simply shrug and say, "Sorry, we did not mean it enough to make you do it, when you decided you would not." But we should reinforce that with a restoration of the central role of fathers.

I have to say also that I am troubled -- troubled because I fear it may be true although I am not sure it is -- by the comment that we may have a human service establishment that does not have a balanced view of the contributions of men in this regard. I do not know whether that is true, but I made a careful note of it and I am going to talk to some people to find out. Because if so, that is a tremendous practical problem, because there is a very weighty establishment in this country.

Let me just close by saying that this is one of the most enjoyable two hours I have spent since January 20th at 1:16 in the afternoon. Thank you all for a wonderful set of questions and a very warm welcome.