A Dialogue on

Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, 1996, 2008
By Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, Steven M. Tipton

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Part I "**Transforming American Culture**"
Habits' conclusion, chapter 11

Part II "**Social Science as Public Philosophy**"
Habits' appendix

In 1959, former Yale Law School Dean and University of Chicago President Robert M. Hutchins (1899-1977) founded The Center to approach the ideal of "a community of scholars" discussing a wide range of issues – individual freedom, international order, ecological imperatives, the rights of minorities and of women, and the nature of the good life, among others. The Center closed in 1987.

The Center Magazine Editor Paul McDonald and Editorial Assistant Helen I. Wells edited and published a heavily edited version of the dialogue in two issues of the magazine: September/October 1986, Volume 19, Number 5, pp. 1-15; and November/December 1986, Volume 19, Number 6, pp. 18-23.

Since the tensions among the participants in this dialogue are illuminating, even in 2013, and since *The Center Magazine* version is not easily accessible, Samuel C. Porter, Ph.D., transcribed audio tape recordings of the dialogue purchased from The Center in 1986. Porter also annotated and lightly edited the transcript for readability.

Donald J. McDonald, the Center's Acting Director, moderated this dialogue.

DIALOGUE PARTICIPANTS

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INTRODUCTION

Donald J. McDonald: I don't think I have to say too much to introduce Robert Bellah. He's been at Berkeley for the last 18 years. He's written many articles and many books, one of the books being *The Broken Covenant*.[1]

Of course the reason we're gathered here today is because of his most recent book, of which he is the principal co-author, called *Habits of the Heart*. It appeared a little less than a year ago and it has been widely reviewed and very critically looked at across the whole spectrum of American society. It is of course a study of American individualism and, apparently, the loss of a sense of community in our society.

I was struck when I read the two chapters that we're going to be discussing today by several statements. I just want to quote a couple of sentences before I turn the meeting over to Mr. Bellah. He talks about the need in our society for "a political discourse that could discuss substantive justice and not merely procedural rules." He talks about "the need to raise the level of public political discourse so that the fundamental problems are addressed rather than obscured." He says, "Any living tradition is a conversation, an argument in the best sense, about the meaning and value of our common life." And he hopes that this book will "create the possibility of public conversation and argument and that it will stimulate the reader to enter the conversation, to argue with what is being said."

Of course, when I read that originally about a year ago and when I reread it recently it had all kinds of resonance for me because of, in particular, this location, this institution, which was started by Robert Maynard Hutchins to continue what Hutchins called "the great conversation," which began with the ancient Greeks about what is the meaning of human life, the purpose

[1] Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial*, Second Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, 1975.

of society and the end of humanity. That's what Hutchins gave his life for and it's what the Center is dedicated to and here we have had at these very tables where these people originally sat – the Reinhold Niebuhrs, John Courtney Murrays and Scott Buchanans – all discussing these things.

We have with us today Robert Bellah who is carrying on that great tradition and we are very pleased to have him here with us. I turn it over to you now Bob.

DIALOGUE PART I: TRANSFORMING AMERICAN CULTURE

OPENING STATEMENT

Robert N. Bellah[2]: Well, thank you Don for that extremely kind introduction. As to when the book was published I think the official date was March 22. So it is just about a year old. The only other thing is that I have to demure a little bit about principal co-author. All five of us are equal. Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton are with me in spirit whenever I talk about this book. One of the deepest joys of this book was the process by which it came about and it was an effort of all of us at every point.

In rereading the last chapter of the book and the appendix in preparation for this discussion, it struck me that the two selections are not entirely comparable. Chapter 11 isn't really an effort to summarize what has gone before in the book. But it does, I think, assume the weight of everything that's happened up until that chapter and struck me as a bit fragile standing alone. So perhaps I am asking indulgence of those of you who only read the Xerox of chapter 11, that it might make more sense if you had read the ten chapters before it.

[2] Elliot Professor of Sociology Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley, Bellah is the author of *Religion in Human Evolution* (2011) and *The Robert Bellah Reader* (2006) among many other books and essays.

The appendix, on the other hand, struck me as, even though it talks about the book and the process of doing the research continuously, having a kind of sturdy independence; and I think it does stand as a separate essay and makes its arguments in its own terms.

In spite of the difference in the two things you've read, I think it is also the case that, in many respects, it's two ways of saying the same thing or saying the same thing at two different levels.

Both of the selections are focusing on the problem of modernity interpreted in the framework of a world of separation and differentiation, and seeing the problem produced by modernity as the need for new modes of integration, which are not entirely lacking but seem to suffer from the fact that modernity is better at creating differentiated structures than it is at pulling things back together again.

So the theme of differentiation and integration runs through both of these pieces rather continuously.

The concluding chapter does so in the broadest possible spectrum of our whole society and culture. That, again, is why, I think, to do so much in one chapter makes it hard to stand alone.

The appendix specifically ties these issues into the history of social science and what's happened to social science over the last 150 years; or, it's only 150 years since we began to speak about social science.

I will come back and talk about some of the issues in the appendix when we start the second phase, although it's going to be a little bit hard to keep the two things separate because of how parallel the arguments are in both of the selections.

I thought, just to open the discussion this morning, I would review one of the principal sources of the argument of *Habits* as a whole, namely, some of the thinking of Alasdair MacIntyre, particularly as it's expressed in his book, *After Virtue.*[3]

The British sociologist David Martin reviewing *Habits* in the *Times Literary Supplement*, said they give lots of footnotes to MacIntyre but they don't really quite admit how much they depend on MacIntyre. So I am here admitting a lot dependence on MacIntyre, except that for those of you who know that book, there's a kind of deep, almost absolute pessimism in the end, which we do not share.

MacIntyre's response to our book, by the way, is "I wish what you said were true. You make the best case possible for it. But I'm not sure I can give up my pessimism."

Anyway, certain features of his argument that don't get into the last chapter might be helpful in posing some of the issues of the last chapter.

Then I thought I would also move to a brief explication as to why – I uncomfortably brought in this enormous blackboard here; part of my professorial *modus operandi* is that I need to write things on the blackboard – I would bring in a set of terms that we learned from Jürgen Habermas[4] that we don't use in the book but I think very much relate to the argument that we are trying to make.

So, first, the MacIntyre language: Focusing in chapter 3 of *After Virtue* on what he calls "the defining characters of a culture," MacIntyre gives a lot of examples. In Victorian England *the school master* – Thomas Arnold (1795-1842), for instance, the father of Matthew Arnold –

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[3] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981, 1984, 2007. MacIntyre is the Rev. John A. O'Brien Senior Research Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at the University of Notre Dame. Born in 1929 in Glasgow, Scotland, he is also a Senior Research Fellow at London Metropolitan University's Centre for Contemporary Aristotelian Studies in Ethics and Politics.

[4] Born in 1929, the German sociologist, philosopher and public intellectual Jürgen Habermas is the author of many books and essays, including *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1: *Reason and the Rationalization of Society* and Vol. 2: *Lifeworld and System* (Trans. Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984). Suhrkamp Verlag published the original German text in 1981.

was a kind of defining character, the playing fields of Eaton and all of that. It is a kind of type that is not necessarily common but symbolizes and sums up the culture.

In using character in that sense, MacIntyre speaks of the two defining characters in our contemporary culture as *the manager* and *the therapist*, and looks at the nature of the manager and the therapist for certain clues as to our cultural condition. Particularly what he focuses on is that both the manager and the therapist are oriented to *means* and systematically avoid discussion of *ends*. *Ends* are either given or random or both.

The *end* for the manager is there by the very nature of the organization within which he or she works. The task is simply to maximize the efficient attainment of those *ends*.

For the therapist the *end* is simply whatever the client or patient wants. Again, that is not to be questioned within the therapeutic context.

MacIntyre specifically contrasts the role of the manager to that of a traditional political leader whose responsibility – given that modern political leadership increasingly is pulled into a managerial mode but, at least classically understood, the role of a statesmen – is precisely to help, in public conversation, the citizenry to think about the *ends* for which we are coming together as a society.

The priest of course is concerned with the ultimate meanings that provide a life that makes sense.

Both the traditional political leader and the priest are also concerned with many of the things that the manager and therapist are but the discussion of *ends* leads to an understanding of the relationship between leader and follower, or whatever the proper terminology would be, as one involving discourse, persuasion, conversation – ideally dialogue – about what we ought to do and who we really are.

Whereas the manager and the therapist, who claim no knowledge of those things, rest their authority on the fact that they can provide *effectiveness* of *means* rather than *guidance* with respect to *ends*.

The pattern comes together in this term that MacIntyre uses – somewhat from our common sense terms paradoxically – of *bureaucratic individualism*. Our common sense culture tends to think these are opposites, that individualists don't like bureaucracy and indeed bureaucracy is a bad word. Politicians condemn bureaucracy and get votes for it.

But in fact, MacIntyre argues, our particular pattern involves an articulation of individualism and bureaucracy through the complementarity of the manager and the therapist so that individuals seeking their *private ends* actually turn out to be good functionaries in a bureaucratically conceived world.

The extent to which higher education is molded by those two forces is something we might think about in the second half of this discussion.

Finally, MacIntyre argues that *emotivism* is the appropriate *moral language* in a culture of bureaucratic individualism precisely because there is no language to speak about *ends*. Therefore, *emotivism* – in the sense of the good is what I feel the good is or what I feel comfortable with – is the only moral language that transcends sheer utilitarianism.

The Habermas terminology derives from a strange twist in recent Habermasian thought in which he brings together Parsonian sociology – [the American sociologist Talcott] Parsons (1902-79) was my teacher and has gone into eclipse for some 20 years and is now being rediscovered by the Germans and given a new respectability. A strange joining of systems language drawn from Parsons and the notion of the *lebenswelt*, the lifeworld, which comes from Schutz

and the phenomenological tradition.[5] But Habermas brings these two – the contrast between *systems* and *lifeworld* – in a kind of interesting conjunction that I think, again, ties into the argument of chapter 11.

He sees the *systems* – in their modern form in the most advanced industrial nations – as taking on a kind of life of their own and organized through what he sometimes speaks of as *media*, adopting the Parsonian language of *media*. Not media in the sense of mass media but of a variety of kinds of *mechanisms of communication*; and sometimes he speaks of media as *steering mechanisms*.

Habermas argues that the dominant systems in a modern society – the bureaucratic polity and the industrial or postindustrial economy – are organized primarily through nonlinguistic media: the economy through *money* and the bureaucratic polity through *power*. The power thing is a little bit more problematic, in a way. Money is obvious enough. Considerations of cost-effectiveness, of profit and loss, are decisive communications for any organization oriented primarily to the market.

Power becomes a preoccupation in a large modern political structure, particularly where the political problems involve the problems of empire.

Here I might just put a brief parenthesis. I don' know how many of you have had a chance to look at George Grant's (1918-88) *English Speaking Justice* (1974), a terribly interesting small book from the leading Canadian political philosopher who is quite conservative, politically, and therefore what he has to say about the United States is all the more interesting.

Grant argues American society has been able to maintain a degree of liberty and decency rare in the world. Largely because, he thinks, we have maintained a relatively unexamined tradi-

[5] See, for example, Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*, ed., Maurice Natanson, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962. Born in Vienna in 1889, Schutz fled Hitler's Anschluss in Austria and immigrated to the United States in 1939. He died in 1959.

tion and kept it alive. But as we have become more involved in empire in the 20th Century that heritage is endangered because, as he says, the principle of empire is not liberty or decency but power. He is not saying our power is always used for evil ends. He is not saying power cannot be used for the purposes of freedom and decency. He is simply arguing that a great imperial power is so involved in the sheer maintenance of power that it is constantly pulled into activities that are controlled by power balance rather than any other value.

I think that is very much what Habermas is getting at when he speaks of power as a *steering mechanism* in a vast modern political structure.

Habermas then goes on to contrast the *systems* – operating in these nonlinguistic media of control – with the *lifeworld*. I want to stress that the difference between *systems* and *lifeworld* is *not* the American common sense distinction between *public* and *private*. For one thing we tend to call the economy *private* in our society, a rather strange usage but nonetheless we do. What Habermas means by *the lifeworld* is certainly not in any simple sense *private*, though it includes what we would call *private* in our society: family, church, voluntary association, and local community. But the lifeworld also includes *the public sphere* in the sense of *public discourse*, the formation of *public opinion*: the active interchange in a free society where people come together to discuss what we ought to do together as a people.

The argument here is that the medium, or steering mechanism, in the lifeworld is *language*. Again, there are all kinds of problems of distorted and blocked communication. Habermas is certainly not idealizing the fact that lifeworld structures operate easily with language.

But the point is that language is the essential mechanism here, and that in some kind of normative conception of a free society, clearly, the lifeworld ought to be setting the terms for the

systems. The systems generate *means*. Money and power are not *ends*. They are *means* – and they need to be used for morally thought out *ends*.

The temptation in modern society is to turn the *means* into *ends* – and when that happens Habermas uses this rather ominous terminology: the systems begin to *colonize* the lifeworld. The normal relationship in which the lifeworld is setting the terms and the systems are providing the means gets reversed. The lifeworld becomes subordinated to the systems.

I don't want to get into the mood of the last chapter of *After Virtue*. I think these are all open questions. These are tendencies. They're not absolutes by any means.

But the danger is that the lifeworld will lose the capacity to set the terms for economic and political action and instead be controlled and organized by what ought to be *means* and not *ends*.

I think the whole discussion in chapter 11 could be seen as an effort to reassert – to think about how to reassert because certainly we don't have any clear answers in any simple sense and certainly even any clear institutional suggestions. But the impetus of chapter 11 is how the lifeworld can reassert its primacy over the systems.

Just to give you, finally, an example of what one might mean by the colonization of the lifeworld by the systems – one could see this in virtually every sphere of the lifeworld – but it strikes me, in an academic context, it is particularly useful to see how this affects us in our own institution of higher learning.

I come up against this all the time as I go around the country trying to respond to the discussion stimulated by *Habits of the Heart*. I see it in different ways at both the liberal arts college and the research university. Let me just give you a couple of examples and then close these opening remarks.

Frequently in liberal arts colleges the question of overwhelming the mission of the college by the current demands placed on higher education is raised. It was raised acutely at Loyola University in New Orleans because I arrived just in the middle of a self-examination that the faculty was undertaking asking the question, what is a Catholic university and, even more specifically, what is a Jesuit university?

Looking at their curriculum and noting that courses in computer science had been proliferating madly, management courses, accounting courses, communication – which doesn't necessarily mean communication in the deep linguistic sense but in a somewhat more manipulated sense – and courses in philosophy, religious studies, and classics battling to survive. The question was asked at what point does it no longer make sense for us to put this many Jesuits and this much money into an institution which is no different from 10 other institutions doing the same thing? But the problem is, to survive as an institution, if they don't have enough of these courses they won't get the students and they won't be able to meet their budgetary needs.

Now of course these are problems that are realities of life in any society at any time in history. But I think they are certainly acute, or my sense is that the whole tier of liberal arts colleges – with or without a religious commitment, so long as it involves a deep concern for classic liberal arts curricula – is in serious trouble. They are facing even the question of survival at the present time for reasons I think are one example of the colonization of the lifeworld by the systems.

The other example I came across at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, a great research university. It has to do with the impact of Star Wars[6] spending in the natural sciences.

[6] In 1983, U.S. President Ronald Reagan proposed the Strategic Defense Initiative to use ground- and space-based systems to protect the United States from attack by strategic nuclear ballistic missiles.

The acute uneasiness in a large part of the faculty both in physics, mathematics and so on, and more broadly, with the declining funding for basic research from government in many spheres, and the temptation to utilize Star Wars money – along the lines of "Well, we'll really use it for basic research anyway and it won't really have anything to do with weapons" – is a pressure in an institution which is not faced with the problems of Loyola University but also has serious problems of its own.

Recently, I have been approached by people in physics and mathematics at Berkeley on the same issue. The temptation, which can be very powerful indeed, is to become involved in things that one has the deepest qualms about, not only ethically but even practically, for reasons of survival in terms of the kinds of research one wants to do.

So those are just examples of what I think chapter 11 is about. That is, how can we regain a community of discourse about what is the good life for human beings in a way that will prevent our agendas being set by structures which have made *means* into *ends* and therefore destroy the possibility of a genuinely human discourse as the directing mechanism in our society.

Donald J. McDonald: Okay, Bob.

Professor Flacks, would you make your opening statement in response?

FORMAL RESPONSE

Richard Flacks[7]: I was very honored, actually, to be asked to do this not only because of my respect for professor Bellah's overall work but also because I think this book is in many ways the right book at the right time. It's an important intervention in discourse because of the almost total collapse of the capacity of people who used to be called liberals to formulate a pub-

[7] A co-founder of Students for a Democratic Society in the early 1960s, Flacks' books include *Making History: The American Left and the American Mind* (1988); University of Michigan Ph.D., social psychology, 1963.

lic philosophy appropriate for the time. That exhaustion has left the field open to a very dynamic neo-conservative revival in the areas not only of politics but also of public philosophy.

I take it that *Habits of the Heart* was intended in many ways – or at least as it got to be written it has become an effort – to sketch out how a revival on the other side might look and what its terms might be.

Secondly, as I think we'll see in the second part of this discussion, it's an important contribution in the reformulation of social science as well as public philosophy.

So we're only going to be able to scratch the surface here of what I think this book has to offer.

The book, by the way, can be criticized and has been because it's so nice. Unlike some other works of social criticism, which use the strategy of polemic, confrontation and polarization, this book uses a strategy of inclusion, searching for common ground, and making everybody feel reasonably okay about where they are – that's probably not fair. A quality of niceness. This is not my critical term. It's one I read in at least one review.

On reflection I thought, well, this is not a bad strategy if the point of the book is not so much to demonstrate the brilliance of the authors as to engage people in the possibility of real dialogue over the kinds of questions being raised.

So I like the fact that the book has a lot of important and profound things to say and that it's also nice, in that sense. But maybe it's not – well, we can talk perhaps if we want to. But I'd rather move on to substantive questions.

The most difficult part of the book, or the part of the book that gives me the greatest reservation, is that there seems to be in the conclusion no real guideline about how we recreate the kind of discourse that's being advocated. In other words, what seems to be argued for in that last

chapter is a kind of conversion on the part of many Americans which, as a sociologist, I find hard to imagine happening in quite the way that the last chapter seems to describe. In other words, my tendency is to say, well, let's look at social reality and figure out what forces might be operating both psychologically and socially that might in fact give us the basis for some of this optimism.

I don't think it's enough, as the book seems to be arguing, that the basis for optimism lies in the fact that, in addition to the kinds of dominant individualisms that prevail in American culture, there are other traditions that we can call on. Yes, we can call on them. But who is going to do the calling? What's the agency? What's the process by which these other traditions might be revived?

One clue to me – which I don't find in the book; maybe I missed it – is to look at the very individualism that's being criticized and ask what in the stance of average Americans – what in American consciousness – offers the possibility of a different direction.

For example, the last chapter says what we need is what's called "a new social movement." Well, is there anything in contemporary consciousness that might lead us to think that there is a basis for such a movement? Not because Americans have moved or converted overnight to a more communitarian perspective but precisely because of their privatism and individualism – the very things that are being criticized. Is there anything in that consciousness that could be the basis of reformulation?

I think that there is. It lies perhaps in – one way to phrase it would be to pick up on what Professor Bellah was just referring to – this distinction between *systems* and *lifeworld* or, the way I would put it, the question of *empire* and *everyday life*.

If you interpret a lot of what is called individualism to be a kind of insistence on the part of the average American of the right to live his or her own life uninfringed upon, then one might

ask, in fact, I think we should ask, isn't that insistence a kind of barrier to imperial ambition on the part of the master institutions of the society? Isn't that one of the problems that the people who seek to preserve and enhance empire face, that is, this very same individualism, or privatism? The problem of mobilizing peoples' energies for empire is that they would rather lead their own lives.

One might add that a danger in talking about the need for integration is that there are other forms of integration than the kind of democratic, egalitarian and just integration that this book advocates. There's the integration of nationalism, the integration of an aggressive stance toward the world, the integration of a people that believes itself in some way violated by the rest of the world and wants to impose its will on that world.

Those are currents moving through American society right now pretty strongly. Yet my own feeling of optimism is that I think the majority of average people in this country resist those kinds of inclinations, or at least would resist them in action even if they gave lip service to them, precisely because they're insisting on their personal lives as having priority over national ambition.

So that's a question I'm asking, that is, what can we learn by looking at the resistance to mobilization that individualism, privatism, whatever you want to call this tendency, provides us?

Second point – it sort of relates to the first. I'm intrigued by this distinction MacIntyre is making between the manager and the therapist, on the one hand, and the older forms of dominant characters: political leader and priest.

You might say that the decline of the legitimacy of the political leader is related, again, to this same insistence on the personal and the individual and the separateness of private life. And I

hope that what we are talking about is not the revival of those more or less authoritarian forms of leadership, namely, the old styles of political leadership and the old styles of priesthood.

Again, we might say maybe there's something very positive about the fact that many, many Americans seem – when political leadership emerges – to question rather than follow. This, I know, seems odd at the peak of Reagan's popularity but we can talk about that. I really think a strong current in our recent history has not only been this kind of privatism but a resistance to certain forms of leadership that used to work in the past.

Are there other dominant character types who we might look to who would be types that promote the sort of discourse advocated in *Habits of the Heart*? That's, I guess, my second question: what would be an alternative to the manager and the therapist?

One answer is, I think, buried somewhat in the book. The alternative to the manager and the political leader is *the activist organizer*. The book does focus on these characters, to some extent, and celebrates them. Where do they come from? How are such people formed? What is the process by which people can decide to make of their life's work the idea that they should be organizing others for empowerment? That's the term that a lot of these organizers use.

If we agree that this model, or this type of character is important to foster, where do they come from in this society? I think that's an important research question. It's one that I'm very interested in personally.

I don't know what the alternative to the therapist and the manager is. I'd like to think it's the teacher. But a certain kind of teacher. But, again, how do you get people to make a decision to go into teaching rather than into management or therapy? Where does that impulse come from?

I guess I want to remind us that what I'm talking about is: what are the processes by which the good things we hope to see happen in society could actually happen.

Last point: I would have liked to see that chapter be more explicit and concrete about the forms of social organization, or restructuring, that could promote the kind of discourse that's mentioned. This is not necessarily a criticism of the book. It's saying we need to write additional books. We need to do additional kinds of reporting because I think that there is a potential in our society for forms of grassroots interrelatedness and a lot of discussion is developing around those forms.

One is a *community-based organization* and that is described to some extent in the book – organizations that seek to protect the local community against the dominant systems and colonizations you are referring to.

Another is a whole range of structures that get called *workplace democracy*. Maybe that's being more discussed than practiced at the present time but it is getting a lot of discussion.

A third that might be raised, and is to some extent being raised in the higher reaches of discussion about higher education, is what's getting to be called a *learning community*, that is, groups of faculty and students who relate to each other not simply through courses and the formal structures of the university but in some other ways.

Neighborhood organization, community organization, workplace democracy, learning communities, these are ideas that, it seems to me, are already in the wind. One question I was hoping we could discuss today is why aren't they reflected in our politics at all, or does that matter? In other words, where is there anyone in the public world of regular politics talking about these forms of grassroots organizations and how they could be developed and supported? And is

that a problem? Or would it be better if these organizational currents proliferated without the intervention of politicians and the state?

Donald J. McDonald: Do you care to respond before we open it up now, Bob?

Robert N. Bellah: Well, I have so many things to say that it would take too much time. So I appreciate that. I hope I can come back to it but I'd rather hear from others.

Donald J. McDonald: Okay. Who would like to – Richard Fox?

Richard Fox[8]: There is so much in *Habits of the Heart*. The book is nice in a very particular way. It's a book which on every page opens itself to the reader, invites the reader to raise questions. It's a miracle of question asking.

It does, I think, much less to answer those questions but that's its promise as a text. It is so inviting, so difficult to reject out of hand. It forces one to confront a whole variety of questions that one might not want to confront.

The key contribution of the book is to tell liberals and even those a little further to the left that the pressing problem today is not a political one. It's not a problem of trying to resist a state, for example. So it brings liberals and left-liberals beyond the antipathies and the conflicts of the '60s. It suggests to us that as liberals, as left-liberals and as radicals, we have to be sensitive to traditions, to conservativisms, to the past. We have to break out of standard liberal categories, which are classically framed in terms of resistance to authority. Authority is a good thing in this book. The past is a good thing.

[8] Formerly at Reed College and Boston University, Fox is a history professor at the University of Southern California. His writings include *Jesus in America* (2004), *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography* (1985) and a 1983 essay, "Epitaph for Middletown: Robert S. Lynd and the Analysis of Consumer Culture." In 1975, he received a Ph.D. in history from Stanford University.

This is a marvelous contribution to liberalism. Yet, I think I share some of Professor Flacks' views in response to the book. The text is a little bit unclear about how we are to get beyond a conservative liberalism. How are we to create this transformation that the book calls for?

I'm not sure that it effectively answers MacIntyre's pessimism. The book offers an optimism but without directly confronting MacIntyre's pessimism.

Let me try to put it this way. Robert and Helen Lynd in *Middletown*[9] make a critique very similar to *Habits of the Heart*. They go to great pains to point out that powerful institutions in American society delimit our autonomy, delimit our independence as human actors.

The Lynds point particularly to advertising as a growing behemoth in American society. Advertising is something that creates our language as Americans, delimits our options. I find very little sense of delimitation by something like advertising in *Habits of the Heart*. It seems to me that the Lynds might offer a way of deepening MacIntyre's critique suggesting ways in which we aren't quite as free as we might hope we are and as I think *Habits of the Heart* asserts we are.

So, finally, let me suggest that for all of this bringing conservative anti-modernism into the liberal debate, I think we're ultimately brought back to the very point that liberalism began with, namely, perhaps to effect this transformation we need an ethic of resistance to authority as well as an enthusiastic embrace of the notions of authority, the past and tradition. We may have to still have a conflict model of cultural renewal. We may still have to resist powerful authorities like these dominant systems that Habermas is talking about. Those dominant systems may in fact delimit and determine our lifeworld much more than *Habits of the Heart* asserts.

Donald J. MacDonald: Noah?

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[9] Robert and Helen Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* (1929) and *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts*, 1937.

Noah benShea[10]: I think this is rich with questions. Most of us seem to take the practical side when we take a question, rather than initially – or we allow ourselves so brief a time to glory in the question before we move to, given this, how are we going to take this and where is this going to lead us?

I'm sensitive to this because I find my own mind working in the same direction. Two things strike me when I try to move to a problem. One is not to look at it symptomatically. Or, if I am looking at it symptomatically, what does the symptom suggest. And, two, rather than trying to destroy the problem, which is a particularly western approach, how am I going to take and use the problem's own energy in its own solution. When I think of those two questions in response to what I've been hearing it seems it becomes a question of belief, strangely enough.

The managers and therapists are not solvers but copers. And if those who are coping are leading then it suggests that most of us are not able, or barely able, to cope and most of us are living lives where we're hoping to cope. Certainly in the seven or eight years that I've been sitting around this table, we've had some pretty interesting people who are in some pretty powerful positions; and to a person, on the right and left, they all admit that there's very little by way of leadership going on at either the national or statewide level, or the international level to be sure – and a great deal going on at a coping level. It is management at every level in the religious as well as political spheres.

If the leaders are managers of coping, it really tends to suggest that most of us are turning to them for direction in how the hell we're supposed cope; and it reflects, again, that most of us are having a difficult time coping or, if you will turn to the music, something to get you through the night.

[10] An American poet-philosopher, benShea is a public speaker, consultant and the author of 23 books, including the *Jacob the Baker* series.

Consequently, this leads me to say, given this question, how do we transform our lives to an experience beyond coping, beyond managers and therapists? Then you begin to realize you can't move beyond coping and moving beyond coping may not necessarily be a quantum leap, and may be a step toward insanity.

There's a great deal in religious history that suggests that coping – how one struggles with life – is the exact transformation of what one ought to be about in life, that is, that Jacob, in wrestling with the angel, transforms himself from merely being Jacob into the notion of Israel even at a metaphysical level.

So it seems to me again if you follow on this, the logic then would lead you to ask how do we add honor to the nature of coping, how do we enrich the nature of the coping managers around us, and all of us hoping to cope in that process?

In this way, it would seem, you are not going to get rid of the managers and therapists in society because the managers and therapists are a response to, or a reflection of, the society and people hoping to achieve coping and management and therapy in their life.

But what we can hope to do, it seems to me, by way of responding to this colonization, and, as someone once said, if the Chinese invaded the United States on the East Coast, by the time they got to the West Coast they'd be opening Taco Bells.

Now if we look at managers and therapists moving over to a colonization of the lifeworld, if you will, let us hope by the nature of their lives, or how one would go about their coping and struggling, might turn around. In fact, I think that one of the things that Dick was suggesting is that we find ourselves – strangely that the people who were once for empire now find themselves arguing rightly for the right of the individual and going against empire. Possibly,

the people we see as managers and therapists of coping might, along with ourselves, be enriched and enrich it and transform it in that way rather than trying to defeat it.

Donald J. McDonald: There are two people now, Sheila and then Tony Day.

Sheila McCoy: I had an interesting experience with this book because I fell in love with it. I thought I must've been born in the same basket because every term, every word was wonderful, everything was wonderful. Then I started giving lectures.

By the way, there is another kind of university. There is the great research university. There is the small liberal arts college. Then there are massive state universities. I am from a state university and we do somewhere in the middle. In other words, we fight to keep the humanities and social sciences alive in the middle of a vast number of upwardly mobile young people who want to know how to do something to make a good living when they get out. So I think you have to consider us, too. I think we're the most dynamic place. I think so because we combine both of these. We've got enough kids to keep the liberal arts alive if we keep fighting. And they're coming and they want to know how to make a living.

But I found that everybody didn't share my immediate gut enthusiasm for this book. Apparently, none of my students and none of my colleagues also read *Lake Wobegon Days.*[11] You have to admit that's the other big hit on the popular circuit.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Sheila McCoy: And why is everybody buying *Lake Wobegon Days*? Why are they reading it? Because they have a kind of nostalgia.

We ran a faculty seminar for students on community in the fall. *Habits of the Heart* was the lead book. I was attacked in the student newspaper because I said "*lifestyle enclaves*"[12] –

[11] *Lake Woebegon Days* (1985) is a novel by American author, storyteller, humorist, and radio personality Garrison Keillor.

where you just live while it suits you and you have no responsibility or you're a "family" at work – are not right. They're not good. They don't make for a good society. A student wrote in and said, "I regard the people at the student newspaper as my family. How can you say they're not?"

I finally have been forced to think more about the kinds of arguments you're really making, which is that, as empathetic as I may be personally, at age 55, for a world I understand myself, history is irreversible. You can't go back for certain traditions as you would for the ones you wish to find. I don't think you can do that. I think you have to look at experience and history as dynamic. In other words, some of us may be able to reach back to the traditions that you urge us to reach back for because we feel them. Others don't.

One of my colleagues said, "What does he mean we have lost the tradition? What tradition?" I knew what you meant. He's about 10 years younger than I am and he didn't.

I think we have to go from the discourse you've opened. You've opened this discourse but you tend to be arguing a position in that discourse, in other words, in terms of how you handle the people.

The first man, Brian Palmer, had a long marriage. He was work-oriented, he never came home and his wife left him. Then he marries again and he's very close to his family. But you're interviewer keeps saying, "You're still not happy." But he says he's happy and if he says he's happy at some point you can't keep bleeding it and say, "You really don't know why you're unhappy, my friend, because you don't have a language that expresses that unhappiness."

I say this with great affection. But you have to really listen to him. If he says he's happy and he feels he's a contributive person, I think the next step for this discourse is to look at our

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[12] In contrast to *community*, a *lifestyle enclave* is "formed by people who share some feature of private life. Members of a lifestyle enclave express their identity through shared patterns of appearance, consumption, and leisure activities, which often serve to differentiate them sharply from those with other lifestyles. They are not interdependent, do not act together politically, and do not share a history," as is the case in a community. *Habits*, p. 335.

society and maybe look at it as anthropologist. How would an anthropologist look at it? Would an anthropologist demand of our society that people have a language that expresses something? Not necessarily. They'd look at what they do.

I'm not convinced, since I've now been battered by the opposition, that because people articulate what appears to be – I mean let's call it what we think it is – selfishness, that they are so selfish.

I'm not convinced anymore that their short-run commitment to social organization – Mothers Against Drunk Driving, let's put a signal on the corner and then it's finished and you leave. You criticize that in the book. You say this is not the kind of thing we want. I'm not convinced that in that there isn't the kind of thing we want, those of us who want community.

I think we are in a society in which people don't vote. You don't talk about that. I talk about it in class all the time, and why do we have the lowest voter turn-out of any western democracy. What does it mean? Well, when there was Watergate they all clamored.

In other words, we have to look at what people are doing next and find out what that represents in our society. I know this perhaps sounds trite but, in some sense, take a wider prism, look at what they're doing, not so much at what they're not doing, what they can't recapture, what they're not saying. What are they doing?

Is there strength in their willingness to call the people at Wendy's "my family." I saw an advertisement on the door at Wendy's once: "Come and work at Wendy's hamburger shop and be a member of our family." I was appalled. I said what does this mean for my notion of commitment in terms of personal relationships. I'm from a small city.

Well, if they're saying that, are they being really cynical? Maybe not. I think what we have to do is look at our society and see it as vigorous, look at it maybe as an anthropologist,

maybe as someone who says what is there in the institutions as they're taking place that we can benefit from and that we can draw out.

Because you did offer a specific route for us: praxis, being involved in the civil rights movement. I ran into a problem with that because people in the civil rights movement wanted to change America more. They didn't stop trying to change America willingly. The institutions stopped them from doing it. People stopped them from doing it.

Frankly, I think we need a better understanding of our society, institutionally, personally, and socially. What is it that's actually happening in America today?

Donald J. McDonald: Do you want to reply to this?

Robert N. Bellah: Yeah, I think enough has been said that I need to say a few things.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Robert N. Bellah: Certainly, I'm not hearing things that I don't get. Because if you got it, I get those things all the time.

The book is taking a position, which is a complex one. We are in one sense – Professor Fox used the word – anti-modern, even conservative anti-modern.

On the other hand, I think the book is deeply informed by an Enlightenment critique of tradition, which we in no way renounce. We don't believe there's any past to which we can return. We think *if* tradition has something to say to us it has to be reappropriated in new ways – and precisely the authoritarianism that was part of the past has to be questioned.

Nonetheless, I would argue that whether your 10-years-younger colleague knows it or not, we are *deeply* dependent on tradition. The free institutions of our society make no sense without tradition. That people don't realize that is part of a powerful ideology – which argues that we don't need tradition – which I think is an ideology in the Marxist sense of false con-

sciousness. I think we are relying on elements of tradition of which we are unconscious all the time.

The purpose of the book is not to return to tradition but precisely to try to raise to consciousness things that have not, or are not, currently being discussed.

I think the left-liberals have such an allergic reaction to this whole area and immediately see – if you say a good word about the family it means you're in favor of the patriarchal traditional family. It's that kind of thing. I just think that there are whole issues here that need to be opened up.

On the point Dick Flacks made, and I think you [Professor McCoy] were also making in a way, the degree to which contemporary individualism is a barrier against forms of domination – empire – and the degree to which they are co-opted to reinforce it seems to me to be one of those things we both need to investigate and to discuss. I don't think they are simply modes of resistance.

When the Episcopal Chaplain at Berkeley characterizes contemporary student culture at Berkeley as competing for first class state rooms on the Titanic, a sense that "probably the world is going to pieces, there is no very much future, *but* in the meantime I'm going to get mine and live better than most people" – now that is co-optation to the hilt!

I see it in my students. I even see it in one of my daughters who works for a large corporate law firm. The *seduction* of becoming part of powerful institutions which give you an opportunity to use your intelligence and to be creative and to get recognized and to get quite extraordinary material rewards – within certain very clear parameters.

In the case of my daughter, working on the team that defended Union Oil of California against T. Boone Pickins – I mean she was glad she wasn't working for T. Boone Pickins. But

her sense that is Union Oil that much different, that she's locked in a structure where all her intelligence and creativity is being utilized for systems, which not only can she have no input into in terms of their moral meaning, but there is no serious discourse going on about the moral meaning of those systems.

Now the payoff in terms of a rich private life – while at the same time one's work life is serving systems, even allowing you the freedom to be critical of those systems, but not really to question them – that is the MacIntyre pattern I think we have to really worry about.

So I don't want to entirely reject what Dick was saying. But I think the exclusively privatistic aspiration can be – and in our society by and large is – co-opted for ends for which the individual has very little say.

The other thing: are we too pessimistic or are we too optimistic relative to what Professor Fox raised? Again, I think we tried to justify – certainly, I don't think we're terribly optimistic.

Donald J. MacDonald: You're talking about the book?

Robert N. Bellah: Yes.

The sense as to whether we're going to surmount some of these problems or not is a very much open question. But if there's a degree of something other than the gloom-and-doom pessimism – which is common on the left and which, I think, can become a self-fulfilling prophecy – it is because we show people in the book who are doing something, are making a difference and that that is possible in America.

Furthermore, I think we show, although we could've done it more explicitly but the context of the discussion of the book shows, at least to me, some of the institutions – which bear certainly the marks of precisely what the Enlightenment was criticizing in traditional authoritarian

institutions – today operate in an extraordinarily new and creative way. Not by rejecting their past, although the fight about the meaning of the past goes on within those institutions.

Let me just give an example of the American Catholic Church where this book has had enormous resonance and where, as you know, there is no homogeneity. There is a great deal of argument going on in, for instance, two areas.

First, the discussion generated by the bishops' letter on the U.S. economy[13] is, I think, one of the most significant things going on in the United States today. Gar Alperovitz, in *Christianity and Crisis,* coupled the bishops' letter and *Habits* as suggesting something like what I think Dick started off with: that there is a break in the line of liberal thinking that opens up some new possibilities. That conversation is not going to end when the third draft is issued in November.

I am actually involved with the process whereby a permanent ongoing discussion of these issues within the church, and in relation to the church and the world, is a serious commitment undertaken by the bishops.

In a situation where very few of our institutions are asking fundamental questions of our economy that is quite remarkable. It is a conversation coming from where, what I sometimes call Enlightenment fundamentalists, the last place on earth they would've expected it to come.

The other thing is just look at the present lobbying going on over aid to the Contras.[14] I think it is reasonably clear that without the enormous day-in-and-day-out lobbying by the church – not exclusively the Catholic Church but very considerably the Catholic Church – we would actually have troops in Nicaragua. For all the people who are worried about Central America, the

[13] *Economic Justice for All, Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, 1986.
[14] The Contras, various rebel groups in Nicaragua, opposed the socialist Sandinista regime between 1979 and the early 1990s. The U.S. supported – overtly and covertly (under the Reagan administration) – the Contras financially and militarily.

ones doing the most, that are out there with the Congressmen, bringing the pressure, getting the letters written, getting the phone calls made, primarily come from the church.

Now I know academics don't – the academy is the most secularized part of society – particularly like religion. They are even blind to the extent to which religion is a powerful force in American society. But I see it there and I see that it's ambiguous. There certainly are the Jerry Falwells and all of that. There are plenty of people in the Catholic Church who are obviously working in very different directions than the one I'm talking about.

But if you don't recognize the degree to which this institution – I use the Catholic Church as only one example – is among the most vital places and is among the few institutions that have a degree of distance to bring a critical perspective – I think it's terribly important that in our public discourse we bring all those people together, that the discourse does not go on just within a religious community but in the public world in which religious communities and other groups talk.

So my final rejoinder to all of you is if you say the book raises questions more than it has solutions, that's *exactly* what we wanted to do. We believe that public conversation about the most important things is itself a good, an intrinsic good, and that there's very little likelihood that we will solve our deep institutional problems without that kind of discourse.

We don't believe that there's any pattern of reform capitalism, democratic socialism or anything else that can just be plugged in as an answer to our deep institutional problems.

Talking, experimenting, making these things part of public discourse is to us the basic preliminary to finding those institutional restructurings which – we would agree – have to come about down the line.

But not because some politically or ideologically super-heated group gets in power and puts them in but coming out of the common experience, the common experiment, the kinds of things I have been talking about recently such as learning communities. Zelda Gamson[15] is one of the people who responded to our book.

I think precisely nurturing and thinking about and bringing more into the public awareness the number of experiments of the sort that you're talking about – that's all part of it. Not that anybody has a blueprint but at least we might have some sort of glimmerings of where we might be going.

Donald J. McDonald: I think Tony Day was next, and then Nathan and then Stan and Mr. Bramson.

Anthony "Tony" Day[16]: I just wanted to mention that the book touches on and brings very strongly to mind, to me, a social-political-communitarian movement in the United States in this state and in the Southwest that arises from many of the concerns you express and touch on and that has been extraordinarily successful.

I'm thinking of the new version of the Industrial Areas Foundation,[17] which was the descendant of the organization put together by Saul Alinsky, as a community organizer beginning in Chicago and, I think, Buffalo. It's now in alliance with chiefly the Roman Catholic Church but also some other churches. It has had what I think is extraordinary success in San Antonio and Austin, Texas, currently in the Rio Grande Valley, and in Los Angeles.

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[15] Gamson is a Professor of Education Emeriti at the University of Massachusetts, Boston and Founding Director of the New England Center for Higher Education.

[16] Anthony "Tony" Day (1933-2007) served as editor of *The Los Angeles Times*' editorial pages for 18 years. He worked with publishers Otis Chandler and Tom Johnson to sever the paper's historic ties with the Republican Party and brought the paper national and international recognition.

[17] http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/.

I'm sure you all know the original Alinsky theory. They have become somewhat less confrontational. In any case, the whole purpose is to train community activists from the community to focus on a particular project or series of projects and, in doing so, build a sense of community that transcends the particular problem they are trying to address.

My wife and I went to San Antonio last year to see what the organization is doing there. We were vastly impressed. Its directors are two Chicana women who had never been in public service before outside of the parish they were in. They were running this very large – with the help of everyone involved – and complex organization in which the general public good came, I thought, to somewhat transcend the particular problems and the particular needs of the particular people involved.

It may be very significant that this is so deeply aligned with the church and connected with liberation theology, on the one hand, and the base communities as it's translated in Latin America, on the other hand. It may be that it is more traditional than radical. I don't know.

But I thought it was worth bringing up because this is a flourishing, successful and growing movement. It is not noticed as much in general as I think it should be. Politicians in particular areas notice it and are rather terrified of it and very glad to do its will because wherever these groups appear they work outside the political system and force the politicians to pay attention to it, and in the end the politicians come around.

Donald J. McDonald: Is the press paying attention to it?

Anthony Day: Not as much as it should. We do, I must say, in our paper.

But there's a man who runs an outfit in Texas named Ernesto Cortez, who I happen to think is one of the most interesting men in America. Not nearly enough paid attention to, he's an extraordinary fellow and he is a leader and has this moving institution. It's quite remarkable.

Donald J. McDonald: Stan and then Nathan. Oh, Nathan.

Nathan Gardels: I have the advantage, or the bizarre opportunity maybe I should say, of having discussed Bob Bellah's book in depth with Jack Kemp and Michael Novak.[18]

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Nathan Gardels: So it frees me to say something that follows upon the comments of both Ms. McCoy and Tony Day.

The problem may be not so much that there's not a discourse. But there is a discourse in different languages. He [Anthony Day] and you [Robert N. Bellah] talked about the Catholic Church and she [Sheila McCoy] talked about Wendy's. Everyone believes that's what the communitarian values of belonging and family are.

When I talk to, for example, Jack Kemp and Michael Novak and so on, they say, "Listen, what are you talking about? Bob Bellah is crazy. What's he talking about? There's the family, the neighborhood, the church, the softball team, the Olympics, our country – we have a great sense belonging. I have no idea what the man is talking about."

These people believe, and I think it's an important point about how the conservatives – or I would call it the revolt against modernity which the conservatives have, I think, captured – see themselves. They see themselves as *the lifeworld*, although they obviously would not use the language of Jürgen Habermas. They see themselves as *the lifeworld* revolt against the manager and the therapist. They're not for pro-choice or waiting 60 days to say whether they're in favor of the death penalty or not. They are not in favor of that kind of thing.

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[18] American politician Jack Kemp (1935-2009), a Republican, served as Housing Secretary in the administration of George H.W. Bush (1989-93). In 1996, he ran as the Republican Party's nominee for Vice President as a running mate of presidential nominee Bob Dole. He also served in the U.S. House of Representatives from the state of New York (1971-89). American Catholic philosopher, theologian, journalist, novelist, and diplomat, Michael Novak (b. 1933) is the author of many books including *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (1982). He is a former George Frederick Jewett Scholar in Religion, Philosophy and Public Policy at the American Enterprise Institute and the 1994 recipient of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion.

They are in favor of absolute values. They want to put murderers and child molesters to death. They are opposed to abortion. They don't take a managerial or a therapeutic position, like pro-choice. They oppose abortion. It's true for the Catholic Church, too. Pro-choice is a kind of procedural value. It's not an absolute value. It's a religious value having to do with the sanctity of life. It's not a procedural value.

So I think that these people very much believe that they are "the lifeworld" revolt against the manager and the therapist – precisely what you're talking about.

They have a sense that there is real community in this country. It's obviously a contradiction and you talked about false consciousness before. But I think that is a very tricky thing to apply in a world where the steering mechanism is dominated by media mechanisms beyond the control of this kind of discourse you are talking about.

Donald J. McDonald: How do you answer that one, Bob? I mean the Kemps and the Novaks think they are representing *the lifeworld*.

Robert N. Bellah: Yeah, Mike Novak is an old friend and even a student of mine at one point and we have been in conversation even since *Habits* was published. What I find so baffling about Mike – because we started out sharing most things and we've grown apart progressively – is that he attributes all our ills to "modernist culture," almost at moments like I feel that certain modern novelists are responsible for everything in Mike's thought – and he exempts entirely the force of consumer capitalism.

All the things that he cares about I see as being relentlessly undermined by consumer capitalism, which is exactly what he said 10 years ago. Now somehow if he's against managers he's only against government managers. He defends absolutely "the free enterprise system" as

essentially, in his view, part of *the lifeworld*. To me that is just a little bit nutty. I find that very hard to understand.

That's the point at which the issue is – I mean I don't know Jack Kemp but I know Mike well enough to know that that's what's going on there. If I have trouble explaining mechanisms, I think he has terrible trouble explaining mechanisms. Because the blame for everything he doesn't like in our society is laid almost exclusively on intellectuals, new class, public functionaries, welfare, and so on, as though those people have the real power in our society, which strikes me as a very strange point of view.

Donald J. McDonald: In other words, you see capitalism precisely, or the political economy as it is now structured, as being problematic rather than an uncritical given?

Robert N. Bellah: I think it's certainly part of the problem. To believe that the pressures that come from our current economy are all in favor of preserving family, neighborhood, community, church, and an old-fashioned idea of work strikes me as just simply – I can only see it as ideological distortion. Now at that point discourse breaks down because I don't understand that argument.

Nathan Gardels: Can I have just one follow-up point?

Donald J. McDonald: Sure.

Nathan Gardels: Isn't this in fact the discourse that we're talking about. When the fight between the people who are pro-abortion, pro-family and pro-patriotism, and people sitting around in this room say, "Wait a minute. What about those values?" Isn't that the discussion going on? It's a kind of kabuki theatre in politics, as I alluded to the case of Bradley and Deukmejian with reference to this recent thing with Rose Bird.[19] It's a kind of kabuki theatre for

[19] Democrat Thomas J. Bradley served as Los Angeles major from 1973 to 1993. Republican Courken George Deukmejian, Jr. served as a California governor (1983-91) and Attorney General (1979-83). Rose Elizabeth Bird

this discourse you're talking about. I mean it doesn't happen directly, like sitting around a table. This is in fact the discourse we're talking about over values and over community, isn't it?

Robert N. Bellah: Well there are certain issues where discourse doesn't occur. It just breaks down – and abortion is a classic example of that. I think a very helpful contribution to understanding that comes from Kristin Luker's book, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (1984), where she did, I think, a wonderful piece of social scientific research in which she talked to pro-choice and pro-life people in-depth, really understanding what they had to say and what the reasons for their views were, to the extent that each side was absolutely convinced that she was a believer in their cause. I think that Krista's own views were sufficiently nuanced that she really does think there is – and she may be the only person in America to think there is – something on both sides of that issue. But she really was concerned to understand sympathetically the opposite sides of this issue.

It does seem to me, but here again, although that's an example of polarization to the point where civil discourse has almost completely collapsed, that there are a few people who are able to allow some degree of serious conversation in this area – people who have enough sympathy with the pro-life position to understand its deep moral bases who also understand the prudential problems of the application of any absolute morality.

So, yes, we do have these situations and it isn't uncommon in our life for the total breakdown of civic discourse. It's precisely when we start shouting at each other and the only basis of moral argument becomes my inner conviction, which has no publicly discussible basis and so on, that civic discourse breaks down into interminable argument. That is a disease in our culture.

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served as Chief Justice of California (1977-87), the first female justice and the first female chief justice on that court; in 1986, she became the only chief justice California voters removed from office.

Yet, I do think that it's far from absolute. You've chosen the hardest cases. There are many other cases where we can talk together.

It was a disappointment to me, frankly, that the neo-conservatives could not respond more positively to this book, because in many ways we were sympathetic to some of their themes. The knee-jerk reaction that we were not sufficiently sympathetic with capitalist structures of the economy meant a wholesale rejection and a refusal to engage in serious discourse on the many other parts of the book where I think we would have something in common. You can have your own explanation as to why that's the case but it does seem to be the case.

Donald J. McDonald: Okay, Stan.

Stanley K. Sheinbaum: Well, one quick comment prior to what I want to talk about. I would not credit what's going on between Deukmejian and Bradley as discourse. Deukmejian has a convenient political handle, political rhetoric to use against Bradley and he's doing it effectively. There's almost no substantive discussion of the death penalty. You might find it on the op-ed section or the opinion section of the *L.A. Times* or a few elsewhere. But those two gentlemen don't engage in it. To his credit at least but so ineffectual Bradley is trying to talk about the real issue and that's the injection of the political arena into the court. But that is not done effectively and would make a hell of a debate, and it just doesn't happen.

But that's not what I want to talk about. What I really want to talk about is your appendix.

Donald J. McDonald: We come to that in the second half.

Stanley K. Sheinbaum: Oh, we're handling that differently?

Donald J. McDonald: The second half.

Stanley K. Sheinbaum: I'll hold off.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Donald J. McDonald: Okay.

I think Leon and then Jeff, Richard, and then we'll break. You [Stanley K. Sheinbaum] can be the first after Herbert Morris.

Leon Bramson: Bob, this is a wonderful book and on the ground that you and I were once colleagues together at Harvard a long time ago I want to push you a little bit on a couple issues which were raised by Professor McCoy that I thought were very important, very much on target but which you haven't had a chance to address.

There were two things that she said and, indeed, I was going to raise these issues so we have a lot of ESP.

Brian Palmer, the first case study in this book, very interesting person, very much oriented to success, hard work, self-reliance, traditional liberal individualist values. He spends the first 15 years of his marriage working a 70-hour week, he provides for his family in an elegant fashion and he discovers, as they're about to move to a new and probably even more magnificent house, that his wife is leaving him.

He then experiences a kind of epiphany in the sense that he reorganizes his entire social world. He reorganizes his life. He changes his values. He in fact becomes open to exactly the kinds of important commitments that I think you and your colleagues are trying to talk about in this book.

But, as Professor McCoy says, you and your colleagues describe him, in the beginning when you discuss the case studies, as confused. He's confused. Now I would like to press you on this point because I think, as Professor McCoy asked you, well, how would you compare what you're doing to what an anthropologist does?

Perhaps this provides a bridge to what we're going to discuss next. It has to do with your posture as a researcher. There's a very real sense in what a person like Brian Palmer says isn't good enough for you and your colleagues. You're questioning whether where he's come out in his life is right. Whereas, from his own subjective point of view, he feels very confident and secure in his new found commitments. That I'm taking from what you gave us in the chapter with respect to Palmer.

So I raise this as a question and it has a methodological kick to it, which was implied in what Professor McCoy was asking. What really is your response to the notion that people like Brian Palmer were steeped in the tradition of what I guess you and your colleagues would recognize as classical individualism but who come around, as it were, in the course of the life cycle, to a broader understanding of what real commitment might mean? What is your reaction to the question as to why you would regard him as confused?

Robert N. Bellah: All right. Several things about Brian: we certainly did not say he wasn't happy. It's our sense that he is happy. If we portrayed it that we think he's not happy that's certainly not right. We think he's quite happy; we also think that in the present phase of his life over the first phase. No question about it.

As a matter of fact, I think in teaching the book and so on, most have seen that the four characters in chapter one are not intended as put-downs, that we think all of them are in their own way admirable. The one person who is usually most disliked by people is poor Margaret Oldham. But even she, our classic therapist, I think is fundamentally committed to helping other people. She doesn't have a language that helps her very much to put it that way. But she really is committed to helping other people in her life.

The problem with Brian is – again, in a certain sense, I think we could defend ourselves as doing nothing but pure anthropological description. Brian has, as you put it, come to a new understanding and reorganized his life around certain kinds of commitments, which are precisely what our book is talking about.

But Brian cannot articulate that change in any other terms than I chose priority B instead of priority A.

We think that is also purely part of the data. Brian Palmer has no way of explaining – morally – why the life of commitment is a deeper, better more human life than the life of sheer, privatized self-aggrandizement. He literally has no way of doing that.

Our question is, not even that he's confused but that if he really does have no way of making any evaluation other than I happen to feel this is better at this moment whereas I used to feel that that way was better at that moment, what on earth reason is there to believe that if some extremely attractive 25 year old comes into his office he's not going to take off with her in still a third phase of his life? Now you may not think he will but I've seen plenty of people where that happens.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Robert N. Bellah: Now one of the things that Aristotle says –

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Robert N. Bellah: – that Aristotle says in Book 1 of the *Ethics* about virtue is it isn't enough just to know what virtue is. Virtue is something that lasts. It has a quality of persistence.

Our question about Brian is about his having nothing but a momentary spontaneous sense that ethics is only what I feel like at this moment. He clearly has moved in the direction of a

more virtuous life, to use Aristotelian language. Does he have a framework to sustain it? Maybe so. But I think our raising that question is not our reading into the data. It's there in the data.

Leon Bramson: Could I just interpose one comment? I think you've given a very good answer that helps to illuminate the text for me.

You referred previously to serious discourse about the moral meaning of systems. I think that what you're saying is that serious discourse about the moral meaning of systems, and the capacity to engage in it, is a criterion for you and your colleagues. But it seems to me that there are an awful lot of people who don't have the capacity to do that, who are not intellectuals perhaps. I think that inured in Professor McCoy's comments, and perhaps also in mine, is a question about that.

What about an inarticulate commitment? It seems to me that there's a kind of presupposition, a metatheory, about engaging in serious discourse about the moral meaning of systems which becomes a criterion for you and your colleagues. I just offer that as a possibility that would help us to explore this text.

Robert N. Bellah: Well, there's a question of who is more elitist you or me? Because I think ordinary people are capable of fairly sophisticated thinking about these things. The problem with Brian is not that. He's as bright as he can be. He's articulate. He's perfectly capable as much as any professor around in thinking about these things.

But he has *bought* a language that doesn't allow him to do that. That's our argument: that he is locked into a coherent but false language of moral discourse. He has a fairly articulate version of what MacIntyre calls *emotivism*. I don't think there's any lack of capacity on his part to think about these things. There are other people in the book who have less education and are less

articulate than Brian who can express their moral commitments with more coherence than he's able to do.

Sheila McCoy: Can I just say to you is there not a particular Christian character about the notion that the idea is the father of the thought and we must look in peoples' heads rather than merely looking at some point at a pattern of behavior.

Robert N. Bellah: I don't think that's what we're saying either. We are saying that behavior and reflection are some kind of circle. Indeed, one of the primary arguments of the book is not that we are selfish. I mean right there in chapter 11 you'll see a whole passage that says we did *not* find a nation of me-ists. We found a nation of people who are reasonably decent, committed involved-in-the-world kinds of people who don't seem to be able to express that very well.

We're talking in the book very much about a slippage between language and behavior. We're not in the least neglecting the degree to which most of the people we talked to are leading decent, coherent lives. Again, that's one of George Grant's points in *English Speaking Justice*.

But an unexamined decency in the midst of a language that has a logic that undermines it is a dangerous situation. So we want to raise the level of common discourse.

Dick Flacks raised the question, as I remember some years ago at that Habermas conference, about everybody being their own social scientist. In a certain way, I think that's right. That the democratization of the understanding of ourselves in the world in which we live is crucial if we're going to have a free society. We can't divide it into a few intellectuals who think about these things and everybody else who doesn't.

Donald J. McDonald: We have a choice here I think. We can either break now and resume with three people whose names I have who still want to speak on this morning's topic in the first half. Or we could go for another say 10 minutes and then break.

Richard Fox: I just have a quick comment about Novak. So maybe it's better if I make it now.

Donald J. McDonald: All right. And then Nathan has a short one too?

Nathan Gardels: Real short.

Donald J. McDonald: And then Jeff and then we'll break after you three.

Jeffrey D. Wallin: Before or after.

Donald J. McDonald: Okay.

Richard Fox: I'm just prompted to move back to Novak because he was my teacher and if you were his teacher I guess that makes you [Robert N. Bellah] my grandteacher.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Richard Fox: I think that what's so interesting here is that Bellah *et al*., in *Habits of the Heart*, are in a very real sense, and I mean this positively, more conservative than Novak. Real conservatives, I think, like T.S. Eliot, for example, are very sensitive to the ways in which capitalism undermines human value. I can't agree more with what Robert Bellah has just said about the ways in which consumer capitalism is an attack upon community, an attack upon the individual.

That's precisely what Novak, I think, is missing at the present moment. He's determined to believe that the individual in America is alive and well. The individual is going ahead and founding new, small corporations and democratic capitalism is at no greater disadvantage today than it's ever been.

I think that's a very myopic view of what's happening today. So I understand why the neo-conservatives can't get excited about *Habits of the Heart*.

My problem with the book is precisely the reverse, namely, in chapter 11, the concluding chapter, I don't think you take seriously enough your own findings earlier in the book that consumer capitalism is as you've just said, undermining human value. I think it would've been better in the last chapter to assert that much more strongly than you did.

But, lastly about Novak, since I want to say something nice about him, the one thing I think he does still do that I think is important is that he asserts our present situation is one of crisis. He, I think, narrows this crisis to the Soviet threat against freedom. Perhaps that goes to his background in Eastern Europe, or something.

But I still think the rhetoric of crisis, the rhetoric of struggle, the rhetoric of conflict has its place. I think a little more of that in *Habits of the Heart* might have been a good idea. There's too much rhetoric of smoothness, I think, in *Habits*. A little bit more sense of conflict and crisis, I think, would've been a rhetorical strategy of some importance.

Donald J. McDonald: Nathan.

Nathan Gardels: I would like to go back to the definition of discourse. One of the things I have a problem with is I think discourse is defined too much in the Habermas sense of communications community or communications *gemeinschaft* as if it's some kind of intellectual discourse.

The point that I was trying to make before – and I mentioned Deukmejian and Bradley, for example, or the fights over abortion, the death penalty and so on – is discourse takes place in our society in terms of symbols and images and conversations and there's kind of a shifting, floating type of operation. I mean I don't think that any of us can sit here and describe why

someone who 10 years ago was adamantly opposed to the death penalty and today they – for example, my wife and I'm sure a lot of other people as well – question, "Well, wait a minute that guy who did this to that little 10 year old girl and he's going to be out in five years?" How does that process take place? Politicians take the pulse of that. The media takes the pulse of that – some kind of a shifting, amorphous consensus out there. I think it happens in images and symbols, not in an intellectual discourse.

But it is a discourse in a society and I think that discourse is going on around these very issues. It has to do with anti-modernism. It has to do with what are the values we stand by and what are the values we don't stand by. I think that may be the significance of the whole neo-conservative phenomenon.

So I just think that in the discussion of discourse, maybe it's a little too narrowly defined in a Habermasian sense.

Donald J. McDonald: Okay, and we're going to come to that, I think, in the last half when we talk about social science as public philosophy and who is showing leadership. Jeff, last comment before we break.

Jeffrey D. Wallin: Why don't we just wait until we come back.

Donald J. McDonald: Okay, well, no more than a five- or six-minute break and then we're going to be back here. Seven minutes.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

PART II: SOCIAL SCIENCE AS PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTION

Donald J. McDonald: Okay, the meeting of the second half is called to order. We have exactly one hour left in this dialogue. It's probably going to be very, very insufficient but it's the best we can do under the circumstances. Bob Bellah will lead off with a brief opening statement and then Dr. Morris is going to respond. Then Stanley gets the first shot if Bob doesn't want to respond to Herbert.

OPENING STATEMENT

Robert N. Bellah: This is, I think, going to be a lot briefer because it's a kind of an extension of some of this framework to the world of social science. I want to start out with a broader perspective which is also at least hinted at in the appendix

One way of thinking about the great change in education that has taken place literally in the last century – the statistics on Ph.D. education in America are utterly stunning. In 1870 one Ph.D. was granted in the entire United States. In 1880 there were 100 given in the entire country. I wish I knew how many tens of thousands have been given this year.

But in literally 110 to 115 years our whole sense of higher education has changed dramatically from a situation in which higher education was almost exclusively relatively small liberal arts colleges – of course, statistically speaking, very elitist, a tiny percentage of people ever went to them – to a world dominated by the model of the research university just coming into existence in the 1880s and '90s: Johns Hopkins renovated, Harvard, Columbia, Cornell, Chicago – really, just a handful that provide the model that now dominates our thinking everywhere in higher education.

I want to just emphasize a little bit one substantive shift which so changes the university. Our notion of the university going back in unbroken continuity for a thousand years is probably pretty wrong.

Liberal arts education was organized primarily around rhetoric.

I want to remind you most liberal arts colleges were founded in this country to train clergy. The role of the clergy, particularly in colonial and early republican America, combined a lot of things that have now become differentiated. The clergyman was doing much of what mass media do now. Communication – through the sermon and through a variety of spoken and written language – was critically important to this central integrating role in early American society.

From the beginning, though, the college education included not only divinity but the humanities. It's very important to remember the word, *humanities*, was, initially, precisely the contrast term to *divinity*. Now that we have departments of religious studies classed as one of the humanities we totally don't remember that. But that's what the humanities were and the humanities were essentially the classical tradition and, again, very centrally rhetorical.

The most important figure in that classical heritage, until well into the 19th Century, was Cicero, perhaps the greatest orator who ever lived. The linkage between rhetoric and practical philosophy, which is so evident in Cicero who was not only a great thinker and speaker of rhetoric but whose common sense works on ethics were simply the taken-for-granted of educated Europeans and Americans until literally virtually 100 years ago. [The German philosopher] Hans Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) has helped us recover that deep connection between rhetoric and practical philosophy.

But, again, humanistic, rhetorical education was aimed toward leadership in civil society through law and political office. We have, therefore, a picture of a very elite institution, which is

nonetheless almost exclusively oriented to training people for public service in the realm of public discourse.

The research university, virtually from the beginning, shifted the paradigm from rhetoric to science. The research university is part of the enormous growth and democratization of higher education so that, instead of one or two percent, in some states like California close to 50 percent of people have some degree of higher education.

The irony, though, is that as education has become much more democratized, its role as preparing people for public service in the realm of public discourse has been replaced by training people with a variety of specific skills modeled more or less explicitly on the notion of scientific method – which I think fits into the Habermasian scheme and also bureaucratic individualism, because one need not think about the public sphere if one learns in school the proper skills to work within structures of bureaucratic power.

Part of what was happening was of course that the Enlightenment all along was very critical of the rhetorical tradition – both the religious and the humanistic rhetorical tradition and considered it quintessentially distorted communication, which God knows often it was.

The early research university had a model of a genuinely democratic form of education that would include public discourse in which an idealized community of scientific inquirers provided the essential model. You see this in Charles Peirce.[20] You see it quintessentially in John Dewey (1859-1952), the most important public philosopher we've ever had in America, who always saw a connection between open, testable, public scientific inquiry and the institutions of a free society. So you have this notion of science as a great opening up of the possibilities for pub-

[20] Charles Peirce (1839-1914), a philosopher of science and logician, founded the American philosophy of pragmatism.

lic discourse that had been kept for elitist and authoritarian purposes in the older rhetorical tradition.

Yet, one of the great ironies is that the promise that was associated with the whole progressive movement, and a lot of other things in American history, has been essentially subverted.

John Dewey's image of the community of inquirers has not really been what happened. What we have seen instead is the idolization of method, which is a non-discursive, monological and not a dialogical way of thinking about knowledge – one peculiarly vulnerable to ideological co-optation.

Particularly in social science, I think the degree to which we have actually contributed to knowledge and the degree to which we have simply operated as legitimating agents for various social forces – Joseph Gusfield has done more to show this side of our work than anyone else – is a very open question. Science as an ideology, I think, easily becomes science fiction, which we have more going on in our public life today – I mean it's among the scarier aspects of our life.

In other words, I am raising the question as to whether the triumph of science as the major paradigm in the university – which has gone together with differentiation, departmentalization, disciplinary nationalism in the sense of dividing up the territory into fields where nobody can talk to each other because they don't have the same terminology and the same methods – has not endangered, at the same time it has democratized higher education, has not become a serious danger to higher education contributing to a *public* world where professors are *public* persons engaged in discourse with the rest of the world.

Whether or not a recovery of the older tradition – again, this is my anti-modernism coming out – in a new way – I mean rhetoric is a bad word. If you say that's rhetoric in America to-

day that means it's terrible. We used to talk about a noble piece of rhetoric because rhetoric was among the things we respected.

A recovery of the deeper meaning of rhetoric, in the terms of practical philosophy, and seeing the academic community as *a community of scientific inquirers* to be sure but also to go back to Josiah Royce, rather than to Peirce and Dewey, as *a community of interpreters* – interpreters engaged in an open dialogue with the public from which we can learn as well as to which we have to contribute.

My last little footnote to this is one of the most disappointing things that occurred to me in the course of the response to *Habits of the Heart* was when a colleague sent me a clipping from *Footnotes*, which is the American Sociological Association's in-house little bulletin with a note: "You're really doing what this article in *Footnotes* says we should be doing." I read the article and it says, "It's about the public image of the sociologist." There was a task force of the association on whether or not our findings should be made public – already a question that baffles me. But there were serious views that since the public wouldn't understand, we shouldn't be very public about our findings. But thank God the task force ended up with the view that the findings should be made public but for this reason: "Because at a time when funding for research and student assistance is so tight we need our good public image as sociologists." There was not a word or a hint in that report that the "findings" of sociology might contribute to any public discourse and *least of all* that we could learn anything from what the public would have to say back to us. So, instead of being an example of what *Habits* was about, it was an illustration of exactly what *Habits* was trying to break through.

Donald J. McDonald: Okay, Herbert Morris is going to make the first response, and I confess now that I forgot that Jeff had a holdover comment from this morning's session and he

hasn't had a chance to put it on the table yet. Do you want to put it on at 1:15 p.m. and have the last 15 minutes or put it on now?

Jeffrey D. Wallin: Why don't we hear the response and see how it goes and maybe after that a little bit later.

Donald J. McDonald: Okay. We'll work it in because I do want to get your thing on the table. I'm sorry I forgot.

Herb.

FORMAL RESPONSE

Herbert Morris[21]: I'd like to start by saying the disposition of my heart is certainly very much in support of the appeal that philosophy, the humanities, conversation, and dialogue with the public have for you. I think those are all very commendable things. Being a dean of humanities at UCLA, a professional philosopher, enjoying conversation, I could hardly take exception to your attitudes.

Next, perhaps I should focus the beginning on what I know a little bit about – and those are cats and mice – to lead into the points I want to make. The way I see it is cats go about catching mice and they generally do so quite successfully. The interesting thing about that is that they don't have a conception about how they go about catching mice. What's fascinating is that there are human beings engaged in all sorts of activity where I think they go about catching knowledge, if you will, without having a conception of what it is that they are doing in successfully catching knowledge. I have in mind physicists, historians, psychoanalysts, literary critics, and lawyers.

[21] In addition to being a University of California, Los Angeles Dean of Humanities and Philosophy Professor, Morris is a psychoanalyst.

I have known brilliant lawyers who argue in the most effective way. When I have asked them to pause for a moment and tell me what the nature of legal reasoning is they flounder abysmally. But they never flounder when they're in the court room or preparing a brief.

I think you are a striking exception to people who simply go about doing their work in this respect. You are reflecting on what you do as a social scientist. There's a great degree of self-reflection. You're reflecting about what others do. The question is *why* in the world are you doing this?

You're engaged in a philosophic activity into the foundations of your mode of inquiry. I think it's to your credit that you're doing that but I think the very first question is *why* are you engaged in what is a peculiarly modernistic kind of activity?

As a philosopher, what I know is that 20th Century philosophy has as its primary subject what philosophy is about. We don't *do* philosophy. We talk about what philosophy might be about. Likewise, there is a similar sort of thing that goes on with literary critics. What is literary criticism? What is psychoanalysis? What is history? And you're saying "What is social science?"

I'm supposing that you're interested in this for something like the following reason, and at any point where my assumption is mistaken you of course, in our conversation afterwards, can correct it.

I think that you have a faith that because sometimes a conception of one's activity mis-leads one and interferes with the acquisition of knowledge that a correct conception can actually promote it. You have some idea that people who have a misconception of the activity that they're engaged in sometimes are tripped up. So you have a faith that if they have a correct conception they will in fact not be tripped up but will actually progress.

You proffer for our consideration this particular conception and it's labeled social science as public philosophy. I have now a number of things to say about that which are for the most part, I fear, trivial kinds of observations.

There's first of all the question of *why* philosophy? I think in the language of discourse one wonders what has attracted you so to a term about which people feel so ambivalently. I'm delighted that you see it honorifically. I think most of the American population would feel quite otherwise – that philosophy is involved in arid inquiries which generate very little advance. But I'm delighted at your positive attitude.

The second question is *why* public?

The third major issue is *why* do you suppose your conception will promote *more valid knowledge*, moreso than what social scientists of a different persuasion, or possessing a different conception, have?

Let me go through each of the points as I understand them and the argument that was set out in the appendix.

First as to why it's *philosophy*, why you're pulled in the direction of saying social science as philosophy. The first point is that your social science is not specialized. You contrast yourself with the narrowly professional social scientist who focuses on a single, or I would suppose, sometimes a multi-variable analysis and they do not take into account the whole, and variables gain their meaning from the whole.

I think that this may very well be the case. It doesn't seem to me anything that makes it particularly philosophic. It's a methodological point. I'm unsure precisely what this means. I don't have a clear grasp – I don't imagine that you intended to provide one – of what it would be to approach a *whole*, as contrasted with discrete particulars within the whole.

The second point is your approach is not merely *inter*disciplinary but *trans*disciplinary. Here, again, I don't see that's philosophic particularly. And, again, I have difficulties about *what* this means; and also the possibility of its attainment.

I'm dean of a division in which in a single department, as I'm sure you're quite aware, the individuals in the department cannot converse with one another because they speak different languages – whether it's the philosophy department or the English department or the French department.

Robert N. Bellah: Sociology.

Herbert Morris: Sociology. Well, it's not in my division, thank God.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Herbert Morris: I do have, as you do, certain kinds of imperialistic tendencies – and can you imagine history in social science at UCLA? I'd like to take them, except when I consider the amount of work it involves in terms of budget.

But I think it's a very difficult problem. You can use the word. It sounds just wonderful – *transdisciplinary* – but, again, one wants to know, what does it come down to? What will be this language? What will be the set of conceptions such that you will have a community of individuals who will receive it, comprehend it and be prepared to engage in dialogue with you?

But, again, it doesn't seem to me philosophic. It seems to me a methodological point.

The third point is that you want to do away with the boundaries between the social sciences and the humanities, and I shout hurrah! here. What makes it, for you, a humanistic discipline is that you're not going to be engaged in a disembodied cognitive enterprise. Social science proceeds, as I think you ascribe to a humanist, with certain kinds of assumptions.

I think here now we're beginning to flirt with what I understand as a philosophic kind of inquiry. What you say is that the assumptions that social scientists invoke, and that you certainly would yourself invoke, are assumptions of the good person and the good life – and that these must in fact be articulated and discussed. There must be philosophic reflection about these matters.

Now I think that would be wonderful. In fact, I've spent the major part of my professional life as a philosopher worrying about justice, and what it is for something to be right and what it is for something to be wrong. If you want social scientists to do that I have no hesitancy at all welcoming you with open arms. I have a sense that you will find your time taken up – as mine has been – a major part of the time – just trying to get clear about one single concept if that inquiry is engaged in. My sense is that social scientists have a good deal to do without getting into the laborious, time-consuming activity that has engaged philosophers.

But this, I think, what you suggest here, is indeed social science as public philosophy. But you have social scientists as social philosophers or as moral philosophers. I can't see any objection to that. My principal epistemological point is I'm not sure how it promotes valid knowledge within social science. That, I thought, was one of the principal concerns.

The fourth thing is that social science should promote self-understanding and self-interpretation. That seems to me correct. I don't think it's a philosophic kind of activity to do that. In psychoanalysis there is of course an attempt at empathic understanding to promote self-knowledge. But it doesn't turn psychoanalysis into a philosophic enterprise at all.

Narrative as a mode of thinking – I agree with you. I think that's extraordinarily helpful. I don't see, again, that that makes it a public philosophy.

Then, finally, you say social science as public philosophy can't be value-free. I don't think that that distinguishes social science as public philosophy from any other social science, however. So I think that that point is not a point in support of social science as public philosophy. It's that you recognize it. You may think other social scientists do not, namely, that *all* social science proceeds with certain kinds of value assumptions.

So, let me summarize this point about social science as philosophy if I can very briefly.

First of all it seems to me there's a kind of trivial verbal point I'm making and that is most of the arguments that you offer do not align your activity with what I understand as a philosophic activity at all. The only activity that you mention that I would see as a philosophic activity is where you're prepared to engage in moral philosophy. You really are interested, presumably, in an investigation – in your role as a social scientist – of the nature of justice, of the nature of goodness, and that I think is indeed is philosophic.

My second point is that as a social scientist engaged in this activity I don't think that that establishes that you have a mode of acquiring any more valid knowledge – engaged in that type of philosophic activity – than social scientists generally.

Finally, as to the *public* aspect – what makes it *public* philosophy is not just that your views will be made available to the public, of course. Nor is it *public* in another sense, which you don't mention, which is a sort of a philosophy *of* the public. It's *public* in that you seek to engage the public in dialogue. That seems to me a very worthwhile kind of activity. You engage in *public* conversation.

Now here is an instance of the public conversation. I may have misread the section here. I think you use your actual interview process as an example. Am I correct about that?

Robert N. Bellah: One kind of an example, yes.

Herbert Morris: One kind of an example – and, you say something in the conclusion there that fascinated me. You said, "We were able to attain a degree of common understanding," and I didn't know what that meant.

I would've thought that you would've communicated to them, as they were communicating to you, your values. That they would've have had an opportunity to inquire into *your* capacity to articulate the bases for *your* values in the way in which you were doing it with them. It seemed to me – I was unable, so I have to excuse myself, to read anything but the appendix. So I only have the dialogue that's excerpted in the appendix. But it is asymmetrical. So I didn't know what you meant by "a common understanding."

The kind of conversation that's pregnant with value, it seems to me, and that you in fact want to have, is not all that different from the kind of conversation I attribute to a first-rate therapist.

I'd like to go back to MacIntyre. You see the therapist, in the MacIntyrean mode, as having the patient's ends fixed and the therapist simply as some kind of assistant, an instrumentalist, in working toward the realization of those ends.

I see the therapist, at least one class of therapists, as engaged in a conversation thereby committed to the values of respect for the other, the value of truth, the value of self-knowledge, respect for the individual, not in the sense of the provision of values to that individual, but assisting in conversation the individual coming to some sense of what their values might be – and why they have the established priorities.

I happen to do therapeutic work so you've touched a raw nerve.

Most individuals whom I see don't know what it is that they value. They're most grateful for an opportunity in a conversational setting to in fact get some sense of what it is that they value.

So I see the division between the therapist and the priest as a false division, that in fact the things you most value can be found in a so-called therapeutic setting because it's a setting of self-discovery with all that that involves in dialogical circumstances.

Well, I think that pretty much sums it up. I am sorry I've taken so much time.

Donald J. McDonald: Do you care to respond, Bob? Or do you want to hear from Stan and give you a little time to think about this?

Robert N. Bellah: Well, I think I can say a couple of things very quickly. I think what we meant is best expressed by some of the examples we gave, and that the question about thinking about society as a whole is best understood by reading *Democracy in America*[22] as opposed to what goes on in most American sociology today.

What we think about philosophy as having something to do with this is best exemplified in the work of people like Alasdair MacIntyre and Jürgen Habermas and one could add [the Canadian philosopher] Charles Taylor. I mean there are some exemplars of people who have simply obliterated the distinction between social science and philosophy. They are perhaps marginal in the philosophic profession but some of them are fairly respected people, and they have provided us a kind of model.

We're *not* saying that we are going to find knowledge that is more valid than people doing other kinds of social science. We're just saying that we will find out things that they won't

[22] The French statesman and author Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-59) wrote, among other writings, *Democracy in America*. Translated by George Lawrence, Edited by J.P. Mayer. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969 (1833).

find out. They will find out quite valid knowledge which is helpful to all of us. But we think they can find out some things this way that cannot be found out in the more highly specialized form.

Two more things.

On the *public philosophy* thing, I think we believe that public philosophy – in the sense of some rough-hewn moral rationale for our common life – is sort of there, often very partially and very badly articulated but it is part of our common life. We think imagining social science as taking on a more responsible job to contribute to that in discourse – with a lot of other people besides social scientists – is a good thing. That's all we mean by that.

Finally, I wish you would also read chapter 5 ["Reaching Out"] because we show how many therapists we interviewed, and many of the clients' of therapists accounts of therapy, are much closer to MacIntyre's version of what goes on than what you just described. No question, at its noblest, the psychoanalytic quest – and as you point out Habermas has used that as a kind of example – can do all the things you suggest. But I would say that therapy, as an ideology of middle class America, is unfortunately far from that ideal.

Donald J. McDonald: Okay, Stan.

Stanley K. Sheinbaum: I would've liked to have had your notes before I had come into this room. They would've been helpful in what I want to say.

I was somewhat concerned in a way that the chapter on social science was an appendix. I have mixed feelings about it having been included. I would like to think that you are therefore going on to another book on that subject because I think it is critical. I think it is critical, that is, the general point you're making, because of the impact of what I call the positivistic approach to social science under the aegis of A.J. Ayer,[23] which has made science a descriptive activity – I'm

[23] British philosopher A.J. Ayer (1910-89) promoted the idea of logical positivism, in *Language, Truth, and Logic* (1936) and *The Problem of Knowledge* (1956). Positivism requires methods as close to the assumed objectivity of

addressing myself primarily of course to social science – and almost no prescriptive or normative role or function.

What has happened over the years it seems to me – and I think the question about what is valid knowledge within social science is critical – is that under the present functioning of social science with its emphasis on method – and I would recommend to you, if you're not familiar with it, Lionel Robbins' *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science* (1932), which is, again, so much like Ayer, A-y-e-r. To some of us another spelling is possible.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Stanley K. Sheinbaum: It's had such an effect, especially in the area where I function in economics and on economists as a whole with certain exceptions. It is descriptive which is the problem of science in the sense that you [Robert N. Bellah] use the term and, to repeat, not prescriptive.

When we look at the world today – our ability to gather information and our inability as scientists to provide direction, except at the margin – we see we don't deal with the basic moral questions of justice, or what have you. All we're worried about is making the machine work better. As a result, at least in economics, there is no discourse, at any level in the economic arena, today of any import.

Donald J. McDonald: Lester Thurow's book[24] isn't being talked about by other economists?

Stanley K. Sheinbaum: It is but –

Donald J. McDonald: He's trying to raise this issue.

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the natural sciences as possible, for example, experiments and the quantification of data and its statistical manipulation whenever possible. See Robert N. Bellah, *et al*., *The Good Society* (New York: Knopf, 1991), p. 162.

[24] See, for example, Thurow's *The Zero-Sum Society: Distribution and the Possibilities for Economic Change*, 1980; and *The Zero-Sum Solution: Building a World-Class American Economy*, 1985).

Stanley K. Sheinbaum: Yeah, he's trying to raise it, Cutler is trying to raise it and others are trying to raise it.

Everything is in terms of what is possible, what works efficiently in terms of the economy as a whole. But in the political arena where – I mean we can see certain activity in the philosophical or maybe in the sociological arena but we cannot find it in the political arena at all.

There is no question that comes before the body politic – in the legislature, in the elections, whatever – of an economic sort. There are such decoy questions as Gramm-Rudman,[25] which has nothing to do with any *moral* question about the distribution of income, for example.

Another way of looking at this is that say if you want to know where Alan Cranston[26] is on the question of Central America, that's easy. You look at how he votes on the Contras. I mean it's a symbolic vote but it says a lot. It may be too symbolic and he's covering something else up. But we don't know that.

If you want to get any understanding of Alan Cranston, or of any other legislator about what he or she thinks about the economy – anti-trust, to repeat, the distribution of income – there's no vote that you can look at. There's no discourse about it at all.

I think it has to do with what has happened to knowledge as we approach it in the social sciences. I go back to the use of the word *descriptive*. It has become primarily descriptive, that helps you see the photograph. It may help you – it's a little bit more *valid* to use your [Herbert Morris] word – it may help you understand what it possible. But it doesn't give you any direction.

[25] Hollings Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985.
[26] Cranston served as a California Democrat in the U.S. Senate from 1969 to 1993.

There are two reasons for direction, or norms. One is you want your *policy makers* to be able to recommend directions to move. The other thing is of course to have moral ideals so that people, even though certain things are not possible, can strive.

There is nothing to strive for. There is nothing I can ask Alan Cranston to do that he would understand – and he's a smart man – because it's not in the discourse and it's not in his way of thinking.

The sciences, it strikes me, the social sciences especially, help us put the emphasis on considerations of *efficiency* – making the system work better – than, to repeat, the normative directions.

That goes back to one of your earlier remarks this morning. I don't separate this morning and this afternoon the way Don McDonald so easily does and I'm sure he doesn't either.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

But – I shouldn't kid around. I lost my thought.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Anyway, there is such focus on *efficiency*.

Oh, your earlier remark had to do with why liberals seem to be slipping behind. I have been into any number of political situations, policy situations – within this university, and if you want to talk budget later I can explain why things work the way they do – where the standard of *efficiency* overwhelms any consideration of what is good or not.

It is inconceivable, given the nature of social science knowledge, that we would be willing, in a major situation – institutional or in the political body – to do something that is good, in some generally acceptable sense, if there is a cost in terms of its effect on the GNP or on efficiency. It's inconceivable – and it's a question worth opening up. But as long as the social sci-

ences are science in the descriptive sense – in the statistical sense, things you can measure, things you can describe – we cannot break through that.

The problem for the liberal is that he or she cannot overcome this concern. This emphasis on the *efficient* – this argument – is always so successful.

Donald J. McDonald: All right. I wonder if we can join what you just said with a question that Herb Morris posed to Bob Bellah and that is how would a social scientist work if he or she were to be a public philosopher? How would she connect her partial knowledge with the whole synoptic? How would she synthesize things?

And maybe – are we talking about the need for a separate discipline here?

Robert N. Bellah: No!

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Donald J. McDonald: I raise that seriously because we have had philosophers here. We had Richard Rorty here a year or two ago when he said, "What are philosophers good for?"

Robert N. Bellah: Nothing, according to him.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Donald J. McDonald: And he admitted, frankly, that the philosophers aren't really concerned with the things we're talking about such as justice. They are maybe personally but not as philosophers. If you talk to social scientists, they may be personally involved and may have emotive reactions and visceral responses to injustice and inequality, etc., etc. but they can't see how they can hold on to that as scientists.

I'm serious, Bob. Maybe there's something – Walter Lippmann wrote a whole book on *The Public Philosophy* (1955). He said, "I think there is such a thing." But it's off the table now

in the university world. Maybe there should be. Where would this public philosophy take place if it isn't going to take place in the social sciences or in philosophy departments?

The press tries to do it. I must say the press does more for public discourse than the universities with their op-ed pages, their opinion sections. They're having more effect on public discourse than I see the universities having. I'm not talking about just our university. So maybe there is a need for a – I throw that out – a new discipline called public philosophy.

Stanley K. Sheinbaum: Milton Friedman in *Freedom and Capitalism* (1962), which I'm sure he would have preferred to have named *Freedom as a Function of Capitalism*, said something that I felt was very important: you do not get a genuine dialogue or argument over a discussion of the *means*. The social sciences can tell you what is possible, etc. You get the real discussion or discourse over the *ends*. I think that's a very valid comment.

Part of the problem – and, no, I don't think you need another discipline and at another table like this I would vote against it. What you have, as Bob Bellah points out in the book, is that the social sciences very consciously – aggressively – attempt to keep value considerations out of it. That's their problem. They become neutered in the area of policy.

Donald J. McDonald: But Bellah says they can't do social science without some value assumptions.

Stanley K. Sheinbaum: Going to the question of if the cat knows what he or she is doing, a lot of social scientists don't understand – Bellah talks about this – that their cultural conditioning builds in something that precludes their cherished objectivity. It's, in a sense, dishonest. Some are smart enough to know it but some accept the assumptions of mainstream social science without thinking about them.

Donald J. McDonald: Okay, Noah benShea, Sheila, Jeff, and Richard. Jeff's going to get a shot here. Okay, we'll have this round here and then Jeff gets – this better be good Jeff.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Noah benShea: My initial note was how do we achieve a prescription on a cleverly diagnosed malaise? That seems to me the question. Everyone agrees that the thoughts are insightful and the questions provocative. So how do we achieve this from here?

Listening to what you [Robert N. Bellah] had to say a few minutes ago, it struck me that when you gather a group of people whose approach, professionally, is reflection you have an operative theory that, given enough understanding, the understanding in itself will transform people to some extent.

It seems to me that when we're talking about transforming folks here that it is very seldom in my life where I have been transformed by understanding. Understanding offers me some steering on occasion inside of my transformations. But the subjects that – the chemicals whereby one goes through changes in their life oftentimes aren't brought up and oftentimes aren't very conversational for an academic, reflective setting. But when we're saying to people that we want you to see the world in another way and when we're saying to people that we want you to communicate with each other and oneself in another way, either a neo-ancient way, if you will, or a truly new way or a way in response to the world we live in. Then we're saying if we want to change the world, or transform folks as a response to a very perceptively diagnosed malaise, we're going to have to be talking about internal shiftings in people.

When we talk about how we're going to lay something over folks, really, I think, we would have to ask ourselves what would it take inside of us, as individuals, to communicate in another way, to have another world vision, if you will.

Those are areas where each of us could immediately begin to be about the work of it, without the setting up of another department, and perhaps in a not very sexy or public manner. But regardless of whatever else we do, that, finally, seems to me is what is going to have to be as a way to make it happen – and everything else is going to be a veneer. Either a veneer of understanding or a veneer of power that we think is going to shift the human kabuki or mask or psyche that presents to each other and to itself on daily basis.

Donald J. McDonald: Okay, Sheila.

Sheila McCoy: I think that the problem of course today is that your book could have been ten books and every chapter could've been a full-fledged discussion. Because what you sought to do was to provide us, as professionals – and, again, I think the book is primarily addressed to those of us who are middle class, upper middle class, professional, somewhat empowered people – and asking us to be aware of our society – and to do something about it. I think that's implicit in what you say to us at the end.

I'm a historian who is in a social science department. I don't spend a great deal of my time doing research. I spend it teaching. So then I ask myself what are you asking of me. It seems that what you're asking of me is that I raise the questions – and you did raise them earlier. I think it's true that, on the one hand, you appear to be saying there is a validity to pure discourse.

Now pure discourse can be misunderstood without some principles. Earlier on you say you rely on the biblical and civic republican traditions because both of them deal with the gap between the rich and the poor. Both of them say a society is not a wholesome society when there's too great a gap between the rich and the poor. Now that means that's an *end*. That's something we should be talking about.

I'm also deeply concerned about issues of injustice. Now maybe that's a word that means something to one set of people and something else to another. I don't know. I know what it means to me.

You are telling us to – if not in our research and in how and what we research, and what questions we ask in the research, and what we produce; and, frankly, in our teaching, because those of us who do teach, maybe we teach more [at the state university level], I don't know; you're asking us to – raise questions about injustice, poverty and wealth.

Because it seems to me we have to have some specific objective. There's isn't a magical transformation about discourse, except and unless you have a vision that understands that, and it's unspoken.

I feel one quarrel – it's not a quarrel. I so sympathize, I so understand, and I so want what you want. But I wish the vision was not so much a vision of recreating the past – the 19th Century university which was an elitist, narrow establishment.

Robert N. Bellah: No, no! We don't want to recreate it.

Sheila McCoy: No, you don't want to recreate it but you offer it as the ennobling vision. Let me put it that way.

I read that and I say what sort of university is that? But, more important, what vision did that university offer society? That vision was limited by the Christian men who peopled it. You also talk of Alexis de Tocqueville. What were the people like us doing then? The sources are all, again, political and intellectual leaders.

So I want what you want. But I think the next step is a vision that doesn't rely so much upon the cultural assumptions of a past time. I understand those assumptions. I really understand what you're talking about. When you talk about discourse I feel what you feel, I think.

But the vision has to be articulated without so much of calling up a past as good. The vision has to be articulated somewhat more in terms of present reality, not in some kind of science fiction futurist sense. But what was it about that past that could provide us with common agreement? What was it about that that will make discourse important? I think those things have to be articulated in a present, which is a highly relativist present.

Donald J. McDonald: Richard.

Richard Flacks: Well, I think a lot of what we're talking about here revolves around not so much a lot of mythological sorts of issues which could've been the focus but how can we imagine people in the university doing social science could actually be doing public philosophy.

I get the sense one of the reasons we have that problem is because there's a vacuum. The vacuum is not so much in our practice or in the nature of the university. It's that there's a vacuum outside the university. In other words, who would we be writing for? Who would we be talking to if we were to be engaged in this enterprise?

I may be wrong but it strikes me that in a number of other societies, in European countries, for example, this is not so much an issue because it's understood already, on the part of a lot of people working in social science, that they are linked directly to politics and the work they're doing is designed to support social democracy, for example. Not so much to win particular elections, although that may be an interest of a lot of people but in supporting a framework of thought that's represented in the politics.

So one of our problems is that we don't see a politics – we, the left in academia, me – out there that can readily adopt the findings or the philosophical materials that we might generate.

Now that's not true in the present or the recent past for people on the right, so to speak. They have a number of quite entrepreneurial intellectuals on the right – of whom Michael Novak

may be a good example – who have figured out that they can convince people in the business world that they need a philosophy, and that there're good reasons for them to invest in the creation of not only findings but ideas.

Well, we don't have that sense; at least I don't see it. I'm not speaking pessimistically. I'm saying that may be one clue to how to fulfill part of the program that you're talking about. That is, if you're interested in doing public philosophy, you also have to be involved in creating the public for which that philosophy stands.

Donald J. McDonald: Is there any place in the university world, to just take that world alone, where students are being introduced to issues that Bob Bellah talks about, that Walter Lippmann[27] used to write about every day – the great public matters? Where in the university are those things? Are they happening?

Richard Flacks: Well, I think they're happening in many classes. They're not happening as a formal part of the curriculum, perhaps, but they're happening in many, many parts of the university and around the country.

Robert N. Bellah: All over the place, and maybe that's the best thing we can expect at this moment.

Donald J. McDonald: I think, Jeff, that this might be the time and then Bob can respond not only to you but also to what he's heard previously.

Jeffrey D. Wallin[28]: Well, it's such a marvelous book. So thoughtful and humane in its treatment of what used to be called *the human things* that I feel almost as if I'm going to be

[27] Born to an American-German Jewish upper middle class family in New York City, in addition to being a journalist, Walter Lippmann (1889-1974) is the author of *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Good Society* (1937), among others books.
[28] Among other writings, Wallin is the author of *Rhetoric and American Statesmanship*, 1984.

churlish if I say anything against it. Yet, I want to praise it before I say something that may appear to go against it.

Certainly, the fact that it brings *ends* or *ends-oriented* language into public discourse again is something that far outweighs in my mind any objections to any particular parts of it. I think that's precisely what needs to be done and has needed to be done for a very long time. Others have tried it. This one seems as close to succeeding as perhaps since Lippmann's book.[29]

I'm also very pleased about what you said earlier in response to Lee Bramson's question about that fellow in chapter one. You said he was confused but happy. So if it's possible to be both happy and confused life is going to be much easier for many of us than I suspected.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Now once we're thinking in terms of *ends* or *ends-oriented* language, then the question becomes: What *ends*?

Because students hate it when you start speaking as if *means* have to be subordinated to *ends*. They'll say something like, "My God, that sounds like the ends justify the means." Well, of course, nothing else can justify the means except an end – which doesn't mean that all ends are good ends or that all ends justify all means.

But the critical question becomes what *end* are we tending toward?

There are a variety of possibilities that come up. The first one seems to be on everybody's lips these days and that's *community*. Somehow what we need is not the personal end of individual satisfaction but we need somehow to belong to something bigger than ourselves. That will be the end. That will take care of it, and we can subordinate ourselves to that.

But that creates certain problems, especially clear to someone like myself who a few years ago lived in a small community in a Southern state. I then came to the conclusion that the

[29] Walter Lippmann, *Essays in the Public Philosophy*, 1955.

best thing about communities in this country is that there's a lot of them. So you could leave one when it became too oppressive and go to another.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

In other words, a community doesn't give you any end. There are lots of communities and some of them are very nice and decent and some of them are rather nasty, mean-spirited and hardly the place where one would wish to educate one's children and live in oneself.

So the question of community, though important, begs the question of what end is in sight – just as the question of tradition always does. [If you say we need to critically drawn on] *tradition*, of course the question becomes *which tradition* are you talking about because there are so many traditions, not all of them quite so nice as some of the others.

If I think through two other traditions, in spite of what I just said, that supply answers to this question regarding ends, one is *reason*, one is *revelation*. Or to use a short-hand: Aristotle and Christianity – and that is a short-hand and I'm quite well aware of that.

Now Christianity poses this difficulty. To the degree that it's been public and really used in public as an end of life, it has not always comported with our ideas of individual rights and of individual liberties. Insofar as Christianity has become a public orthodoxy it has sometimes been much less tolerant than its adherents today would wish.

Moreover, there's even a deeper problem and that is the question of whether Christianity itself is not part of the problem that we're speaking about today. That is to say, if you're looking for the roots of individualism, one of those roots is Christianity. After all, take a look at *Pilgrim's Progress*. In *Pilgrim's Progress* what does Pilgrim do? He leaves his community and leaves his family and goes in search of the salvation of his *individual* soul. There's a way in which Christi-

anity pulls away from *community*. It may build a different kind of community but it's not necessarily compatible with public life of the sort that we're talking about now.

If we go to that other source – reason – and the reason I use Aristotle I'll come back to in a moment. I have a reason for that. It has to do with your chapter on social science. There, you've got somebody who will talk about ends.

Aristotle's *Politics* is preceded by the *Nicomachean Ethics*. So one can say that he certainly sees these things conjoined – the public and the private. Not to say that there's no difference between them. But as Aristotle says, it is a wonderful thing to be just, how much better would it be to be just to many people than merely to be just to one person. Better therefore to be a judge than merely a private person who can only exercise that virtue sporadically and cannot exercise it on a day-to-day basis affecting the lives of many. So for him there's a coherence between those two things.

Now it seems to me that most people around here would be uncomfortable with going to Christianity to solve the problem for obvious reasons. Many people would also be uncomfortable with a return to an Aristotelian political science. Because, for one thing, both imply a *hierarchy of values*. It seems to me one can't talk about ends without talking about hierarchies.

The real problem might be this: what you want to do in that book is get to some sort of liberal end, some sort of liberalism. But liberalism seems to be incompatible with a *hierarchy of ends* since a hierarchy of ends seems to be incompatible with *pluralism* as we know it.

Therefore my criticism is that your book is headed towards a sort of more enlightened, more decent, more comfortable liberalism. But in a certain sense the more that one looks at the premises of the argument the more one sees that it goes in another direction that was brought up earlier, maybe the direction of the neo-cons who talk about this all the time and who are not, evi-

dently, at least some of them, concerned about such things as the intrusion of religion into say school life and things of that sort. So that's part of it.

Now, there is another way of looking at this that tends to unite these two and I think you would have a problem with that too. That's the American tradition itself, which is a combination of reason and revelation.

We did have an example of public discourse in this country that lasted pretty much up to the Second World War, which has figures in it such as Madison, Hamilton, Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and, a name that will probably bring a smile to some faces, Coolidge.[30]

We always think of Coolidge, after Arthur Schlesinger's biography of course, as this mean-spirited fellow who thought that the only thing worth doing in life was making money. But if you ever read any of his speeches you see making money is always subordinate to other ends. Always – and very, very clearly so.

We have that tradition in American life and yet we all pull away from it. Why is that? Because for Lincoln, there's a connection between public and private morality, on the one hand, and a market economy, on the other, as one can see by reading his speeches on labor. Because he too was faced with a very hostile opponent to the capitalism of his time, and that was the socialism of the South in the writings of George Fitzhugh (1806-1881). He wrote that book with that unbelievable title, *Cannibals All!* (1857).

Then Coolidge of course presents public and private morality, again, within the context of capitalism – and the one thing everybody around here doesn't like is capitalism. At least if that's not true I was out of the room for the half-hour that someone said something good about capitalism.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

[30] Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933), a Republican lawyer from Vermont, served as the 30th U.S. President (1923-29).

Donald J. McDonald: We really opened up when you left.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Jeffrey D. Wallin: Snuck it right by me.

So it seems to me that we're limited from a return to that tradition, too, because somehow we don't like the idea of people pursuing wealth not as an end but as means to another end. So we're limited, on the one hand, from that practical sort of consideration of what a new public discourse might be. On the other hand, we're limited in thinking about what a different social science might be because a different social science, a Tocquevillian social science, would really be the architectonic political science. Tocqueville after all is a political scientist as well as a sociologist of sorts. In both of those cases we seem to have drawn back and I just wonder about your comments on that.

Robert N. Bellah: Well, Jeff, you've raised some of the deepest questions which bear on the book and I don't think that I can possibly begin to deal with them.

On the question of *community* I would point out that one of the most perceptive reviews that we got of the book was Christopher Lasch's review in *In These Times*[31] who warned: do not read this book as a celebration of traditional *gemeinschaft*. This is not a book that bewails individualism and calls for a return to the small face-to-face community. This book is calling for a sense of our public life in a large, complex society as an answer to our problems rather than to community in that nostalgic sense.

That is right, as far as I'm concerned. *Community* itself certainly is not an unmitigated good. It has to be subject to normative evaluation. The same thing is true with *tradition*.

[31] Christopher Lasch, "The Search for Meaning in a Narcissistic Age," *In These Times*, June 26-July 9, 1985, pp. 18-19.

We indicate in the book fairly clearly what parts of tradition, and how, we think speak to us, and what don't. So we're not affirming tradition for the sake of tradition but only tradition so far as in the reflective process of open discussion we can retrieve those parts of tradition that speak to us.

I think that the *liberalism* question is quite crucial. There, I think the authors of *Habits of the Heart* are faced with a very complicated position. Because, on the one hand, we clearly, like all Americans, embrace pluralism, tolerance and all those good liberal things.

On the other hand, I think we believe that liberalism – not contemporary political liberalism but classical liberalism, the notion of a minimal state and a minimal procedural consensus, leaving virtually everything to free choice – is in the first place not descriptive of our society, that in fact, there is a thicker consensus than our liberal self-interpretation would imply.

The second point is no society could exist on the basis of classical liberalism. Classical liberalism implies a thinness of consensus which, while theoretically possible, is performatively impossible.

So, insofar as liberalism in that sense – remember, I'm not talking about contemporary politics; I'm talking about a liberalism which would be exemplified by Ronald Reagan among others – that notion of an enormous realm given over to individual freedom and a very minimal role to anything else has served ideologically in many positive ways to criticize authoritarianism and various oppressive structures.

It is not, however, a viable basis for any actual society. A more substantive agreement on ends is necessary. I would argue this on sociological grounds as well as ethical grounds. The problem then is how do we get that consensus. Not through the presumption that it's already there unexamined but through public discourse. That's what we're talking about and of course

that has to occur in an institutional structure which allows for genuine openness and participation.

So finally let me just sum up by saying the appendix to the book didn't get published without the book. We didn't just call for public philosophy. I would argue we *did* public philosophy. The evidence that we did it is the response to the book.

For one thing the University of California Press did not know how to deal with a book that kept selling out every two or three weeks. The innate caution of a publisher, where the normal publication never exceeds 1500 copies, to publish enough copies to keep the book in the bookstore – I mean we are now over 50,000 copies in print and the UC Press is still baffled by that. The book is about to be brought out in paperback the first printing of which is 50,000 copies. I don't think that proves anything except obviously we've moved beyond the academic ghetto.

In terms of what means more to me – the specific response to the book – I have had people in public life such as county supervisors in California, mayors of middle-sized towns, and superintendents of education say this book helped me understand why I've taken so much *shit* and stayed in this kind of job and *thank you* because it gives me some arguments.

Dialogue participants and audience: laughter.

Robert N. Bellah: The superintendent of schools in Eugene, Oregon, Margaret Nichols, said, "Because of your book I can handle much better the pressure on me that *only* computer literacy and math scores are important in the schools. I can talk about character and citizenship and you've helped me do it."

Well, my God, to me that's what the book was about. If it's doing that even for one person out there, and it seems to be doing it for quite a few, it has succeeded in the task that I have in mind.

Besides people in public life, it clearly has been used by people in all kinds of voluntary associations, public service institutions and churches who are thinking about these questions and have used the book not only as individuals to encourage them in the privacy of their homes but also as a basis for study texts in their organizations, which again tells me something about what the book is doing out there. Harry Boyte in Minnesota, who is concerned with citizen movements, told me that this book is all over the place in those circles.

Also, however, not to ignore the fact that this book has had an extraordinary response within the university precisely in the way that I call for in the appendix: it has transcended disciplines. *The Journal of Politics* has devoted a large part of its whole book review section to six reviews by prominent political scientists. That is not normal treatment of sociologists by political science. I mean that's a pretty distinguished journal. Religious studies people have obviously responded to the book. That's perhaps not surprising. Anthropologists – many anthropologists tell me this book is anthropology. Even philosophy – perhaps not Harvard and the famous places but at Boston College, at Ripon College in Wisconsin – at a variety of schools the philosophy department has a symposium on *Habits of the Heart*, and often invites Bill Sullivan who has a philosophy Ph.D. So there's still that much disciplinary loyalty.

But, again, what I'm trying to suggest is that we didn't just talk about doing something transdisciplinary, we did it. We were able to write a book that people in a variety of spheres could read.

Now we've also gotten flak about that. One of the great ironies to me is the very important review we got in the primary journal of our own discipline, *Contemporary Sociology*. Joseph Gusfield, in a basically sympathetic and yet critical review, finally ends up telling us, "Really, what you're doing is moral philosophy and you're only using your sociology to illustrate it." The only thing I would say to Joe Gusfield is you haven't read many books in moral philosophy recently. If you think they're like this, they're not. What Joe was not seeing is that this book doesn't fit. It isn't sociology in the sense that Joe does sociology, even though he is one of the closest to us. But it damn sure isn't moral philosophy as that's done in American philosophy departments today.

So, again, I think the best argument for what we're trying to do is the fact that we at least have crossed the boundaries that seem relatively hard to cross in American life – both academic and nonacademic – and started a conversation. Whether it goes anywhere is of course open, contestable and so on. But on the first point I think we've not just talked about it we've done it.

Thank you.

Dialogue participants and audience: Applause.