



Book Reviews

Rasmussen , Douglas B. and Douglas J. Den Uyl. *Norms of Liberty: A Perfectionist Basis for Non-Perfectionist Politics*. University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2005. 358 pp. \$25.00 paperback.

Norms of Liberty is the third book by Douglas Rasmussen and Douglas Den Uyl in which together they offer an Aristotelian argument in defense of political liberalism. For those familiar with the earlier work of Rasmussen and Den Uyl, especially *Liberty and Nature* (1991) and *Liberalism Defended* (1998), their newest book will be a welcome extension. They do not change course. Instead, their argument is deepened and more detailed. *Norms of Liberty* is a mature neo-Aristotelian defense of limited government and a market economy.

This is an important argument for political philosophers engaged in fundamental questions about a free society that respects human dignity while allowing space for communities of virtue. *Norms of Liberty* should be of special interest to thinkers interested in the social teaching of the Church. Rasmussen and Den Uyl want an ancient ethic of virtue to guide individual human conduct, and they want to provide a moral and metaphysical argument for those with political and legal power to be committed to human flourishing and hence to defend individual (negative) rights.

Rasmussen and Den Uyl make their argument in philosophical terms. Although they rely heavily on Aristotle and the virtue tradition, there is little in the way of explicit hints of the Catholic tradition throughout their work. Still, this is an argument made by thinkers deeply influenced by Catholic habits of thought. In a sense, it is a Catholic defense of the American experiment in ordered liberty.

While Rasmussen and Den Uyl don't mention church documents, their argument can be read as confirming and extending a certain interpretation of *Gaudium et Spes*, *Dignitatis Humanae*, and *Centesimus Annus*. In broad terms, they are in the tradition of John Courtney Murray, S.J. They don't quite put it this way, but they end up defending a society where the family and the Church can play an important role in promoting the life of virtue while the governmental sphere (democratic in character) and the economic sphere (based on the market) proceed in terms of basic human (negative) rights. As thinkers who came of age after the Second Vatican Council, it seems to me they want to affirm the "joys and the hopes" of modern democracy (with its emphasis on individual rights and its recognition that every citizen is endowed with the capacity for self-direction) while avoiding the "griefs and anxieties" that the culture of endless rights has brought us, especially the tendency to neuter moral language, producing a culture of

convenience that lacks the seedbeds of virtue needed to promote a self-governing people concerned with virtuous self-determination and honest economic exchanges. Rasmussen and Den Uyl want to retrieve the ancient language of virtue and give it a place in the culture, but not a place where the federal government acts like royalty in a paternalistic manner that violates individuals' abilities to make responsible decisions.

Rasmussen and Den Uyl are driven by one central question: How can we establish a political/legal order that in principle does not require the human flourishing of any person or group to be given structured preference over that of any other? They are political liberals in the sense that they want the sphere of government to protect negative rights without privileging any particular conception of the good. But they recognize that liberalism is in crisis and that virtually every effort to defend liberalism has failed.

With their earlier two books, Rasmussen and Den Uyl carved out a distinctive place as defenders of political liberalism: they base their defense on Aristotle. This book extends their earlier argument. The main novelty in this book is their deepened articulation of the claim that individual rights are "metanormative." "Individual rights are a unique concept that cannot be reduced to other ethical concepts . . . they are not needed in order to know the nature of human flourishing or virtue . . . Rather, individual rights are needed to solve a problem that is uniquely social, political, and legal" (78). Metanorms are "norms of liberty" that require those with political and legal power to respect individual rights.

Why should those with political and legal power respect individual rights? Most political liberals provide an answer based on our lack of knowledge: we don't really know what's best for someone else, so rulers have no business telling others how to live; rulers can intervene only when one citizen is a threat to the liberty of another. Rasmussen and Den Uyl reject that line of reasoning. Instead, they argue that those with political and legal power should respect individual rights because human beings, by their very nature, seek happiness and human flourishing, and self-direction is a necessary condition for human flourishing. Those with political and legal power are required to prevent encroachments upon the condition in which human flourishing can exist.

To support their view, Rasmussen and Den Uyl present an intricate argument (with 58 steps), schematized from pp. 269-83. The argument moves from a positive affirmation of an ethic that flows from human nature to the claim that governments should respect the human need for self-direction.

While I'm deeply sympathetic with the basic of project Rasmussen and Den Uyl, let me outline three areas of concern.

First, it is not at all clear to me how emphasizing liberty as a “metanorm” would play out with regard to the life issues. Since the question of how we treat human life at its fragile beginning and ending stages is the greatest moral question of our time, I would have liked to have seen Rasmussen and Den Uyl do more to show how their way of understanding liberty would help us think through the issue of government involvement in the human rights questions related to abortion, euthanasia, and stem-cell research, along with the competing liberty claims involved. Who is included in the community that deserves the state’s protection? How do we adjudicate disputes about competing claims to liberty, such as the woman’s claim to choice with the unborn child’s interest in not being destroyed?

Second, I would have liked a more detailed treatment of the principle of subsidiarity. Doesn’t a commitment to human flourishing lead to the view that the government sometimes can play a positive role in helping to support intermediary social groups without destroying or absorbing the self-direction of smaller groups or individuals? Too often, the social picture presented by Rasmussen and Den Uyl seems to focus solely on individuals and the state. Since an ethic of virtue is tied in with communities of virtue—intermediary social associations committed to the well-being of each member as an individual person—doesn’t the state sometimes have an obligation to play a subsidiary role in supporting intermediary groups? And doesn’t that mean, at least sometimes, more than the protection of negative rights?

Finally, although *Norms of Liberty* begins with a paragraph on Alasdair MacIntyre, I don’t think MacIntyre would be convinced by their 58-step argument. Although Rasmussen and Den Uyl claim their argument is neo-Aristotelian, it seems they accept a basically modern way of proceeding, arguing from and for a rational foundation rather than proceeding from the vantage point of an engaged practitioner and then aiming to dig down to the roots, as Aristotle does. A more convincing argument, I think, would begin with the institutions of liberalism—especially democratic government and the market economy—and show that, contra MacIntyre, these institutions are social practices in which we find ourselves already participants, and that these are practices of a distinctive type. As such, they have distinctive goods internal to their practices. I think it would have been helpful to argue that we can accept these modern social practices (and the goods internal to them) without endorsing the corrosive effects of the culture of nihilism and consumerism. But that’s a different kind of argument. The careful and detailed thinking presented in *Norms of Liberty* is a helpful contribution to political philosophy; I would like to see it complemented

by both a practice-based argument and concrete examples of communities of virtue that flourish within the practice of a political/legal order based on norms of liberty.

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Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. 270 pp. \$24.95 hardcover.

From the professor of History and Religious Studies at Penn State and author of *Pedophiles and Priests* comes this fascinating study on the future of Christianity in our world. While it is fashionable for believers to lament the loss of faith of the “post-Christian” nations of Europe and the other First World nations, Jenkins instead points to the explosive growth of Christianity in the poorer nations of the Third World to give a more realistic and hopeful view of the future of Christianity. On the way, he challenges us to look at the historical spread of Christianity with far different eyes, offering an analysis that is part of a recent trend of reassessment of where Christianity has been, and where it is going.

Christianity has long been associated almost wholly with Christendom; that is to say, the political and social entity of Europe. When one thinks of the spread of Christianity in these terms, one thinks of the Crusades, of Spanish conquistadors in the New World, and of the mercantilists and imperialists of half a dozen European nations, who spread their faith along with their European hegemony. The time has come, Jenkins notes, for us to reassess this view of where Christianity came from, and where it is going. The reality is that, from its very beginnings, Christianity was first and foremost a Middle Eastern, African, and Asian phenomenon. In its first few centuries, despite communities growing in what would later be Europe, Christianity’s roots and focus always lay in the “East.” From the development of Christian theological thought, to the creation of institutions such as Christian monasticism, places like Egypt, Syria, and North Africa were far more important than anywhere in Europe. Jenkins is at pains to remind the reader that even events such as the fall of Rome and the subsequent advance of Islam into the heartland of Christianity were not as transforming as we so often assume. Even though under Islamic rule,

places such as Egypt, Palestine, and Anatolia retained large and influential Christian communities—even majorities—for many centuries. Some of these communities, though much-reduced, are still present—witness the former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, a Coptic Christian from Egypt, as an example. Furthermore, even in places which fell under European hegemony from the 15th century onward (and emerged from it in the 19th and 20th centuries), Christianity is now far from being treated as the unwelcome foreign imposition so many modern liberals paint it out to be. Rather, it is frequently an influential, and very welcome, part of daily life. All in all, world-wide Christianity has never been coterminous with a European “Christendom,” and Jenkins’ book is worth reading on this theme alone.

Proceeding from this premise, Jenkins surveys what he thinks the likely future of Christianity will be. He ably contrasts the moribund church attendance figures and plummeting birth rates of the first Christendom, Europe, with the large church attendance figures and soaring birthrates of what he views as the “next Christendom”: Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. Honest demographics and sociology leave no room for doubt: while Christianity is dying out in the First World, it is exploding in the Third. Indeed, Jenkins believes that the truly influential religious force of the 21st century will not be Islam, as so many pundits assume, but rather Christianity, and that the new world polarity will not be East/West, but rather North/South.

What will be the nature of Christianity in this “next Christendom?” Very different from that in Europe and America, and different in a way that is likely to cause problems in the relationship of co-religionists in both regions. First-World Christianity is by and large wealthy, liberal, rationalist, and sedate. By contrast, Third-World Christianity is poor, conservative, supernaturalist, and vibrant, in a way that is often shocking to First-World sensibilities. Third-World Christianity leans very much towards the charismatic, in both its devotions and its practices. It features ecstatic worship, prophetic visions, and apocalyptic conceptions. In particular, it is very much focused on the supernatural world, on the realities of demons and sorcery, and on the need for exorcisms and faith healings. In other matters, though, it is deeply conservative theologically, rejecting outright such liberal touchstones as abortion, feminism, homosexual rights, and even, at times, contraceptives. Faced with such realities, Jenkins concludes that “brown” Christianity will come to outpace “white” Christianity, and that the locus of Christianity will shift to the “next Christendom” of the South. Indeed, in some ways Christianity has come full circle, and has its strongest appeal amongst poor, struggling people

in need of healing they cannot afford and a consolation that the world cannot give them—in short, the sort of people to whom Christianity appealed the first time around, in the days of the New Testament.

The Next Christendom is not a work of triumphalism, though. Jenkins is at pains to point out that the differences in practice and styles of worship are already causing problems in the relations between “old Christendom” and “next Christendom” believers, as we have already seen in the controversies over ordained homosexuals in the Anglican communion, with the spectacle of Anglican communities in England placing themselves under the jurisdiction of African bishops to avoid the problem! Furthermore, Jenkins does not minimize the dangers that Islam currently poses and will continue to pose to Christians in the “next Christendom”—Islam is going through one of its militant and expansionistic phases, and the deaths of large numbers of Christians at Muslim hands (one of the most under-reported facts in the modern media) are a reality that will only get worse in time. Then there is the situation of immigration to consider: Third-World religious folk, Muslim and Christian, have been emigrating to dying First-World nations in large numbers, bringing their frequently-unwelcome beliefs with them. *The Next Christendom* was written before last year’s large-scale Muslim riots in France and Australia, and First-World nations are not considering that the only force vigorous enough to resist an imported Islam may be an imported Third-World Christianity. Still, while *The Next Christendom* is not a triumphalistic work, it will, for the right reader, be a great occasion for reflection and much hope. While I am a post-Vatican II Catholic, I am still old enough to remember collections for the missions, and the nuns saying that, one day, priests from those mission lands would come to serve us. When I reflect on the fact that, of the three priests under my supervision at work, one is from Argentina and one from Uganda, I have daily proof of how right Jenkins is. Some years ago, a friend in Britain lamented living in a “post-Christian” society. I took him to task: no age is “post-Christian”; rather, we are living in a “post-Christendom” society, but even in that I was wrong, for as Jenkins notes, the next Christendom is on its way.

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Fornieri, Joseph. R. *Abraham Lincoln's Political Faith*. DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005. 218 pp. \$38.00 hardcover.

Joseph R. Fornieri's *Abraham Lincoln's Political Faith* is a welcome contribution to the field of political theory. It offers a thoughtful examination of Lincoln's political philosophy, a philosophy founded upon American democratic and religious traditions.

Fornieri states that "Lincoln viewed the politics of the Civil War era in terms of civil theology" and "interpreted the conflict over slavery as a struggle between rival moral justifications of the American regime competing for public authoritativeness" (3). He argues that Lincoln's "defense of democracy was informed by a transcendent standard. In his view, a legitimate republican government was bound to and limited by the universal moral law revealed by God in the Bible, known through human reason, and promulgated by the Declaration" (5). Fornieri cautions the reader that "Lincoln's account of the American political order was formulated not as an abstract doctrine but as a concrete historical response to the rival civil theologies or 'political faiths' of proslavery theology, popular sovereignty, and radical abolitionism that competed to shape the public mind during the Civil War era" (6). Fornieri characterizes Lincoln's political thought as "biblical republicanism" because it combined the biblical tradition of Judeo-Christianity with the American republican tradition of self-government. Consequently, divine revelation and reason worked together to recommit the Union to the Declaration of Independence and the end of slavery.

"Lincoln's biblical republicanism can be analyzed further in terms of four related dimensions: its substance (public opinion); its agent (the cultural elite); its form (biblical republicanism); and its end (liberty and Union)" (13). Fornieri argues that the significance of public opinion in Lincoln's thought explains why Lincoln found popular sovereignty and proslavery theology "particularly insidious" (15). The cultural elites, including the self-serving proslavery clergy, Stephen A. Douglas, and the imprudent radical abolitionists tried to shape public opinion in ways destructive to free government and the Union which secured it, and so were particularly at fault. Fornieri contends that Lincoln provides an ultimate moral justification for free labor that combines biblical teaching with the republican principle of consent. "In Lincoln's civil theology, the political teachings of American republicanism are revealed in the Bible and reinforced through natural reason" (20). The final dimension of Lincoln's biblical republicanism is

the public good which Lincoln associated with the Declaration of Independence and its teaching that a just regime must secure natural rights. “Lincoln’s conception of liberty and Union combined a moral obligation to the Declaration with a legal obligation to the Constitution” (21).

Fornieri is equally critical of modern interpreters who focus on Lincoln’s personal psychological history to understand his politics. Fornieri’s account of Lincoln offers an alternative to Straussian interpretations. He distinguishes himself from Straussian arguments in giving serious consideration to Lincoln’s biblical faith. Fornieri also argues against those southern conservatives, such as M. E. Bradford and Willmoore Kendall, who see in Lincoln a dangerous “millenarian heresy” which “sanctified the state as a sacred object of veneration” (97). Fornieri thus draws together reason, revelation, and republicanism “as related ways of knowing,” which “reinforce one another in illuminating the same moral and political truths” (37). Fornieri makes a convincing argument by carefully analyzing Lincoln’s public and private writings. His thorough analysis of Lincoln’s use of biblical language is one of the most important contributions of his book. He contends that “In sum, Lincoln used biblical language in at least five different ways: (1) theologically to ponder God’s providential role in order and history; (2) civil theologically, as a transcendent rule and measure to judge public life; (3) evocatively, for stylistic purposes and rhetorical emphasis; (4) allegorically, to clarify or didactically to convey a respective political teaching by means of biblical illustrations; (5) and existentially, as a meditative unfolding of his personal experience of biblical faith” (38). Thereby, those interpretations which fail to note the various uses of biblical language are distorted. For example, the Straussian account of Lincoln’s use of biblical writings reduces it to only civil theology. Similarly, the failure to note Lincoln’s prudence and use of foundational American documents leads to the distortion of the southern conservatives who make Lincoln an idealistic crusader. “While Lincoln may have viewed the Bible as the preeminent source of wisdom...he clearly did not view it as *the sole and exclusive* source of moral guidance in politics” (35). “Lincoln envisioned a harmony between faith and reason that mutually confirmed the authoritative nature of the nation’s founding creed,” the Declaration of Independence (36). Fornieri draws comparisons between Lincoln, Washington, and Jefferson showing Lincoln’s continuation and extension of the founders’ republican principles.

Fornieri also offers a convincing challenge to those who focus on the Lyceum Address of 1838 as a reflection of Lincoln’s civil

theology. He argues that “the Peoria Address of 1854 represents the most mature and profound expression of Lincoln’s biblical republicanism” (104). Similarly, he offers a different perspective on Lincoln’s Springfield law partner, William Herndon. Fornieri puts Herndon’s statements regarding Lincoln’s religious belief in context. “In sum, Herndon ‘was driven to overstatement’ by the apotheosis of Lincoln and by hagiographers who sought to baptize the president as a member of their congregation” (53). Fornieri offers us a fresh look at old ground which provides a more coherent understanding of the political philosophy of Abraham Lincoln.

Joseph R. Fornieri has given us a thoughtful and well argued account of Lincoln’s political faith that should enhance conversations about religion and politics.

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Smith, Wesley J. *Forced Exit: The Slippery Slope from Assisted Suicide to Legalized Murder*. Dallas, Texas: Spence Publishing, 2003. 364 pp. \$17.95 softcover.

Absorbing Wesley J. Smith’s *Forced Exit: The Slippery Slope from Assisted Suicide to Legalized Murder* is an education, accessible to professionals and laypersons, in the facts of the current legal battle surrounding physician assisted suicide (PAS) and euthanasia. Before turning to Smith’s argument, a list of the highlights could be helpful to a prospective reader:

- The legal history and current situation in Holland, which is the most strident pro-euthanasia country in the world (Chapter 4).
- An easy to follow account of the highly successful euthanasia movement in pre-war Germany and how it facilitated the move to the concentration camps (84-97).

- The inner workings of HMOs and why their policies promote the euthanasia movement (183-89).
- The differences between seemingly daunting legal realities such as “living wills” and “durable power of attorney,” and advice on how to utilize these to prepare legally for one’s own end of life (301-304).
- Common sense advice on how health care delivery in the United States could be reasonably altered to care more properly for the weak and dying (300-10).
- Concise refutations of the ten most common sound bites utilized by the pro-death movement (Chapter 8).
- An understanding of death as a human act which can be performed well, and participated in well by those who love the dying person (311-15).

In addition to the concise presentation of the facts, countless examples—many taken from the author’s own legal practice defending the weak—are given to support every point. Any reader of this book ought to brace himself for a walk through a series of heart-wrenching true stories of what can only be accurately described as murder. Yet, many of the stories have happy endings, and the reader will also come away with a sense that genuine compassion still exists and with a very real hope that it can win the day—if individuals act.

Smith begins by contrasting the two radically opposed ethical principles underlying the euthanasia debate: the equality-of-human-life-ethic and the quality-of-life-ethic (82). The equality-of-human-life-ethic holds that all human persons have an equal worth which is untouched by debilitating factors. Thus, no person ought ever to be killed as this is a violation of that worth. The quality-of-life-ethic, on the other hand, holds that the worth of a human fluctuates, and it can fluctuate to a level at which it becomes morally acceptable to kill such a person. Smith points out that Peter Singer holds the position that although still human, a member of our species who has gone below a certain level of cognitive ability is no longer a person, and may be killed (25). Smith convincingly shows that the quality-of-life-ethic leads down a slippery slope to large-scale disaster, and thus “demonstrates the grave importance of adhering to the equality-of-human-life-ethic” (91). He points out that centuries-long tradition has maintained that all human persons have equal rights regardless of mental capacities (45).

Let us look now at three developments of the main theme of Smith's book: the slippery slope. The first is his discussion of the euthanasia movement in pre-war Germany which paved the way to the concentration camps. Smith holds that the concentration camps of World War II could never occur in America, yet he speculates about where the legalization of PAS could lead. He suggests the possibility that members of oppressed minorities may be permitted to request assisted suicide because they can no longer bear to live as victims of injustice (163). While this may sound outlandish now, the logic is simple enough: the core principle of PAS is that the patient "requests" to be killed on the basis of "suffering which is felt to be unbearable." Such requests are already being granted for AIDS patients, MS patients, and quadriplegics (184). That basic principle of people choosing to be killed because they suffer could easily be extended; and I agree with Smith that if PAS and euthanasia are legalized, it will be—in ways we may not yet have imagined.

Smith develops a second form of the slippery slope reality by showing the link between money and the inner workings of the HMO system, the result of which is increased pressure for the legalization of euthanasia and PAS. The logic here is that under the HMO system doctors earn their living not by providing services, but by cutting costs; and cost control and killing patients go hand-in-hand (183–89). Yet, Smith is not a libertarian free-market man who thinks that profit increases on the part of doctors will solve all problems. Rather, he wants the patients—vulnerable human persons who are expensive to care for—to be the primary object of health care. He simply points out that the existing set-up is in open violation of this goal, represents a classic slippery slope scenario, and then offers practical remedies for our current health care crisis (304-307).

A third slippery slope relates to the Oregon Death with Dignity Act (Measure 16), the first law in modern history legalizing PAS, which passed in 1994. In bullet point format, Smith describes the nine "safeguards" written into the Act and then systematically shows how in actual medical practice and court proceedings, each safeguard was reduced to a "joke." Indeed, after describing in unsettling detail a few of the cases, he points out, utilizing statistics from "The Fourth Annual Report on Oregon's Death with Dignity Act" of the Oregon Health Department, that not one of the cases of assisted suicide during the first four years of the law's passage met the safeguard guidelines (147-61).

Closely tied to the slippery slope in actual practice is the role of the mass media in the debate over euthanasia: it is one-sidedly in its favor. Smith's treatment of this element is cathartic for those who want

the press bias to be revealed. He picks apart their documentaries on euthanasia and PAS almost scene by scene, uncovering hidden motives and unmasking a complete lack of emotional objectivity—one reporter participated in coercing a person to ask to be killed and was present when, as the man struggled for his life after taking poison, another person held his flailing arms down until he died: the reporter did nothing, and, as one would expect, felt nothing (21-22). He also reveals the calculated methods of the media to create a false emotionalism in order to cause a public shift in favor of PAS and euthanasia.

The book highlights the importance of genuine emotions, and one touching aspect is Smith's sharing of his own stories. My favorite is his description of his fear of visiting a young client, Sally, he was to defend in court. He describes how, upon meeting her, he saw right through her terrible disfigurement, how she appeared beautiful, and how his "heart opened like a blossom unfolding." Smith held her hand and, for some unknown reason, began to sing Dean Martin's "Everybody loves somebody sometime." He spent an entire hour holding her hand and singing to her! Sally's eyes focused on him, she smiled and eventually some nurses entered, sang a little with him and cried (45).

Throughout Smith's book it is perfectly clear that he is not only against mass killing, but also against the abandonment and killing of each individual person who is in such danger. Yet, I would like to offer an explicit expression of this point that is implicitly quite strong in his book: *To kill or abandon one single human person is, in a certain sense, just as horrible as killing or abandoning thousands.* Since persons are irreplaceable, killing one of them represents an infinite loss, and so killing many is not a "greater" evil in a qualitative sense, such that when you reach a certain number (say 100,000) only then does morality kick in; rather, killing many persons should be understood as a "greater" evil in a different sense, namely, that it is a repeating many times over of an already infinite crime of violating a unique and precious person.¹ Only if the foundational point that not even one single person should ever be abandoned or killed is explicitly set forth and explained, can the argument be won. For, without this, the pro-euthanasia activist will spend his time trying to find guidelines that really work: since all he has been given is an argument against mass killing, not killing as such.

It is a well-known fact that a request to be killed is in actuality a plea for help. It is a plea for two basic things: to be loved and to have pain relief, and it is well known because as soon as these people feel loved or have their pain managed, they no longer ask to be killed. Pain is the trump card used by pro-euthanasia activists to promote their cause. Smith admits that the lack of proper pain management is an unconscionable epidemic in the world of high-tech health care,

explaining that we have the ability to eliminate this reason for the request to be killed (179-80).

We have the ability to eliminate the other reason for the request to be killed, and it is not a high-tech solution, but a decision: will we succumb to the obstacles and temptations that push us towards the easy way of killing those who suffer, or will we recognize that loving each person is an infinitely higher value than cost management and perfect physical health? As Smith rightly concludes: “The choice is ours. So will be the society we create.”

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1. The uniqueness of persons, which reveals their absolute inviolability and which he calls their “incommunicability,” has been written about recently with great originality and philosophical depth by John Crosby. See his *The Selfhood of the Human Person* (Catholic University of America Press, 1996), especially chapter 2, and his *Personalist Papers* (Catholic University of America Press, 2004) especially chapter 1. I have attempted a summary of Crosby’s insights and then set them squarely against Peter Singer’s concept of person here: Peter J. Colosi, “The Intrinsic Worth of Persons: Revisiting Peter Singer and his Critics,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 18.

Roback Morse, Jennifer. *Smart Sex: Finding Life-Long Love in a Hook-Up World*. Dallas, Texas: Spence Publishing, 2005. 260 pp. \$27.95 hardcover.

Catholic novelist, Walker Percy, once made fun of the self-help genre by giving one of his books the playful title: *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book*. Creating a kind of “mock” self-help book designed to encourage us to think about who we are, rather than how we can be more beautiful, successful, thin, and confident, Percy designed a different kind of self-help book, meant to provoke rather than to reassure. Always the Catholic, Percy simply wanted to remind us that life is difficult as we are all “Strangers in a Strange Land.” But, he also wanted to tell us that life is a mystery and love is a delight, and that God is the infinite mystery and the infinite delight.

It is in this spirit that Hoover Institution Research Fellow and academic economist, Jennifer Roback Morse, offers us her own version of a self-help book in *Smart Sex*. As with all self-help books, Morse offers a promise to help us “Find Life-Long Love in a Hook-up World.” But, unlike most self-help books with “sex” in the title, Morse offers no suggestions on how to choose the perfect lover, or how to improve our lovemaking techniques. Instead of reassuring us that we too can find the perfect mate, or have the perfect marriage, she reminds us that none of us are perfect in an imperfect world. And, those who seek such perfection in a mate are doomed. While Morse offers some practical suggestions on how to deal with feelings and communication, and she begins the book with the promise that *Smart Sex* “is about how and why to stay married,” the real focus of *Smart Sex* is much deeper. Early in her book, Morse advises us that “the self help books aren’t going to be enough because they deal with the superficial symptoms of much deeper problems.” Instead of techniques, Morse focuses on the nature and meaning of sex and marriage. Instead of easy answers, Morse explodes some of modern society’s most cherished and destructive myths. She argues that reproductive freedom is an illusion, that recreational sex isn’t really fun, and sex is neither morally neutral nor private. Of course, this has not stopped amazon.com from suggesting on the *Smart Sex* purchasing page that customers interested in this title would be interested in a link that promises to help readers “Hook up with more Women through doubleyourdating.com.”

Dr. Morse would be amused by such a site because she knows that if “hooking up” with more women, or with more men, were the answer, people with many sex partners would be the happiest people of all. But they are not. Morse knows that the idea of sexual freedom has

reduced sex to a commodity—and has left people more empty than before. Ever the economist, Morse provides evidence that what she calls “consumer sex” has left millions of people miserable: “Not only is recreational sex no fun, but consumer sex is profoundly anti-social . . . The sexual revolution has retarded people’s ability to create community life and to relate to one another.” Even worse, our modern sexual moral code does not cultivate an attitude of respect for others. Instead, “our modern sexual ways have led us to believe that we are entitled to use people.”

Morse suggests that the “date rape crisis” that continues to plague many college campuses is a direct result of the problems that have been wrought by recreational sex. While date rape has become a politicized issue that is about power as well as sex, Morse asks the more important question of “why” date rape has become so politicized. She believes that “Date rape points to one of the underlying problems with the notion that all voluntary sexual encounters are morally acceptable Since wrong and right, good and bad are no longer useable terms in our post-moral, post-modern world, we don’t have many adjectives to describe a negative sexual encounter.” The date rape crisis tells us all something we should have known all along—sex is not simple, sex is not everywhere a good. Instead, Morse suggests that we must “ask ourselves what circumstances and conditions make sex a good or prevent it from being a good.” We should have known that using people and being used by others can only lead to negative outcomes.

Morse points out that we most successfully pursue happiness by being in relationships with others. We find our true happiness only by giving ourselves to others and being able to receive others as gifts to us. In a chapter entitled “The Law of the Gift,” Morse suggests that we look at our lives as gifts to us, and to look at other people’s lives as gifts to themselves, and ultimately to us as well. As Natural Law and Christian revelation teaches us, it is always wrong to view people as means instead of ends. We will always find our deepest happiness when we give ourselves to others—and when we are receptive to the gifts of others. “In other words, a life without self-giving love would not be a truly happy or satisfying life, no matter how many other accomplishments, achievements, or possessions the person might accumulate.”

Dr. Morse has done a favor for all of us in this book because she offers us two things: information and hope. Like all good self-help books, the early chapters help us understand why marriage matters—not just to the individual, but also to the rest of the world. These early chapters provide the foundation for the concluding chapters on human

nature, sociobiology, and revelation. It is a hopeful book because Morse promises us that if we begin to really pay attention to what we are doing, we can improve our lives. For Morse, the vision of the free society must be humanized. We can humanize our lives by realizing how dependent we are on each other—we all must matter to someone.

For those of us who usually recoil at the prospect of reading a self-help book, I can only suggest that this book is not *really* a self-help book in the way that “How to Hook-up with More Women” is a self-help book. *Smart Sex* is smart enough to know that no book can provide the easy answers that can make us happy. Still, Jennifer Morse has generously provided help by beginning to light the path toward happiness and fulfillment through living as if life really were a gift from God.

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Ratzinger, Joseph. *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*. San Francisco, California: Ignatius Press, 2002. 460 pp. \$19.95 softcover.

In *God and the World*, German journalist Peter Seewald interviews the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, on the inscrutable mysteries of the Catholic faith. The book was first published in German in 2000 and subsequently translated into English. During his years as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Ratzinger granted three in-depth interviews that were subsequently published as books. Two of those became bestsellers—*The Ratzinger Report* (1985), in which the Cardinal was interviewed by journalist Vittorio Messori, and *Salt of the Earth* (1997), in which he was interviewed by Peter Seewald. Because of the success of the two latter books, the Cardinal agreed to a subsequent interview with Seewald which resulted in *God and the World*.

The Cardinal and Seewald engaged in a series of conversations that took place over a three day period at the Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino. This locale was particularly poignant given the Holy Father’s devotion to St. Benedict and his assumption of the name

Benedict. Seewald employed a quasi-question-and-answer approach throughout the interview process during which he either asked direct questions of the Cardinal or made extensive commentary and waited for a response from him. The end result is a wide-ranging dialog between the two men on Catholic theology. Most impressively, the Cardinal's ability to spontaneously respond with deeply insightful and fully formed answers is a clear indication of his formidable intellectual skills as a theologian and of the depth of his faith.

Anyone familiar with Benedict XVI's background knows that he is a former academic who spent the better part of twenty years as a professor of theology at various leading universities in Germany. Additionally, he is a prolific writer with an extensive number of scholarly articles and books to his credit. The corpus of his theological writings has clearly established Benedict XVI as a one of the foremost Catholic theologians of this era. In *God and the World*, the range and depth of his theological insights is readily apparent.

God and the World is organized into four sections. The first section is a Prologue which focuses on the virtues of "Faith, Hope and Love." The rest of the book is organized into three parts: God, Jesus Christ, and The Church. The Prologue consists of some seventy pages and encompasses a wide range of topics such as the image of God, the current crisis of faith in the world, the role of reason in faith, and the contradiction between good and evil in man.

In the remainder of *God and the World*, the Cardinal essentially outlines salvation history and the role of the Church. In doing so, the book becomes almost catechetical in nature in its discussion of Christian theology. The section entitled "God" examines the nature of God, creation, the Fall, and the Old Covenant. In reflecting on the disorder that original sin has interjected into mankind's relationship with God and with one another, the Cardinal notes: "And we then see that this is portrayed in the Bible in a way that is marvelous from the psychological viewpoint, how in their conversation after the Fall Adam and Eve blame each other and each unloads his guilt onto the other. The disruption of the relationship with God, then, immediately sets them at odds with each other. For anyone who has turned against God has by the same token turned against others" (87). The Cardinal outlines how "God set to work at once to rebuild the relationship and make it right" (88). In a subsequent discussion on heaven, hell, purgatory, and the need for man's redemption and purification, the Cardinal comments, "I would go so far as to say that if there was no purgatory, then we would have to invent it, for who would dare say of himself that he was able to stand directly before God" (130).

The section on Christology is particularly well done with chapters on the incarnation, Christ as god-man, the Trinity, Our Lady, and the Cross. Commenting on the Last Supper, the Cardinal states: “The institution of the Eucharist represents the sum total of what Christ is” (325). In pondering Christ’s words used in the Consecration, the Cardinal concludes: “In these few words, as we see, lies a synthesis of the history of religion—of the history of Israel’s faith, as well as of Jesus’ own being and work, which finally becomes a sacrament and an abiding presence” (326). In a moving passage on the Agony in the Garden, the Cardinal reflects on Christ’s struggle to assume the sins of humanity and overcome the wayward nature of man brought about by original sin. “Jesus has to overcome man’s inward resistance against God. He must overcome the inner temptation to do it some other way. And now this temptation reaches its zenith” (327).

The section on the Church includes discussion of the nature of the Church, the sacraments, and the future of the Church. Here the Cardinal speculates that the future Church may indeed be a smaller Church but one that is nonetheless is open to all and responsible for society as a whole. He prognosticates that one of the greatest threats to the Church is public pressure for a watered down, appeasing Christianity. The Cardinal notes: “And I think the situation may absolutely develop here in which there must be resistance against the dictatorship of this apparent tolerance, which eliminates the scandal of the faith by declaring it intolerant” (454).

God and the World is a book that provides keen insights into the Catholic faith in general and Pope Benedict’s reflective wisdom in particular. The book is compelling to read and retains a spontaneous, conversational style throughout. Furthermore, it can be read either topically or sequentially without any loss of understanding.

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**A Thomist Wolfe?
Tom Wolfe's Struggle With God and the Greeks.**

Wolfe, Tom. *I am Charlottle Simmons: A Novel*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004. 688 pp. \$28.95 hardcover.

This is an ugly book, but it could have been even uglier, being a book about the life of the contemporary mind. And protagonist Charlotte Simmons of Sparta, North Carolina is scarcely an heroic figure. Prized by her protective family and a determined teacher, Charlotte becomes an outstanding student—admitted with full scholarship to Dupont University (a fictitious Ivy League school with a Georgetown or Duke-level basketball team). She is a freshman version of Sherman McCoy of *Bonfire of the Vanities*, the would-be Master of the Universe. That she winds up being a victim is the key to understanding what Wolfe is up to: The clash of Greek morality (Sparta) and Greek philosophy (Dupont)—each represented weakly, I emphasize—is the theme of the novel. The life of the mind requires a new type of politics to defend it, which is terribly missing but nonetheless hinted at.

With her heavy accent and Southern, rural upbringing, Charlotte has often been thought to be an evangelical Christian. Surely her parents are. But what is striking is that we fail to see Charlotte attending chapel, discussing religion, or praying—except late in the book, when at home for Christmas break, she prays for her death. In fact, she is always ashamed of her family and her origins. Her glitzy (and trashy) roommate merely clarifies what she had felt before setting foot on Dupont's vaunted grounds. She even grows to disdain the spinster high school teacher who poured her being into Charlotte's thirsty intellect and who taught her Nietzsche's contempt for the common people. What primarily explains her is her concern for her persona. Do they think her a snob, as she delivers her high school commencement address? Will they mock my accent, as she anxiously contemplates contributing a point to class discussion? Will he think me a hillbilly unworthy of the "coolest guy in the coolest fraternity," as she is being ravished? Charlotte is far more in love with her reputation than with what is truly good for her soul. To a great extent that concern is for a good reputation, but her vanity is sufficient for her to cast over all self-respect. She is a much better person when she is blunt and heedless of what people think of her. To the extent that her conduct might be described as virtuous, it is compromised, because she takes no pleasure in it; "virtue" as she knows it makes her miserable. She craves

acceptance and looks for any rationalization to get it. Though apparently untouched by feminism, she is open to the idea (that of a former high school classmate, one who has actually “gone all the way”) of making college an experiment without risks. Thus, her literally idiotic mantra, when faced with the perplexity of college life, is “I am Charlotte Simmons.” (She omits her plainspoken mother’s addition: “and I don’t hold with thangs like ‘at.”) But separated from Sparta and her mother, her soul is rather an open city. She is defenseless against the temptations of power and pride the university has to offer.

In the *polis* of Dupont, Charlotte’s soul is confronted for good and ill by three students—Adam, an academically ambitious nerd and school newspaper reporter; Jo-Jo, the sole white star of the basketball team; and Hoyt, the seducing senior Big Man on Campus. From Adam, she gains a feeling of academic exhilaration she had been seeking. He introduces her to his discussion group, the Mutants, in fact a bunch of losers who make Sinclair Lewis’s *Thanatopsis Society of Gopher Prairie* sound like a Straussian seminar. Adam wants the academic prestige his newspaper reporting, work in Africa, and class performance will yield him. And he wants to use his intellectual musings—to seduce Charlotte. Jo-Jo came to Dupont only to play basketball, but upbraided by Charlotte, he begins to question his life purposes. His classes are rocks for jocks, and tutors write his papers anyway. It turns out he needs Charlotte to save himself from expulsion. Despite their shortcomings, let alone hers, Charlotte improves the character of Adam and Jo-Jo. The scenes depicting Hoyt and his fraternity, with obscenities and vulgarities streaming, are painful but not inaccurate. They are the farthest thing from the Christian martyr who fought Islam, St. Raymond Nonnatus, whom their fraternity honors in name. Hoyt, like many others at Dupont, knows his admission into the school means he has already attained a level others could only dream of. (These graduates will be the foul-mouthed Wall Street traders at the beginning of *Bonfire*.) The three men of mind, spirit, and desire comprise a kind of caricature of Socrates’ tripartite soul, in the *Republic*. They in turn reflect a greater whole, also noted by Wolfe—the stupidity, cowardice, and moral corruption of the modern university.

The faculty are wizened versions of the students. If they do the right thing, it is for the wrong reason (as is true of so many of Wolfe’s characters). Even freshman Charlotte catches on to the superficiality of her teachers. In a neurophysiology course she boldly offers a critique of Darwin, which wins praise from her Pulitzer Prize-winning professor. She is elated. But the point of the course she is so caught up in is that all intellectual achievement and indeed all life is a neurophysiological

illusion. In such a cynical atmosphere—where students think they have it made and spend their time drinking, partying, masturbating, and fornicating; where athletes pretend to be students, and professors teach nihilism—reality is indeed uprooted. No wonder Charlotte loses her bearings: Both campus experience and the classroom subvert what moral and intellectual foundations she had.

I expected greater things of Charlotte. But Wolfe has his own intentions with her, and he fulfills them magnificently. Everyone associated with a university or seeking to be associated should read this novel, as should everyone considering a donation to a university. I initially thought Charlotte would be a student version of Charlie Croker, the manly hero of *A Man in Full*, and in a way she is. But Charlotte's Nietzschean teacher had planted in her prize pupil the seeds of her destruction. (I take this to be Wolfe's response to Allan Bloom's still immensely useful critique of the university, *The Closing of the American Mind*, which praised the '50s elite university too highly.) As Aristotle notes at the end of the *Ethics*, even the best family needs politics to protect its virtue. And politics is not a topic of discussion, let alone serious discussion, at Dupont. The dregs of the '60s and the sexualized politics of the '00s are what we see. Post modernism (with its levels of sarcasm) is, as it were, a natural development in student souls. Hoyt's St. Ray fraternity's break-up of a gay rights demonstration epitomizes the lack of political seriousness. There are significant parallels that explain more about Wolfe's purposes. Charlotte is as conventional as the 1950s she appears to reflect, in mores and even clothing. When the '50s confront the '00s, the '50s lose, much as the Just Logos is defeated by the slick-talking Unjust Logos in Aristophanes' *Clouds*. Charlotte wants a man, but she is fickle and uncertain. She will get the right man when she discards pretense and engages Socrates. Charlie has his women, but he will become a "man in full" only through his conversion to Greek philosophy of a particular kind. Charlie becomes an evangelist for Stoicism. Charlotte's life, by comparison, is elevated by Socrates, but is not complete; she is still consumed with vanity and her victories in the Dupont struggles for recognition.

For all his brilliance at portraying contemporary life, Wolfe approaches and then veers away from confronting the most important human questions, explored most profoundly by the Bible and Greek philosophy. May his next novel take the mean between Socrates and Stoicism and discover Aristotle. But even Greek philosophy can be made "more perfect." And may that be his opening to the Bible and an even greater flourishing of his mind.

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McCullough, David. 1776. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005. 400 pp. \$32.00 hardcover.

I spent Fourth of July weekend visiting Revolutionary War sites in Brooklyn. David McCullough's *1776* was the motivating force behind my venture. His description of the Battle of Long Island whetted my imagination to relive the British landing at Gravesend Bay, the marching of the king's troops through Flatlands, the fighting that took place in what is now Greenwood Cemetery, and the encampment and escape of Washington's army from Brooklyn Heights. Finally, moved by the sacrifice made on behalf of our freedom, I paid my respects at the War Memorial in Fort Greene Park where thousands of Americans who died confined on British prisoner ships are entombed. Because of this book, I feel closer to the important places, events, and persons, great and ordinary, who are responsible for the independence we Americans now enjoy.

1776 explodes some myths and reminds the reader of a few indisputable facts about the Revolution. McCullough shows that King George III was not an inept ruler or mentally incompetent, nor was parliament united on the issue of war with the colonists. And, he emphatically states that the American victory at Trenton was not due to the intoxicated state of the Hessian mercenaries encamped there. He strongly reiterates the commonly held belief that George Washington was indeed indispensable to the American cause. He also claims that the colonials enjoyed "a higher standard of living than any people in the world."

The major portion of the book describes the main battles that took place in Boston, New York and New Jersey during the initial year after independence was proclaimed. Readers not familiar with military concepts or strategies will find McCullough's reporting eminently readable and the actions depicted understandable. And his inclusion of maps from the era is most helpful in appreciating the geography and tactics described.

McCullough brings the key persons on both sides of the battle to life by describing their physical appearance (the book contains a fine collection of portraits) and psychological make-up. He uses personal letters and diary entries from officers and enlisted men to provide a sense of the drama and how participants on various levels of the conflict perceived personalities and events. For example, one particularly unflattering letter written by Washington's closest confidant, Joseph Reed, notes the wavering attitudes toward Washington among some of

his men because of the general's indecision and ineptitude in the loss of New York. McCullough reports that, while Washington accidentally gained access to Reed's letter, it was to his credit that he was able to keep focused on the "big picture," never behaving in a petty or retaliatory way toward those who criticized him or even betrayed his confidences. Instead, Washington wisely continued to use people's talents for the greater good to be achieved (certainly a valuable lesson for those in administrative and leadership positions). Tactical flaws aside, McCullough shows that Washington kept his underpaid, ill-clothed, and often dispirited colonial soldiers fighting through his perseverance, his personal courage, and his indomitable belief in the rightness of the Americans' cause.

McCullough believes that, besides Washington, there were three crucial factors that contributed to the success of the Revolution: grit, genius, and luck (or providence?—on the last the author leaves the question tantalizingly open).

An example of American grit is General Henry Knox's successful engineering feat of transporting guns and canon nearly 300 miles from Fort Ticonderoga in New York for use at the Battle of Boston. The appellation genius could be ascribed to the decision not to engage the British in a head-on battle, but rather to occupy Dorchester Heights, causing General William Howe to evacuate Boston without a fight. And finally, was it luck or providence that produced a thick fog that allowed Washington's troops to escape from Brooklyn Heights and cross the East River to the safety of Manhattan? Without the action of either, the Americans would have faced annihilation by the combined force of General William Howe's army and the navy squadron commanded by his brother, Admiral Richard Howe.

McCullough's account is so engaging that the reader feels part of the events described in 1776. And, indeed we should. The Revolution and the spirit of participants on the American side are part of who we are 230 years later. It is important that we reflect on the principle characters, as well as on the foot soldiers and brave civilians who suffered so much for the sake of generations to follow. For instance, McCullough captures the enthusiasm of a 15-year-old Connecticut recruit, Joseph Plumb Martin, who later recalled that, upon joining Washington's army in 1776, "I never thought about numbers. The Americans were invincible in my opinion." It was this belief that convinced Martin and many others to remain with Washington's army until the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783, ending the war.

Reading this book and strolling through Brooklyn gave me a sense of The Spirit of '76. It lives on in all Americans who love liberty

and are willing to fight for it. The present War on Terror is really a continuation of those battles fought long ago for the principles of the Revolution. For me, the book was a reminder of the real cost and meaning of the Fourth of July and our obligation to keep the Revolution's vision alive. Thank you, Mr. McCullough.

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Schoroeder, Gerald L. *The Hidden Face of God: How Science Reveals the Ultimate Truth*. New York: Free Press, 2001. 240 pp. \$13.00 softcover.

The author is a Ph.D. from MIT whose three previous works were *The Science of God, Genesis and the Big Bang, and Genesis One: A Dialogue*. He currently teaches at an Israeli university.

Stephen Barr's *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith* has demonstrated that the cosmological sciences of the last century have overturned the view of scientists, dominant for three centuries, that reality is all and only material. While many thinkers offer arguments from contemporary scientific data on behalf of a cosmic Designer, Barr only says that science has found so much order behind and beneath every level of order they have found earlier that materialism simply has no grounds anymore. Reality, above all, man's mind and consciousness, is not reducible to the material, the empirical, the quantifiable. Modern science has made room for faith (and for metaphysics).

What Barr calls order, and some call design, Schroeder calls information, and then Wisdom. His first paragraph reads as follows: "A single consciousness, an all-encompassing wisdom, pervades the universe. The discoveries of science, those that search the quantum nature of subatomic matter, those that explore the molecular complexity of biology, and those that probe the brain/mind interface, have moved us to the brink of a startling realization: all existence is the expression of this wisdom. In the laboratories we experience it as information first physically articulated as energy and then condensed into the form of matter. Every particle, every being, from atom to human, appears to have within it a level of information, of conscious wisdom" (xi). Information is non-physical, of course. "Science itself has rediscovered the confluence between the physical and the spiritual," the metaphysical.

The perspective is distinctive. He does not look at information within the physical as its explanation, or the order behind a system as the source of its design. He sees the physical universe as the expression of what is metaphysical, of wisdom. Scientific research wants “access to the consciousness within which we are embedded.” He speaks of a spiritual unity we naturally seek in a “theory of everything,” and the unity of the original speck from which, in the big bang, the universe began its exploding.

All scientists presuppose a philosophy. This scientist does more. He asks philosophical as well as scientific questions. Chapter One is about existence. He asks, “Why is there anything at all?” as if it’s a normal logical question even for a scientist.

Schroeder casually takes you by the hand into and through quantum physics, and then the microbiology of human cells, nerves, senses, and our brain. On almost every page he lifts his head up from the trail and expresses a dazzling reflection.

Let me share some of these delights.

“The molecular workings that underlie life [reveal] a complexity so extreme, so overwhelmingly elaborate, that it outdoes science fiction by a league” (2). “Ask a physicist what electrons or the quarks of a proton are made of . . . The reply will be along the lines of ‘Huh?’”(4). “Every particle, every body, each aspect of existence appears to be an expression of information . . .”(7). “The more deeply matter is probed, the more bizarre it seems” (38). “[E]verything with no exception . . . is a manifestation of something as ethereal as energy. And . . . below the energy lies information, a totally nonmaterial basis for existence” (17). “Physics has entered the metaphysical, the realm beyond the physically perceivable, in the fullest sense of the word” (20).

He quotes de Duve, the Nobel laureate: “If you equate the probability of the birth of a bacterial cell to chance assembly of its atoms, eternity will not suffice to produce one” (51). Chance may have been involved, “But it is not . . . the whole answer, for chance did not operate in a vacuum. It operated in a universe governed by orderly laws and made of matter endowed with special properties” (51). “Order is known to appear spontaneously in chaotic systems via random reactions However, unless this order is somehow locked into place, the system reverts to chaotic disorder. This is the demand of the second law of thermodynamics. In any situation where order is not imposed [from beyond it], momentary order always degrades to chaos” (53). “Thermodynamics favors disorder over order” (58).

Schroeder contends that the “emergence of the specialized complexity of life, even in its most simple forms, remains a bewildering

mystery”: “life has somehow gotten hold of wisdom, of information, that taught it to take energy from its environment, to concentrate that energy, and with it to build and maintain the meaningful complexity of the biological cell” (58-59). Accordingly, he contends that “[g]oing inside the body and then inside the cell is a journey to wonderland” (60). But his whole book is a wonderland, because his contemporary science discloses that everything is a wonderland. Waking up in the morning is a wonderland. Our nervous systems, then our brains, and finally our minds only multiply the wonders.

No review can do justice to this work. It is no wonder, on the one hand, that this book converted England’s most famous atheist in his eighties to theism. On the other hand, any high-schooler can read it.

Dick Rolwing

Griffiths, Paul J. *Lying: An Augustinian Theology of Duplicity*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2004. 254 pp. \$18.99 paperback.

As Walker Percy often observed, any satisfactory social science must account for man as a languaged being, man as *homo symbolicus*, to use Percy’s witty locution. Aristotle held that *logos*—a word translated as both speech and reason—is the distinctive human faculty, and the prologue of the Gospel of St. John famously describes Jesus as the *Logos* that became flesh. But what is the relationship between the divine *Logos* and that of man, made in His image and likeness? This question deserves serious attention, and *Lying: An Augustinian Theology of Duplicity* is an excellent place to start.

The *Catechism* denounces lying unambiguously: “By its very nature lying is to be condemned” (2485). Yet this simple and clear proscription conceals a surprisingly complex problem of moral inquiry that has its own rival traditions both without and within Christendom: What is a lie? It is through this inquiry that Paul J. Griffiths takes his readers in *Lying*, wherein he attempts with elegant prose and balanced argumentation to “seduce” (his word) his readers into adopting the Augustinian definition of lying, which is as follows: lying is any intentional, duplicitous speech, that is, any speech that is directly contrary to what one knows to be true. (Griffiths is ambiguous on the status of misleading, as opposed to contradictory, speech). As in Kant

(whom he treats in Chapter Thirteen), this definition is formal and categorical, holding true regardless of external circumstances. (He excludes silence, joking, and figurative speech from the definition, for reasons I find problematic). Unlike Kant, the Augustine/Griffiths categorical account is grounded in a theological ontology/analogy: Just as the Incarnation is the perfect and true articulation of the perfect and divine Word, so in man, made in God's image and likeness, language should be the true verbal articulation of human intelligence. Any deliberate falsehood in human cognition or speech amounts to a "rupture of the divine image," and "a vocalized word is true, on this view, when there is in what it says just and only what is in the concept to which it gives voice."

Griffiths forthrightly acknowledges that "Augustine's position on the lie is neither the only possible nor the obviously best position," and he articulates and responds to alternative accounts offered by nine different thinkers, including Plato, Aristotle, Jerome, Aquinas, Kant, and Newman.

A better definition of lying (one found in the *Catechism* at 2483, though compare with 2482), for example, might be the following: to speak duplicitously in order to lead into error someone who has the right to know the truth. The added circumstantial specification, "someone who has the right to know the truth," places the definition of the lie within the context of justice, or what one owes to others.¹ This specified definition is not equivalent to Consequentialist or Proportionalist moral reasoning, contrary to what Griffiths suggests. Whereas both of these species of moral reasoning involve determining the morality of an act by measuring prohibitions against foreseeable consequences, the specified definition is exceptionless and holds true in every particular circumstance which falls under its form. Telling an intentional falsehood to Nazis at your door, for example, is not an excusable lie weighed against consequences, it is no lie at all. In this it is similar to the definition of stealing, which is not simply taking some else's property, but taking it against the "reasonable will of the owner,"² or like murder, which is not simply killing a person, but killing "an innocent person."³

This definition of lying comports well with our common notions of justice. According to Augustine/Griffiths, "no temporal good, not even the saving of life or the protection from rape, can warrant the lie." As one can see by this example, the stakes in the disagreement are high, and Augustine/Griffiths should be commended for their consistency in the face of them. And yet such consequences of a moral principle when they conflict with common notions of justice might

reasonably call into question the premises of that principle. Indeed Griffiths himself seems to acknowledge in his Conclusion that his position is virtually impossible to achieve in practice, a confession that may satisfy those prone to a certain dialectical idealism, but which gives little consolation to those whose work it is to “bring as little bad as possible”⁴ from the muddy affairs of an imperfect world.

More importantly, whereas Augustine/Griffiths measure speech according to its internal integrity (the accuracy with which the word represents the concept), they seem to downplay or neglect the fact that speech by its very nature is a communicative and “other-directed” act. As a vehicle of communication between persons, speech should be measured not simply by the accuracy of its representation but also by the intimacy and transparency of the communication it achieves. One danger of the Augustine/Griffiths definition is that persons will become preoccupied with achieving a mistaken notion of linguistic purity at the expense of charity.

The specified definition also seems to comport better with the theological reality of the Incarnation, in which Christ did not reveal the Father all at once in a simple expression, but slowly, deliberately, and cautiously, in a way analogous to the “divine pedagogy” of Sacred History itself. Though he withheld nothing in becoming Man, Jesus withheld much from men during his time on earth.⁵ And yet given the ontological necessities of the Augustine/Griffiths formulation in which the accuracy of the representation has primacy, it is difficult to see how this “economy” of Christ’s incarnation, the “divine condescension,” could be justified.

Finally, the Church’s incorporation of this principle of condescension is enunciated in St. Paul’s first Letter to the Corinthians, “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some,”⁶ and is exemplified in his speech before the Areopagus in Athens, in which he utilizes pagan gods and poetry to present the message of the Gospel.⁷ As this tradition developed, many Church Fathers, including Clement, Jerome, John Chrysostom, and Athanasius, articulated two terms to express the notion: The “disciplina arcani” (“discipline of the secret”) and “dispensatio” (“economy”).⁸ The first term referred to the responsibility to withhold the secrets of the faith from those who were not prepared to receive them. The second encouraged the faithful to always seek ways in which the faith could be most effectively presented. Thus St. Clement praised the man who “both thinks and speaks the truth, except when careful treatment is necessary, and then, as a physician for the good of his patients, he will lie, or rather utter a lie, as the Sophists say.”⁹

In sum, *Lying* makes for a challenging, stimulating, even seductive read. Whether the seduction is a holy one the reader must decide.

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Notes

1. St. Thomas Aquinas treats lying under the virtue of Justice in the *Summa Theologica*. Griffiths cleverly exposes difficulties in St. Thomas's attempt to synthesize Augustine and Aristotle's accounts of lying. See Griffiths, *Lying*, 171-184.

2. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2408.

3. *Ibid.*, 2261.

4. See the remarks of St. Thomas More in *Utopia*, revised edition, ed. by George M. Logan and Robert M. Adams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35.

5. It would be easy, but tedious, to quote the many passages of Scripture in which Christ charges certain persons—including demons—to silence, gives “secret” teachings and interpretations to his followers, and alludes mysteriously to his “time coming,” that is, to the consummation of his plan, a plan, I might add, which seems to remain obscure until Pentecost.

6. *I Corinthians* 9:22.

7. *Acts* 17:22-34. Dietrich von Hildebrand makes some important distinctions on the appropriate application of this principle in the eighth chapter of *The Trojan Horse* in the *City of God: The Catholic Crisis Explained*, forward by John Cardinal O'Connor (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 1993; originally published 1967).

8. See John Cardinal Newman, “The Principle of Economy in the Alexandrian Fathers,” in Vincent Ferrer Blehl, editor, *The Essential Newman* (New York: A Mentor-Omega Book, 1963), 82-92.

9. Clement, *Stromateis*, vii. 8, 9 (abridged). Quoted by Newman in *The Essential Newman*.

Slawson, Douglas J. *The Department of Education Battle, 1918–1932: Public Schools, Catholic Schools, and the Social Order*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005. 352 pp. \$43.00 hardcover.

It does not take long, reading in Catholic periodicals of the 1920s, to notice that issues concerning schooling were among the most common topics of discussion. Specifically, Catholics debated—argued against, for the most part—the expansion of federal aid and control in the educational sphere. The names of congressional bills—Smith-Towner, Sterling-Towner, Curtis-Reed—litter the landscape of Catholic journals and present a formidable challenge to the scholar trying to sort it all out.

Douglas Slawson has therefore rendered a considerable service by organizing the campaign for a federal department of education into a coherent story. He has done so by focusing on the two main antagonists in the ensuing battle; namely, a coalition of public education supporters on one side and Roman Catholics on the other.

Slawson's story begins in 1918, with the push for nationalization that attended World War I sweeping the country. The educational establishment, led by the National Education Association (NEA) sought an instrument for the strengthening and coordination of public schools, and viewed a federal department of education as the means to that end. The NEA wanted the new department to fund, collect, and disseminate education research and to provide additional monetary aid to schools, either directly or through the states.

Catholics at once perceived a threat to their large and growing school system, built with much sacrifice over the preceding decades. The protests of supporters notwithstanding, Catholics believed that with federal aid would come federal control. Centralization of functions at the national level might well mean declining toleration for educational diversity, including parochial religious schools.

The defensiveness of Catholics on the issue was justified by the character of the supporters that coalesced around the proposal for a federal department. Besides the NEA, the Southern Jurisdiction of Scottish Rite Masonry and the Ku Klux Klan also provided vocal support for the idea. Slawson carefully sorts out the relationships among these groups, as well as their motives, and never succumbs to the distortions of sensationalism or guilt-by-association. He nonetheless shows irrefutably that anti-Catholicism played a vital role in stoking a large part of the campaign's support, and that, more specifically, many

in the coalition explicitly aimed to destroy the Catholic school system in the United States.

Thus the story continues over the course of the next fifteen years, with charges hurled back and forth between the opposing camps and the battle lines remaining substantially the same, albeit with some shifting of positions. Slawson details each legislative initiative, the machinations of its proponents and opponents in the corridors of politics, as well as the public debate between the two sides in the pages of the nation's Catholic and secular presses. He perceptively observes that Catholics in this period, far from being anomalous in their opposition to centralization, shared in widespread American distrust of federal control over education.

In the process, Slawson brings to light a number of intriguing points. For one, he places the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) in its rightful place at the center of the legislative skirmishes. Yet he notes forthrightly that the NCWC's role in the debate was an ironic one. NCWC staff such as Father John J. Burke leaned heavily on the argument that centralization of education in the federal government was dangerous because it would necessarily lead to bureaucracy, inefficiency, and a socialistic mentality. But the NCWC itself was formed as part of the nationalizing trend of the Great War, and represented the bureaucratization of the Church in America. It was a point not lost on the NCWC's critics, who voiced their concerns loudly in 1926 when the NCWC staff endorsed a compromise bill that conceded some ground to the pro-department lobby (170–172).

The display of such internal strife among Catholics is the second interesting dimension of Slawson's narrative. Though Catholics generally lined up on one side of the larger debate and though significant commonality characterized Catholic educators, editors, and intellectuals, it is still true that there were significant areas of disagreement among Catholic figures. Many Catholics were absolute and intransigent with respect to federal involvement: none could be permitted. Others, including prominent educators such as Monsignor Edward Pace and the NCWC's Burke, were open to some measure of participation by the national government. Lively debates aired not only between Catholics and the NEA, then, but also among Catholics.

In one instance only does Slawson's judgment seem mistaken. In the dispute within the Catholic community over whether or not to support the compromise bill mentioned above (the "Phipps bill"), Slawson dismisses the concerns of opponents such as *America* editor Wilfrid Parsons, claiming that the measure was "hardly the entering wedge for the creeping federalism feared by [its opponents]" (178). But

Slawson had already presented ample evidence that any movement toward federal control or funding was indeed viewed by the NEA and its allies as simply one step toward extensive nationalization of education. In short, the various groups of both supporters and detractors viewed the various legislative proposals in various ways (a complexity Slawson skillfully captures). The position of those absolutely opposed to federal involvement was at least reasonable, then, in light of the stated aims of the pro-department lobby. With the benefit of hindsight, indeed, one might argue that Parsons' opposition was prescient.

Slawson's research is thorough and his writing excellent. The subject matter, moreover, possesses some of its own drama. The book is, nonetheless, largely a record of legislative and editorial activity and cannot be characterized as a page-turner. Its sometimes-heavy pace is compounded by some redundancy, such as repeated explanations of the rationale of the two sides, which could in some cases be omitted.

The book is nonetheless a solid scholarly treatment of an important and revealing period in the history of Catholic interaction with American culture and politics. For this reason and others aforementioned, it deserves wide attention.

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Correction

In a recent review (Volume 10) of Edwin Black's award-winning bestseller on eugenics, *War Against the Weak*, our reviewer asserted in unqualified terms that "Black is clearly biased in favor of abortion" and later referred without qualification to "Black's pro-abortion bias." In fact, Black is unalterably opposed to all forms of abortion, and has gone on record stating as much. Elsewhere, the review criticized Black for portraying DNA pioneer James Watson as a "humanitarian" when Watson has advocated infanticide for so-called imperfect children. In fact, however, *War Against the Weak* offers no approval of Watson's views on this question and indeed contains an explicit criticism of Watson's eugenic opinions. Finally, the review used Black's supposed "advocacy of abortion" to link him "inexorably with euthanasia." In fact, Black has been a lifelong crusader against all forms of passive and active euthanasia, and much of his book is devoted to this topic. Black invented the word eugenicide to depict eugenic euthanasia. We wish to correct the record and regret the misimpressions created by the review. We are happy to note that our review was elsewhere overwhelmingly positive, calling the book "extensively documented and provid[ing] important historical perspective on the history of eugenics in the United States."

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