Moral Conservatism

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The study of ethics has recently become influenced by a form of moral con-
servatism — a critique of "modernity" with a bias towards Aristotle. It stresses
the integrity of communities and their customs, a pluralistic and particularistic
respect for the diversity of human groups, the poverty of utopianism and
Marxism, and the inevitability of moral and political conflict. Each stress raises
major issues: the priority of social goods over human rights; hermeneutical
problems of understanding between communities; difficulties for societies'
shaping a common future in accordance with their moral understanding; the
balance between consensus and conflict in political life. These problems are ad-
dressed in an extended form of moral conservatism which defines a number of
correspondences with progressive conceptions of humanity. Referring to central
facts of moral psychology and possible institutions of public communication,
the discussion identifies universal human purposes whose practical implications
are consistent with a postmodern society in which the course of development is
settled by public deliberation.

Moral philosophy has undergone remarkable changes in recent
years. Interest in practical ethics overshadows a former preoccupa-
tion with metaethics, and once-dominant methods of rationalistic
moral theory are being broadly challenged. The changes bear out
Elizabeth Anscombe's claim that "the differences between the well-
known English writers on moral philosophy from Sidgwick to the
present day are of little importance"[1] and explain Thomas Nagel's
observation that "no visible attention is paid to the moral philoso-
phy of the past 50 years."[2] For many, Aristotle has become more
congenial than the heirs of Bentham and Kant.

The development I call moral conservatism is a broadly based
critique of "modernity" — a form of culture in which the self is un-
derstood as independent of social affairs and "finds no limits set to
that on which it may pass judgment," there being no rational crite-
ria of evaluation to govern one's choice of a moral standpoint.[3]
Despite rejecting modern assumptions, the most interesting forms
of moral conservatism are best understood as broadly progressive.
Some moral conservatives (including Michael Oakeshott, Roger
Scruton, and George Grant) are political conservatives; those
whose views I am most concerned to examine are not. Prominent
among them are Stuart Hampshire, Michael Walzer, and Alas-
dair MacIntyre.

Of course no collection of original thinkers is going to share an
identical doctrine. Any current of intellectual opinion contains

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streams which converge and overlap in interesting and complex ways. The wave pattern formed by the mutual reinforcement of these individual streams gains most of our attention here. The following exploration of these patterns has three parts: an outline of the principal features of moral conservatism, definition of some of the main issues arising from them, and consideration of these problems. The discussion is largely a description rather than an argument for the movement. Its objective is twofold: to present a distinctive body of thought as plausible enough to warrant serious attention and development; and to show that a politically progressive moral conservatism is a real possibility.

The Main Characteristics of Moral Conservatism

Four related features of moral conservatism can be distinguished. (1) It honors the integrity of communities, their customs and institutions, and prevailing values. (2) It is pluralistic and particularistic, recognizing the diversity of human groups and the internality and flexibility of the rules which define the practices in each. (3) It is pessimistic about utopian ideas of progress but sanguine about the apparent permanence of conflict among ways of life and conceptions of well-being. (4) It opposes abstract, computational morality in both its consequentialist and deontological forms.

1. The Central Place of Social Conventions

"Conventions; moral perceptions and feelings; institutions and loyalties; tradition; historical explanations — these are related features, and ineliminable features, of normal thought about the conduct of life and about the character and value of persons."[4] Thus Stuart Hampshire. Similarly, MacIntyre contests "the standpoint of modern individualism." We are "bearers of a particular social identity. . . . I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations. These constitute the given of my life, my moral starting point. This is in part what gives my life its own moral particularity," determining "what is good for me."[5] The concept of an individual as an atomistic agent capable of making judgments from an abstract and universal point of view is repu-

diated. The modern self is an untenable cultural artifact, for the social relationship is prior to autonomy and independence.

Walzer develops the view that all goods are social goods, all meanings common meanings. Since we want things in virtue of such collective criteria, individual desire is not a primary datum. Moreover, "the political community is probably the closest we can come to a world of common meanings. Language, history, and culture come together . . . to produce a collective consciousness" in which "politics present is the product of politics past." The political community determines how goods are to be distributed and "is itself a good—conceivably the most important good—that gets distributed. But it is a good that can only be distributed by taking people in. . . . Hence membership cannot be handed out by some external agency; its value depends upon an internal decision. Were there no communities capable of making such decisions, there would in this case be no good worth distributing."[6]

The political community distributes other important goods but only in conformity with their historical meanings. When these "meanings are distinct, distributions must be autonomous. Every social good or set of goods constitutes, as it were, a distributive sphere within which only certain criteria and arrangements are appropriate."[7] The concept of autonomous spheres is key to an argument about just communities. In political society, goods are inevitably possessed in unequal amounts, but as long as the possession of one good does not lead to control over others there is no systematic inequality. In such a regime of "complex equality" a monopoly within one sphere gives one no power in others.

Moral conservatives are keenly interested in the political community as basic to civilized life, but Walzer goes further in drawing explicitly upon the importance of social traditions in support of a particular political theory. Social classes exist wherever one group's monopoly over a particular good enables it to dominate in other spheres, and where the autonomy appropriate to each distributive sphere is recognized this class structure is broken. The problematical nature of this case is evident in a striking similarity between autonomous spheres of distribution and Scruton's "autonomous institutions." "An institution is autonomous if its purposes are peculiar to it." In such institutions—including property, labor, education, welfare, office—"we are at rest" and "view ourselves not as means but as ends. Such practices must themselves *contain* the ends of conduct." Walzer would agree, but Scruton also views "in-

equality as a form of natural order and legitimate bond," insisting that "there is an order of argument and conception, which leads the conservative onward to the hierarchical state."[8]

This suggests strongly that moral conservatism is politically ambiguous. Walzer argues for the "egalitarian logic" of distributive spheres, while Scruton assumes that "autonomous institutions and class distinctions go naturally together,"[9] but their cases appear to be alternative political interpretations of the basic moral facts rather than proper demonstrations. Nor are the respective claims strengthened by the undefended assumption that political relationships can be modeled on the homely analogy of practices which can exist without the state. To appropriate a line from Ortega y Gasset, "the theme I am pursuing in these pages is politically neutral, because it breathes an air much ampler than that of politics and its dissentions."[10]

2. Particularism and Pluralism

It is clear that moral conservatism entails a strongly particularist view of practical requirements and possibilities. Walzer explicitly adopts this view, noting the many forms which generic social institutions may take. Leisure appears in the form of the North American "vacation" which most can claim as a right, although "holidays" were until recently the norm.[11] The diverse obligations and rights attached to varying institutions of education, work, provision, property, etc., support the idea that much moral rectitude is inherently parochial.

Hampshire also stresses "the particularity of the particular case" and adds: "men are not only rational and calculative in forming and pursuing their ideals and in maintaining rules of conduct, but they are also in the grip of particular and distinguishable memories and of particular and distinguishing local passions; and the Aristotelian word to emphasize is 'particular.' "[12] Local attachments and historical associations permeate our desires and purposes, and it is reasonable to respect a multitude of moral requirements. Such a particularism is hardly distinguishable from Scruton's characterization of conservatism as arising "directly from the sense that one belongs to some continuing, and pre-existing social order, and that this fact is all important in determining what to do."[13] In feeling an institutional stance toward one's

church, regiment, nation, or other such "order," one exists in the current of a common life and experiences its historical vitality.

Respect for particular traditions and conventions easily finds expression in a defense of pluralism. There are rival orders and traditions; and, while some may reasonably be rejected, others make equally valid claims upon the allegiance of their respective members. Hampshire sees the diversity of customs, values, attitudes, and human relationships as "a primary, perhaps the primary, feature of human nature, species-wide. . . ." To understand "the indispensable and related notions of convention and ways of life" leads to the conclusion that the plurality of values is incompatible with any "definite list of essential virtues."[14] As MacIntyre puts it, the contrary view "ignores the place in our cultural history of deep conflicts over what human flourishing and well-being do consist in and the way in which rival and incompatible beliefs on that topic beget rival and incompatible tables of the virtues."[15]

Walzer, too, develops an argument that is radically pluralistic. Rejecting the standard assumption that "there is one, and only one, distributive system that philosophy can rightly encompass," he insists that "the questions posed by the theory of distributive justice admit of a range of answers, and there is room within the range for cultural diversity and political choice." In fact, "the principles of justice are themselves pluralistic in form; . . . different social goods ought to be distributed for different reasons, in accordance with different procedures, by different agents; and . . . all these differences derive from different understandings of the social goods themselves — the inevitable product of historical and cultural particularism."[16]

3. ANTI-UTOPIANISM

It comes as no surprise that in Walzer's view "there is no ideal regime."[17] Despite agreeing with much of Marx's critique of domination, Walzer abandons teleology. The dominant good and primary social agency need not be productive property; it may be familial reputation or religious office or political power; nor is there any temporal order to their succession. Walzer's view of history is far more fluid and directionless than Marx's class conflict. Because "dominance is always incomplete and monopoly imperfect, the rule of every ruling class is unstable. It is continually chal-

lenged by other groups. . . . One group wins, and then a different one; or coalitions are worked out, and supremacy is uneasily shared. There is no final victory, nor should there be."[18]

The final victory once predicted by Marxists includes an end to deep social oppositions. Hampshire joins Walzer to insist that "we ought not to plan for a final reconciliation of conflicting moralities in a perfect social order." Speaking of Spinoza's pessimism about the historical future, he holds "social and historical change" to be "superficial in their consequences." Contrary to another teleological dogma, utilitarianism, "an historical transformation of human nature . . . is now not to be reasonably expected."[19] "Now not": the disappointment conveyed in this order of words reflects the difficult journey leading modern intellectuals to moral conservatism.

The disbelief enunciated by Walzer and Hampshire does not violate the political neutrality referred to earlier. It expresses Oakeshott's view of politics as "the art of knowing where to go next in the exploration of an already existing traditional kind of society,"[20] but is not itself biased in favor of particular political ideals or social systems. Their pessimism is antiprogressive only in assuming the permanence of conflict whatever the form of collective arrangements.

"As there must be conflicts in society, so there must be conflicts in the soul."[21] If Hampshire is right, moral claims, moral virtues, and principles of conduct unavoidably collide, and "there must always be moral conflicts which cannot, given the nature of morality, be resolved by any constant and generally acknowledged method of reasoning."[22] The thesis of conflict is linked closely with the theme of the divided soul and the limits of reason which is a constant of conservative writing at least since Plato, but today's moral conservatives develop the point in a way that is especially interesting for moral theorists. They repudiate the rationalistic conceptions of ethics which have been the focus of philosophical debate for many years.

4. ANTIRATIONALISM

Oakeshott depicts the Rationalist as standing for freedom from obligation to any authority except the authority of "reason," as the enemy of prejudice, the merely traditional, customary, habitual. Of two forms of the moral life, the Rationalist rejects one which is "a habit of affection and behaviour" in favor of the "reflective ap-

plication of a moral criterion."[23] Hampshire now advances a
"two-level" conception of morality whose components bear a
strong likeness to Oakeshott's pair of forms. There are indeed ra-
tional requirements in his view but they "plainly under-determine
the full, complex morality of the family and of sexual relationships
and of friendship in any person's actual way of life. . . . [R]ational
argument is not available below the level of the general require-
ments of fairness and of utility."[24] There is thus a clear and simple
"reason for rejecting any rational morality, and moral theory,
which could be described as "abstract and computational." "It is of
the essence of moral problems that on occasion they seem hope-
less, incapable of solution, leaving no right action open; this has
been an objection not only to utilitarianism of any form, but to
any exactly prescribed moral ideal."[25]

Kant and ideal contract theory fall under this judgment, as
they do also for MacIntyre and Walzer. Among Walzer's primary
targets is John Rawls's idea that rational men and women can ar-
rive at a similar conception of justice under any social circum-
stances. Such an agreement is possible only if there are "primary
goods" which everyone wants to protect and enhance, whereas in
the conservative view there is no set of concrete "basic goods con-
ceivable across all moral and material worlds." Even if it is possible
to agree in the abstract about certain necessary goods — food, for
example — they carry different meanings in different places, and it
is these historical understandings which determine the choices
people should make. "Every substantive account of distributive
justice is a local account."[26]

It is the importance of shared understandings which gives
power to the conservative view of rationalist moral theory as re-
flecting an unhappy absence of social meanings and an ungovern-
able society. "To suppose a collection of people without recognized
traditions of behaviour," as Oakeshott says, "is to suppose a people
incapable of politics."[27] It is to suppose, George Grant notes, that
"the allocation of rights . . . cannot be decided in terms of any
knowledge of what is good";[28] or, as Michael Sandel puts it, "what
separates us is in some important sense prior to what connects
us — epistemologically prior as well as morally prior."[29] This "deon-
tological vision is flawed . . . as an account of our moral experi-
ence . . ." in denying "those loyalties and convictions whose
moral force consists partly in the fact that living by them is insep-
arable from understanding ourselves as the particular persons we

are — as members of this family or community or nation or peo-
ple, as bearers of this history, as sons and daughters of that revo-
lution, as citizens of this republic. . . ." This is "not to conceive
an ideally free and rational agent, but to imagine a person wholly
without character, without moral depth."[30]

THE MAJOR ISSUES RAISED BY MORAL CONSERVATISM

It is a minor challenge even to sort out the main problems
raised by the network of ideas that make up moral conservatism,
but I will isolate four such issues, corresponding to the viewpoint's
main characteristics: the priority of goods over rights, the problem
of relativism, the question of Marxism, and the permanence of
conflict.

1. THE PRIORITY OF GOODS OVER RIGHTS

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of moral conservatism
is the diminished position accorded to rights. Walzer's arch dis-
claimer, "I shall imitate John Stuart Mill and forego (most of) the
advantages that might derive to my arguments from the idea of
personal — that is, human or natural — rights," is more than a
methodological ploy, for he views most rights as following from
shared, local conceptions of social goods rather than from our
common humanity.[31] In contrast to unrepentant deontologists like
Charles Fried, who maintains that it is precisely "our common hu-
manity" on which rights are based,[32] Walzer complains that we
can find "less in a universalist conception of persons than in a plu-
ralist conception of goods."[33] The deontological view bases rights
upon a conception of autonomous agents who construct their own
view of the good: rights exist to protect this possibility. Once
goods are tied to social meanings, the individual does not have
this freedom. Goods are matters of local knowledge rather than
creations of choice; local rights protect them.
A pluralist conception of goods also conflicts with any form of
utilitarianism not vacuously endorsing "utility in the largest sense."
The principle of utility incorporates the idea that there is one in-
trinsic good; it assigns this good priority over the concept of right
and defines right in terms of the promotion of the good. If plea-
sure and happiness are polymorphous, however, utility provides
no clear definition of this kind; and no common capacity for hap-

piness can be identified which would give clear content to the notion of the greatest good for the greatest number.[34]

This opposition to the main forms of moral rationalism is not entirely uncompromising. Some moral conservatives hold that there are certain universal traits of moral rationality embodied in deontological and utilitarian theory. In that upper tier are also located the rights to life and liberty which both Hampshire and Walzer are prepared to say follow from our "common humanity."[35] These agreements with the liberal tradition distinguish them from Oakeshott, Scruton, and others who reject the rationalist form of the moral life and adopt the Burkeian view that we should make moral claims "not on abstract principles 'as the rights of men,' but as the rights of Englishmen" or Swedes or Russians.[36] Here MacIntyre agrees with the political conservatives, calling natural rights "fictions,"[37] and we should ask whether the qualified form of moral conservatism is defensible or whether the single-tiered version is the only alternative to the modern worldview. If MacIntyre is correct in lumping universal human rights together with witches and unicorns, we need no longer try to explain the existence of natural rights but should rather account for the persistence of the belief in them.

This question aside, it is clear that insofar as goods are social goods, rights are local and particular. Goods are tied to distributive spheres or autonomous institutions whose rules define specific rights. The variability of these institutions includes the variability of the rights which are subject to extension and restriction in ways familiar from the history of property, work, education and politics. Such rights are neither absolute nor universal but customary and conditional, resting upon specific understandings established over the evolution of the institution in question or agreed to during a period of reform — as tenure developed as a protection for the pursuit of knowledge practiced within the institution of education. They have no rationale apart from such practices. This is what it means to say that goods have theoretical precedence over rights.

The consensus about the relationship between rights and goods does not extend to all questions about the nature of the good. Many moral conservatives appear to hold conventionalist opinions, viewing moral objectives and prohibitions as "human creations." Human reality has to be described in terms of the moral ideas formed amidst social institutions, for without these ideas the

world is only the totality of barren facts.[38] For others more needs
to be said. Ortega y Gasset remarks that "the day when a genuine
philosophy once more holds sway in Europe — it is the one thing
that can save her — that day will she once again realize that man,
whether he like it or no, is a being forced by his nature to seek
some higher authority."[39] Even if no such authority exists — the
philosophical question may be unanswerable — it is better that
people believe that it does. As Scruton says, the political conserva-
tive "might in all conscience seek to propagate the ideology which
sustains the social order, whether or not there is a reality that
corresponds to it."[40]

If anything characterizes political progressives, it is repudiation
of the "noble lie." They therefore need a distinction between mo-
rality and ideology which permits describing moral ideas as ade-
quate and valid without falling into the danger of "false conscious-
ness" or other irrational dependency upon fictions. Our authors
suggest that moral ideas are expressions of the sentiments — pity,
love, resentment, guilt, and other passions which include forms of
respect for persons — without which we could not establish human
relationships valued in themselves. These relationships require no
justification outside themselves, so that moral judgment does not
presuppose subjection to myths. The permanent aspect of human
existence is the reality of ordinary attachments and conflicts. Hu-
man well-being is adequately understood in these terms, and no
place need be made for the concept of a higher authority.

Moral conservatism of any kind does hold that evaluations pos-
sess a claim to validity, whether they are based only on convention
or also seek a deeper foundation in nature. Goods are objective;
there is a difference between desire and desirability, contrary to
individualistic doctrines which assert the need for everyone to be
allowed to pursue whatever desires one has — and to be accorded
the rights needed to do so without interference. The priority of
the good over the right is thus an expression of moral objectivism
which is the belief in a common moral order connecting us and
making human relationship prior to autonomy and independence.

Lest this be misunderstood, let us note with Hampshire that
"When one values the customs and morality of one's own society
or group as distinctive, one is thinking of them as discriminatory.
So far there is no requirement to universalize the prescriptions,
implicit or explicit, which govern the customs and values, and to
think of the prescriptions as applicable to all men, whatever their

condition."[41] This means that the objectivity of these moral claims differs from that of descriptive utterances. Descriptive claims are commonly thought to be universalizable in the sense that the same claim can be made of anything similar in all perceivable respects. The underlying idea is that the descriptive properties of things are qualities of the objects themselves. No such claim can be made of qualities whose identity is owing to particular customs and resides partly in social understandings.

2. THE PROBLEM OF RELATIVISM

To the comparison between Oakeshott's forms of moral life and Hampshire's two-layer view of moral requirements can be added their use of the image of the Tower of Babel. It seems to lead from themes of pluralism and particularism to a thesis that understanding between communities must fail.[42] How are people whose conceptions of the good are shaped by different local traditions to understand and communicate with one another?

The question connects moral conservatism with a hermeneutic turn in moral and political philosophy. Whereas ethics has usually conceived its object ahistorically, searching for permanently valid standards of behavior, moral conservatism does not expect to discover foundational principles (apart, perhaps, from those thin and ambiguous requirements of our common humanity). It is constrained to regard each historical period as a separate world of belief. "Normal discourse," in which the rules of inquiry and justification are agreed upon, may occur within such worlds, but discussions with participants in unfamiliar or alien ways of life lead to intractable disagreement.

This view is often called "relativism," but two considerations count against the label. The first point is a technical one. Typically, relativism holds that "different ethical standards are correct for different groups of people,"[43] so that the same standards may be correct for one group and not for another. This formula is empty because there are no available criteria of sameness and difference. If substantive accounts of moral goods and requirements are local accounts, then there is no identification of goods and requirements across the boundaries of particular ways of life, and no external perspective exists from which differences can be objectively determined. For this reason, the "relativism" suggested by moral conservatism is better termed "internal realism."[44]

The second point is that "relativism" is often used as a term of criticism, but the permanence of disagreement is not necessarily something to be regretted. Richard Rorty has put this cogently. In his view disagreement includes the possibility of continuing a conservation, whereas the idea that there is a set of final truths to be discovered in moral matters accepts "the freezing-over of culture" and "the dehumanization of human beings."[45] By putting aside this fear we also "abandon the hope of being anything more than merely human"[46] held by those who believe in the perfectability of mankind. But we also open up another possibility. If it is possible to be "merely human," then it may after all be arguable that there are certain points which define our humanity—not just within a tradition but everywhere.

The mitigated relativism which results is partly defined by the fact that moral judgments always express some tradition, hence the prejudices of history. Echoing Burke, Hans-Georg Gadamer stresses the importance of such prejudices in any hermeneutical understanding of moral rationality. Trying "to restore to its rightful place a positive concept of prejudice that was driven out of our linguistic usage by the French and English Enlightenment," he maintains that "prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience."[47] They are expectations enabling us to assimilate information and deal with novelty.

These ideas suggest a distinctively conservative epistemology. In contrast to the Cartesian conception of rational individuals who fashion a coherent world from the data of sensation, Gadamer understands reasoning as something which is possible only against a set of background beliefs, or prejudgments. It is a community of expectations which is basic for knowledge[48]—together, perhaps, with some features of human development. To the prejudices inherent in "the historicity of our existence" can be added others not directly determined by the past. If emotions like fear, curiosity, pity, and love are natural responses to events, then the judgments they include are initially prejudices. In contrast to "considered attitudes"—the calm and reasoned motives which rest on reflexive beliefs about danger, suffering, and the like—an initial, reflexive response to a situation includes a judgment which has not yet been thought through.[49] Since these responses are a part of our biological make-up, they are an innate part of our information-processing mechanism and as such constitute a fixed

point for our humanity in addition to our need for the prejudices of history. They are prejudices not of the community but of the species.

These observations do not lend themselves to a two-level account of morality — the other way out of the moral isolation of particular communities. Contrary to the view of our common humanity which supposedly yields certain universal rights and rational principles, our empirical similarities lack any immediate normative implications. Creatures with traditional and emotional prejudices may belong to opposed traditions and may interpret danger and suffering in different ways, so the fact that we need roots and possess similar emotional capacities imposes no *a priori* constraints upon behavior. Our shared concept of the good is almost entirely abstract and does not by itself offer any rational means for resolving conflicts. Since traditions can be transmitted and experiences can converge, nothing in our prejudices precludes dialogue which can create understanding between different ways of life, but understandings have to be created. They do not derive from independently valid principles of moral reason. The conservative epistemology gives no reason to expect the universalistic element sought by Hampshire.

3. The Question of Marxism

Against this background we can appreciate another striking feature of moral conservatism. Besides attention to universal rights and rational principles characteristic of the liberal tradition, intellectual history since Marx includes a strand of structuralism. Social phenomena are regarded as in need of analysis in terms of underlying features of organization which shape the production, distribution, and understanding of goods. Independent of the will of social subjects, these structural features are primary determinants of human action, and structural change constitutes a revolutionary alteration in the circumstances of life. It is part of the anti-utopianism of moral conservatism that it rejects such structuralist assumptions.

Walzer's domesticated conception of class struggle takes it for granted that the goal of egalitarian struggle cannot be located beyond an epochal transition. "If such a society isn't already here — hidden, as it were, in our concepts and categories — we will never know it concretely or realize it in fact." As a corollary, "the political

community is the appropriate setting for this [egalitarian] enter-
prise."[50] Scruton's only disagreement with this comes with his be-
lief that an egalitarian society is not here and never to be ex-
pected. The revolutionary idea that we can leave behind the
political form of organization is not even to be considered.

Nor are we to take seriously the idea of a scientific study of his-
tory made possible by the identification of social structures inde-
pendent of beliefs and sentiments. In focusing on local knowledge
and practice, the beliefs and purposes of agents becomes primary,
and behavior is understood in terms of unpredictable volition and
the diversity of ways of life as understood from within. This diver-
sity entails competition which has no rational resolution and
which therefore eludes predictable, lawlike outcomes.[51] The pre-
supposition of agreement and predictability — an Adamic or uni-
versal language in which familiar and alien forms of justice, cour-
age and friendship could be discussed within one
framework — does not exist.

Skepticism about Marx's ideas of social development is sup-
ported by the scope of moral thinking — the scope of the moral
sentiments. The objects of these sentiments are human actions
and relationships, not impersonal social structures. The facts that
are meaningful for human beings are those selected by the emo-
tions, not the broad sweep of historical stages. As Scruton says,
even if what Marx asserts is true it is unimportant. "The *reality* of
politics is not to be found outside the motives of those who engage
in it, and whatever Marxists may say about the relation between
base and superstructure, or about the economic causation of so-
cial behaviour, its truth does not bear on the *political* understand-
ing of humanity." Marx's "striking, convincing, and yet futile hy-
pothesis . . . has no evident bearing on political activity."[52]

Moral conservatism may have too modest a sense of the possi-
bilities of social action. When societies debate fundamental re-
forms they engage in collective discourse whose effects differ
markedly from the normal exercise of political power and author-
ity. People collectively generate expectations about the future
which governors must then satisfy rather than following the dic-
tates of their personal consciences or class interests. This is a com-
munitarian sense of politics and suggests the consensual society
apparently envisaged by Marx as coming after political cultures.
If forms of social discourse and debate were the normal mode of
making major social choices, we would be beyond the privatistic

modes of development typical of our society. In one respect this
would leave history directionless, as the decisions of free people
cannot be predetermined. As Hampshire observes, "there is un-
avoidably a breakdown of clear reasoning in choosing what the fu-
ture is to be."[53] Yet if there were institutions of consensual deci-
sion-making they would provide standards of social deliberation
which would impede reversion to the practices of authoritarian
and individualistic eras.

To what extent can genuinely structural change be pursued
through political means? All moral conservatives view the state as
a dangerous necessity,[54] and its necessity counts against a radical
populism. Yet the emphasis placed upon conversation, dialogue,
narrative, and debate by many conservatives gives their view of
politics an affinity to the above conception. Can such a holistic
view of society be reconciled with a vision of politics which in
many important respects is anti-utopian and pluralistic?

4. THE PERMANENCE OF CONFLICT

The prejudices of history condition those of instinct: traditional
expectations provide initial criteria for discriminating real from
apparent threats, acceptable from unacceptable suffering, etc. It is
reasonable to speak of a single moral "form of life" constituted by
the human propensity to make familiar emotional judgments and
a diversity of moral ways of life defined by different communities
and their customs. Moral conservatism commonly supposes that
discourse between such ways of life must be abnormal, lacking in
criteria for rational agreement, but can these barriers be so seri-
ous?

Jürgen Habermas prominently represents the idea that people
engaged in rational discourse can in principle arrive at a consen-
sus about purposes. His "communicative ethics" constitute a ques-
tion for moral conservatives which few have addressed directly.
Walzer may allude to it in saying, "Ideal contractualism or undis-
torted communication, which represents one approach — not my
own — to justice in particular communities, may well be the only
approach for the globe as a whole," but he deems the centraliza-
tion of power which this might imply as sufficient reason to limit
himself to the local groupings that shape their own internal life.[55]
The limitation may be unnecessary in virtue of an area of agree-

ment between the two accounts which reduces the difference be-
tween internal and external conflict.

Conflicts within society and the soul may be "the stuff of moral-
ity as we ordinarily experience it,"[56] but these are not always deep
conflicts; nor are they undesirable. It is important to generate
"just the right kinds of tension or even conflict, creative rather
than destructive, on the whole and in the long run, between secu-
lar and sacred, local and national, Latin and vernacular, rural
and urban." For "when an institution — a university, say, or a farm,
or a hospital — is the bearer of a tradition of practice or practices,
its common life will be partly, but in a centrally important way,
constituted by a continuous argument as to what a university is
and ought to be or what good farming is or what good medicine
is. Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict."[57] Un-
less a practice is frozen over, competing interpretations of its in-
trinsic goods develop and parties contend for dominance. But if
such competition is an important part of participation, the conflict
is not fundamental. Just as both sides in a game share the desire
that their opponents try to win, there is a complex mutuality
within factional struggles which unites them in a common cause.
Even for the losers, the tension is a locus of meaningful activity
which would not be available were there no conflict. Some people
may remain disappointed or angry at the conclusion of such a
contest, but these responses are arguably superficial.

Such conflicts presuppose a kind of agreement within com-
munities, and, in virtue of being conflicts of ideas, imply a certain
agreement between communities as well. As long as communities
have the analogous institutions which enable them to enter into
opposition at all they share abstract ideas of goods and purposes.
The view that there is no basis for resolving conflicts between dif-
fering ways of life must be qualified accordingly. It cannot be re-
jected outright, since in arguments about purposes there is no re-
quired outcome. No rational path leads from conflict to
harmony.[58] But this is true within communities as well, and in
both cases some outcome may be possible. Debate may give an
abstract idea a dominant concrete interpretation.

Even if an account of such processes can be successfully stated
(a task for the concluding part of this discussion), there remain
fundamental conflicts in which no loss is acceptable. When a con-
flict is not between interpretations of the same abstract goods but
between competing ones no resolution may be possible. When fil-

ial piety conflicts with civic duty, when individual freedoms collide with religious convictions, we have the stuff of moral dilemma and competing absolutes. Are such problems simply nonsense, or must they be regarded as signs of deep difficulties of the sort reflected by the paradoxes arising within logical systems? Do they demonstrate moral conservatism's validity in contrast to its rationalist and Marxist opponents?

Consideration of the Problems

These questions lack neat answers. The problems raised by moral conservatism are complexly interrelated, defying the crisp solutions of deductive demonstration. Only an extended narrative uniting moral psychology, ethical theory, epistemology, and a variety of social studies is likely to convine. Within the scope of a short story, however, it may at least be possible to indicate how various moral ways of life can communicate with one another without glibly accepting the modern worldview or adopting the dubious aspects of revolutionary attempts to replace it. I will briefly develop a version of moral conservatism which interprets the undeniable facts of division and opposition in a way that addresses the difficulties besetting moral appeals in pluralistic societies.

1. Rightful Expectations

Reflecting upon manifest contempt for the traditions of the *ancien régime*, Burke asked, "Why do I feel so differently?" He answered, "because it is *natural* I should; because we are so made to be affected by [such] spectacles with melancholy sentiments . . .; because in those natural feelings we learn great lessons; because in events like these our passions instruct our reason."[59] Little need be added to this statement to see it as an excellent summary of a distinctly conservative account of nature and convention, reason and passion, goods and rights.

The lessons of our feelings are universal aspects of being human, not in being necessary parts of practical rationality but in expressing how the world is seen by any creature capable of fear, shame, resentment, and like sentiments. Melancholy judgments at the sight of royal degradation would not afflict a passionless observer, however skillful in applying abstract rational principles of

utility or justice. Nor would such events deeply perturb a person outside traditions of kingship. The passions instruct reason only when conventions give them content. Natural sentiments establish laws of conscience, but these laws have practical application only when they gain particular meaning from customary institutions. Rational expectations then exist to test emotional responses for appropriateness.

Universal moral laws are not the principles typical of deontological and consequentialist views of ethics. While there may be such principles they are, in Oakshott's view, "merely abridgments" of the coherence exhibited by approvals and disapprovals.[60] Rules of justice do not occur apart from the affective judgments whose intellectual structure and conceptual content contain all that is permanent in moral rationality. Thus, resentment includes a perception of unfairness, and this judgment can be parsed in terms of equal treatment; but our interest in equality has no basis except our tendency to respond in certain ways to certain relationships. No independent principle is responsible; but none is needed, for requiring that equals be treated as equals is fully accounted for by the defining conditions of resentment.

Nor do we need or have available a satisfactory account of rights as universal requirements of human nature. "Our common humanity" refers to nothing clear if it does not describe features of moral psychology common to all human beings, and universality in this sense is consistent with the contingencies of interpretation which explain why we have the particular rights we do — the concrete entitlements attached to any system of social meanings. These rights are goods rather than elements of a framework within which we pursue goods which exist independently of them. The contrary view — that there are universal human rights valid under any social circumstances — presupposes a political tradition whose philosophical expression conflates a universalistic way of life with a set of supposedly universal moral requirements.

This explanation of belief in "rights of man" is better than accounts ascribing it to the decay of convention and conversation in modern society. We are amply bestowed with traditions. In our way of life individual autonomy and independence are important goods; our lives are poorer without them. Freedom is central to our mode of well-being because it expresses a collective sense of rights and responsibilities appropriate in a culture that often finds agreement on specific values difficult. It is no less a collective

sense for consisting of shared meanings which include rightful expectations about the separateness of persons and pursuit of self-interest.

Insofar as there is agreement about the abstract purposes which characterize particular emotions, and insofar as rights arise as protections of these goods, certain abstract rights can be generally acknowledged. Because we experience fear, curiosity, pity, and love it is part of the good life for human beings to be free from danger, to seek knowledge, to give comfort and be at one with others. It is reasonable to expect people everywhere to claim a right to be secure, to learn, to help others and to form personal attachments. A community in which such rights did not exist in some form is hardly imaginable. But these are not human rights in the sense that they are prior to conceptions of the good—for they clearly are not—or in the same sense that they apply universally. The right to security may be expressed as a claim upon private property, upon social welfare, upon housing of certain standard, upon nuclear armament or nuclear disarmament, or in a multitude of ways which differ enormously according to prevailing expectations. The right to learning may be the right to go to school, or the right to hunt with one's father, or the right to read books. No concrete right is universal. Even the right to life is qualified in a myriad of ways and may count for little if people are united in a common pursuit of a higher purpose.

These points reinforce the political neutrality of moral conservatism. What is important for human well-being is that there be scope for the expression of pride, love, curiosity, anger, hope and reverence. No form of civilization has the monopoly upon these opportunities. They are the interest of the moralist rather than the politician, except in a special sense of "politics." George Woodcock says of George Orwell, "The differences between politician and moralist are clear. The first is concerned with acquiring power in order to implement a certain program . . ., and for him the means are always subordinate to the end. For the moralist the means are all-important."[61] The processes by which social decisions are made are central to a progressive account of rightful expectations formulated within the anti-utopian and antirationalistic framework of moral conservatism.

This project is full of pitfalls which do much to sustain the appeal of human rights. Expectations are malleable, easily skewed in wartime situations and psychological experiments. Must we then

view usually deviant behavior as reasonable and acceptable? Two
tentative responses may be offered, subject to later development.
First, human psychology is more convincing as a basis for moral-
ity than are undemonstrable metaphysical notions of "common
humanity." Second, it is not that true moral conservatism must ac-
cept the validity of ostensibly aberrant purposes.

2. THE FUSION OF HORIZONS

Conservative epistemology views human understanding as pos-
sible only against a background of traditional presuppositions or
prejudices. In contrast to accounts of knowledge which assume
that issues can be settled by reference to a neutral standard, the
conservative perspective regards all claims as subject to interpreta-
tions of this traditional background. Understanding comes with a
"fusion of horizons," as Gadamer calls the outcome of testing our
prejudices: "we regain the concepts of an historical past in such a
way that they also include our own comprehension of them."[62]
Such understanding becomes remote when interpretation is
complicated by the incongruent sets of presuppositions of other
traditions, but hermeneutical problems are not fundamentally dif-
ferent within and between cultures. That a "fusion of horizons" is
not limited to past and present is suggested by the similarity be-
tween Gadamer's concept and some views expressed by Paulo
Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Describing "dialogical" education
involving "revolutionary leaders," Freire says that the teachers
from outside aim not to give information but to engage in "the-
matic investigation" of the "ideas, values, concepts, and hopes" of
their students, leading to a "synthesis" of the world views of both
parties to the enrichment of both."[63] Habermas develops a similar
model of discussion leading to the formation of "generalizable in-
terests." This process of discursive will-formation leads to valid
common purposes, contrary to the modern epistemology which
denies validity to final ends.[64]
This cluster of ideas is obscure and complex. In comparing sev-
eral philosophers, I have neglected some important controversies,
including a well-known dispute between Gadamer (and other
moral conservatives) and Habermas (along with others seeking to
retain some form of Marxist holism). My effort is limited to at-
tempting to develop a model for the above metaphors — fusion,
synthesis, generalization — capable of accommodating these di-

verse perspectives and showing what is right and what is wrong in the idea that "tradition is the best basis for the practical life."[65]

Only an endless flux of interpretations can be expected unless we can identify a justifiable conception of human nature. We cannot do so on philosophical grounds. Grant notes that "it is feasible to wonder whether modern assumptions may be basically inhuman," but it is impossible to imagine arguments which would "determine the truth about these ultimate matters."[66] It is because philosophical discourse is in this sense characteristically "abnormal" that any dependable conception of human nature will have to be more psychological than metaphysical.

The conservative emphasis on the passions enables us to treat disagreements about evaluation as differences in interpretation of the same basic human purposes and to imagine conversations overcoming the barriers to agreement built into the modern worldview. The prejudices of curiosity, pride, and resentment consist in distinctive ideas, and these ideas — novelty, achievement, injury — have a limited range of possible interpretations. The corresponding purposes — knowledge, recognition, atonement — have the support of good reasons when the prejudices are educated by experience and argument. Underlying such rational desires is a kingdom of human ends, a system of shared meanings and agreements about the kinds of things which can be intelligibly desired.[67] While these underlying meanings are abstract rather than those of a particular community, their existence entails that any two traditions should be "able to recognize each other as advancing moral contentions on issues of importance" and that all human traditions "share some common features."[68] Thus any two can in principle be part of the same interpretive circle.

The important fact is that natural agreements do exist. I will not here elaborate the qualifications required for a precise statement of the limits of agreement. Without them no community would be possible. Given them we all possess a common concept of the good life shaped by desirable ends. We may construe these ends differently, but their existence lets us envisage the creation of common points of view even within pluralistic civilization. We know how to compare diverse conceptions of novelty, achievement, injury, etc., and we are able to understand the associated purposes in the light of the rational expectations which give these ends a concrete form different from our own. During this imaginative sharing of alternative bodies of experience and tradition

our perspectives may expand and we come to understand what was unclear.

Adult and child, champion and novice, friend and stranger assess novelty, achievement, and injury differently. This is not a barrier to mutual understanding and respect. The same may be said of differences between traditions and ways of life: they are differences of the same logical kind, for the concept of the good for human beings provides a key of interpretation. It opens another door as well. Discourse about the practical life does not have to be backward-looking. The future is also a relevant horizon, and we can formulate expectations as to what that future should be. While this process may begin from existing traditions, it is not bound by them. We can set out to change conventions and the rights attaching to them. Let us explore this theme in reconsidering the conservative rejection of Marxism.

3. THE POSSIBILITY OF POSTMODERNISM

Moral conservatives have not seriously explored the possibilities of a postmodern society whose course of development is deliberately and collectively determined rather than occurring as the unplanned result of countless private transactions and political contests. The pluralism of the viewpoint appears deeply at odds with the totalistic vision of a society governed by consensus. There are nevertheless grounds for asserting the compatibility of moral conservatism with a social radicalism which protects communities within a society capable of defining its broader purposes and direction.

This social radicalism adds to the conservative critique of modernity the idea of a rational society. A rational individual is one who pursues coherent objectives according to an effective plan; a rational society acts to further its legitimate aspirations. Such purposes require agreement, since they would otherwise represent only a fragment of society and reflect social divisions analogous to divisions within a person who strives after conflicting goals. Agreements of this kind can be described. They characterize societies whose stable traditions provide a sure practical guide despite the continuities of conflict typical of social institutions. If we are interested in the idea of collective will-formation and action, however, we require another guide. A condition of its existence is that,

while conflicts will remain, there will be no systematic or deeply divisive opposition in postmodern society.

The best recent model for consensual social direction comes from Habermas. Here is a severe summary of his view of discourse within a "communication community": When participants in discussion are motivated only by the cooperative search for truth their consensus on accepting a norm expresses a rational purpose. The rationality of such a "discursively formed will" consists in the validity of common interests which are ascertained without force or deception. Because this consensus can arise only through "generalizable" interests, or "needs that can be communicatively shared," the result is much different from a social contract. Social-contract accounts of collective will-formation take for granted "an impenetrable pluralism of apparently ultimate value orientations" and are therefore limited to "a decisionistic treatment of practical questions." These limits are overcome when the generalizability of interests can be tested in argument. Of course, such pluralism is a fact, but what Habermas disputes is the assumption that we cannot distinguish generalizable interests from those that are and remain particular.[69]

How these abstract propositions are to be understood can provoke argument. I have rehearsed them not to contribute to that debate but to appropriate a framework which can be filled in a manner consistent with moral conservatism. I will do this by elaborating an interesting interplay between particular and generalizable interests earlier suggested as a way of denying any fundamental place to conflict in society. The main argument is simple. Interests can be argumentatively tested only if they are attached to cognitive states. In the last analysis, the only interests of this sort are those which arise in judgment-making sentiments. These sentiments do not themselves define needs, but they do provide the common conceptual format which makes argument about purposes possible. It is through such argument that they can gain a specific interpretation which can be generally accepted.

How can agreement be expected on the basis of a common conceptual format in which the concepts are inherently contestable? Contingencies of individual experience, circumstance, disposition, and ideology create divergent interpretations of security, achievement, suffering, and the like, and give rise to many different particular interests which vie for supremacy with those of other people. These interests lack demonstrable validity, and no one has

described how contests between them can be settled through argument alone. It may be necessary for argument to come to an end in a decision in favor of one side, just as a jury often goes beyond the evidence presented. While a "decisionistic" treatment of practical issues is inadequate, authoritative judgments do often have a decisionistic element, and it is not difficult to identify other social practices of which this is true. The determinations of any corporate body often consist in choosing between alternatives both of which have defenders, but the choice once made becomes that of the whole. Such deliberative processes end by creating generalized interests whose validity is not impaired by the fact that some desires are denied satisfaction.

Political deliberation is the most important case. When freely contending parties offer their proposals in the setting of electoral confrontation, no side will gain unanimous support. The outcome can nevertheless be decisive as long as the debate concerns competing visions of the social good. Because they are open to interpretation, politically salient concepts such as security, relief, liberty, and equality are natural loci of competing viewpoints; but when a decision is made, an interpretation is, in principle, fixed. An abstract good is given a particular social meaning which even those on the losing side can accept. They do not get what they would have preferred; but no one's rational purposes are denied, there being no such purposes prior to the contestable abstract good's being given a particular interpretation. Thereafter, the social facts sustain certain rightful expectations.

Suppose that public argument leads a government to remove the personal cost attached to medical attention. Individuals then have reason to expect protections they did not previously enjoy. This gives new meaning to the concept of security, and because security is undeniably a good, the validity of expectations of medical service becomes generally acknowledged—even by those who may have argued against public health measures on the grounds that they undermine other values or that social resources could be better expended. Opposition is entirely reasonable as long as the interpretation of security remains unsettled, but once the matter is decided by a valid political decision a rational purpose is created and makes a claim superior to any desires which lack the support of good reasons.

This account of publicly determinable rational purposes is both pluralistic and holistic. It recognizes the permanence of conten-

tion, choice, and a diversity of goods while at the same time describing the possibility of a normative totality of generalizable interests or communicatively shared needs. It also suggests a sense of politics consistent with modes of social decision acceptable to Marx. Social measures enacted after long public debate are implementations of the social will rather than impositions of political leaders. They exemplify a mode of social development which could be strengthened by encouraging institutions of public debate. By providing access for ordinary people to influence legislative discussion, by opening up the ownership of mass media, by extending the issues subject to collective bargaining, and in many other ways, new and deeper expectations about popular sovereignty would develop. Class structures would be undermined by the attrition of the right of private interests to make socially crucial decisions. Since there is no predicting the outcome of unconstrained public discussion, this is very much the matter of politics as a means rather than as a program to be introduced. The means-centered, politically neutral, approach of moral conservatism is consistent with Marx's vision of a democratic society.

4. AFTER CONFLICT

Where agreement is possible, conflict may end. Moral conservatism's emphasis on human passions opens up this possibility. Were we to encounter a race of beings that lacked emotions or experienced sentiments unknown to us, there could be little communication. But if our orientation to the world has cognitive and purposive elements in common, then it is possible to get acquainted with one another. If the differences between us are not biological but only features of our experience and acquired expectations, a meaningful conversation and a meeting of the minds can be imagined.

The history of social conflicts and schisms identifies the extremer divergences in the interpretation of goods which characterize any institution or people, but the inevitable formation of sides and parties occurs within the broader set of expectations and understandings which characterize a common way of life, or at least a common form of life. Are these common understandings and expectations sufficient to cope with the kind of pessimism expressed by Hampshire in saying "we ought not to plan for a final

reconciliation of conflicting moralities in a perfect social order; we ought not even to expect the conflicts between moralities, which prescribe different priorities, will gradually disappear, as rational methods in the sciences and in law are diffused"?[70] As a reflection on rationalistic moral philosophy these claims have a point, but they are too truistic to constitute real pessimism. In order to test this claim, I will examine the most difficult forms of conflict for those continuing to entertain some conception of a rational society.

Many cases of conflict can be set aside at once. We have already noted the superficial opposition characteristic of the intellectual and athletic contests which occur within a well-defined structure of agreement. These rigidly rule-governed activities exhibit significant analogies to social institutions describable in terms of their constitutive rules. Institutions differ from games in possessing the normative openness evident in competing interpretations of their purposes. In the case of political institutions there is an inherent tendency for division into government and opposition, and a tendency within each group for further division to occur. This happens whenever conflicts are primarily conflicts of ideas whose validity has as much to be decided as discovered. Such disagreements are not to be regretted, for they represent a form of conflict we can neither avoid nor wish to avoid as long as all parties share a commitment to the institution.

Institutions can be used for ends which are independent of them, as when interest groups engage in parliamentary politics as a means to social revolution. Here effective conversation is blocked, and words serve as surrogates for violence. The absence of a *modus vivendi* in such situations identifies a conflict which marks a limit to social rationality. Such a limit is defined by cases of pure material conflict. They are defined by the absence of any redeeming quality for those who lose, and they are rarer than might at first appear. We tend to view competition for scarce resources as primary causes of the conflicts of interest which create problems of justice, but if Walzer and others are right the matter is more complicated. If all goods are social goods whose value is determined by common meanings, then material conflicts can also be conflicts of ideas. Competition for resources is also a battle for freedom, security, knowledge, leisure, or other meaningful ends. To lose such a battle is disappointing, but it need not be totally

alienating because it is a well-understood possibility with any competitive sphere.

I am not suggesting that, when social struggle turns from ferocious debate to assassination and class warfare, common understandings reign even there. They may, but in many instances the collision seems better modeled as physical forces. Such conflicts are misfortunes, but they are not irreparably damaging to the view of a rational, postmodern society. Insofar as this is the view of a consensual society beyond class conflict, these moral calamities are only symptoms of the imperfections and absurdities of our social order. The crucial question is whether such conflicts always result from unfortunate circumstances alone or whether they sometimes constitute real moral tragedy which the prophets of rational society fail to recognize.

Moral conservatives are inclined to believe that insuperable conflict between moral ways of life is part of the human condition. In one respect this is true. Everyone faces choices between possible ways of life — choices which one cannot make without being basically changed. Sartre's freedom fighter has to decide between a course of action which requires courage, violence, dedication, deceit, selflessness, and loyalty and another which calls for friendship and affection, gentleness, acquiescence in public injustice, and passivity in the fact of others' suffering. Neither is wholly desirable, and to achieve the one is to impair the other.[71] But are the sacrifices required in this case basically different from those involved in the specialized lives of artists, athletes, politicians, or priests? They also occur in the lives of ordinary people; and, contrary to enemies of specialization like Marx, they are a commonplace of the moral form of life. The modern mode of existence includes a vast range of choice among alternatives, but some desirable choices make others unavailable. The absence of rational solutions to such conflicts between (and within) ways of life poses no difficulty for a postmodern form of moral conservatism: they are permanent features of human reality.

Antigone's dilemma illustrates a more serious problem, as do contemporary disputes around life-and-death questions so deeply felt that conversation breaks off. How can discussion go on if it implies even momentary toleration of actions seen as absolutely awful? Democratic decision is no solution to such problems, and destructive conflict therefore threatens to make consensus a futile dream. But while moral conservatism convincingly rebuts ration-

alistic moral theory, it does so in such a way that implacable moral animosities must be viewed as irrational. They exist where competing absolutes prevent continuing discussion, but modern moral conservatism has no room for absolutes. Because moral judgments are expressed in concepts which are inherently contestable, they cannot claim indubitability. The abstract moral laws inherent in human emotions are unquestionably correct, but their application to concrete cases cannot occur apart from habits and inclinations which have no permanent validity. If all goods are social goods, then all evils are social evils and can be dealt with by human beings. Not even the moral disagreements which resist rational solution invalidate the compatibility of moral conservatism with a progressive critique of modernity.

CONCLUSION

I have been more concerned to define avenues for exploring a tendency in moral philosophy than to defend a sunny version of an often dark point of view. The institutions of public discourse I have sketched will not develop easily in a world that has only a dim sense of public meanings, and the very idea of such institutions raises serious problems about totalitarian democracy and coercive consensus. Yet the possibility of a progressive moral conservatism demands attention. From the conservative point of view, the Marxist intellectual heritage is too deeply embedded in our psyches to be easily eliminated from our understanding of reality, and the liberal tradition defines a set of values too readily dismissed as reflecting a decline rather than a revision of common meanings. Moreover, the fit between progressive conceptions of humanity and the realities stressed by moral conservatives is too good to be ignored. The passions and social institutions form the center of the conservative intellectual tradition. Finding these ideas expressed in a conception of social order and purpose which brings together emotional purposes and institutions of communication gives us a reason to welcome the new vigor of this view of the moral life.

NOTES
[1] G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," in *Ethics, Religion and Politics*, Vol. 3 of her *Collected Papers* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), p. 26.

[2] Thomas Nagel, review of *Morality and Conflict*, by S. Hampshire, *New York Times Book Review*, 8 April 1984. The term *moral conservatism* is Nagel's.

[3] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue, A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 30. See also pp. 118-19.

[4] Stuart Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 166.

[5] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 204-205.

[6] Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), pp. 28-29.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 10. Compare MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 176.

[8] Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 141.

[9] Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, pp. 75, 86; Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, p. 181.

[10] José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1957), p. 96.

[11] Walzer, *Spheres of Justice,* pp. xiv and 192.

[12] Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, p. 8. Compare MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 119.

[13] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, p. 21.

[14] Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, pp. 141 and 159.

[15] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p.152. See also p. 133.

[16] Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, pp. 5-6.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

[19] Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, pp. 160 and 100.

[20] Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (London: Methuen, 1974), p. 58.

[21] Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, p. 21.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 152.

[23] Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics*, pp. 1, 61, and 67.

[24] Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, p. 136.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 115

[26] Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, pp. 8 and 314.

[27] Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics*, p. 123.

[28] George Grant, *English-Speaking Justice* (Sackville, New Brunswick: Mount Allison University, 1974), p. 74.

[29] Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 133.

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 177-79. Compare MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 206.

[31] Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, p. xv.

[32] Charles Fried, *Right and Wrong* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 118.

[33] Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, p. xv.

[34] On these points see *ibid.*, together with MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 62, and Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, p. 91.

[35] See Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, p. xv, and Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, p. 136.

[36] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p. 118. Cf. Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, p. 49.

[37] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 65-67.

[38] Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, p. 96; Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, p. 7; Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, pp. 140 and 190.

[39] Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, pp. 115-16.

[40] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, pp. 140-41. Compare George Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), pp. 95-96.

[41] Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, p. 132.

[42] Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics*, pp. 59-79, and Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, p. 149.

[43] James W. Cornman and Keith Lehrer, *Philosophical Problems and Arguments: An Introduction* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), p. 367.

[44] See Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 48-56.

[45] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 377.

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. D. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 9.

[48] Compare Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, pp. 7-9, 133.

[49] On considered attitudes see Stuart Hampshire, *Freedom of the Individual* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), pp. 85-95.

[50] Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, pp. xiv and 28. Cf. George Woodcock, *The Crystal Spirit, A Study of George Orwell* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966), p. 234. I owe this reference to Dr. Louis Greenspan.

[51] Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, pp. 81 and 140-52.

[52] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, pp. 36, 134.

[53] Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, p. 118. Compare Woodcock, *The Crystal Spirit*, pp. 247, 285.

[54] See Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, pp. 15, 281-84, and Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, p. 186. Compare Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, pp. 117-20, 122-23, and Woodcock, *The Crystal Spirit*, p. 235.

[55] Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, p. 30.

[56] Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, p. 116.

[57] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 160, 206.

[58] Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, p. 152.

[59] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 175.

[60] Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics*, p. 105.

[61] Woodcock, *The Crystal Spirit*, p. 282.

[62] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1975), pp. 273 and 337.

[63] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury, 1970), pp. 91, 181-85.

[64] Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), pp. 102-110.

[65] Grant, *Lament for a Nation*, p. 96.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[67] For defense of the points in this paragraph see my article, "Emile's Moral Development: A Rousseauan Perspective on Kohlberg," *Human Development* 26 (1983): 198-212.

[68] See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (1984), p. 276.

[69] See Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, pp. 107-108.

[70] Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, p. 160.

[71] See *ibid.*, pp. 33 and 119.