

Discernment

So that you may be able to discern what is best. *Phil. 1:10*

Being Responsible in an Irresponsible Age

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■ My 10-month-old son, Peter, isn't walking yet, but in his wheeled walker-chair he can rumble anywhere. The chair has a food tray, so he can take along his Cheerios. It's always easy to find Peter; we just follow the cereal trail. Recently my wife, Christine, told me she likes eating out because Peter can make as big a mess as he wants, and she doesn't have to clean it up.

She isn't alone. Restaurants are popular not only because they offer food and ambiance, but also because they promote a benign irresponsibility. At a restaurant someone will park your car (at least at the nicer ones), help you get seated, serve you, and clean up after you. All you are responsible for is the check. Much of the American economy, in fact, depends on promoting benign irresponsibility.

Sometimes, however, the irresponsibility promoted is more malignant. For example, although gambling is a zero-sum bet that produces nothing, Americans spent \$586 billion on casinos, lotteries, and other legal forms of gambling in 1996. This is more than they paid for groceries (\$437.9 billion), clothes (\$318.4 billion), or cars (\$117.6 billion). Meanwhile, an estimated 4 million adults and teens are gambling addicts, extracting a social cost of \$40-50 billion annually. (By comparison, U.S. Protestant mission agencies take in less than \$3 billion every year).

In our values-free age of "no fault" divorce and auto insurance, many citizens yearn for someone who will take responsibility. Sadly,

as the media reveal, evangelicals too often succumb to adultery, divorce, and other forms of irresponsibility. While we love to quote Jesus' words, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's," we seldom do either very well.

The struggle between law and grace is as old as Christianity itself, going back to the cross.

I was attracted to Christ in part because I didn't have to do anything to earn eternal life. Yet since becoming a Christian, I've seen my responsibilities only increase—to my God, my family, my church, and even myself. And that isn't all bad. We can't remain in our walker-chairs forever. Perhaps we rights-conscious Christians should adopt a Bill of Responsibilities.

Yet being responsible needn't be grim. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,"

Jesus said, "for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

In these pages you will sample some of the fruit of CACE's November 12, 1998, public forum on "Being Responsible in an Irresponsible Age," along with several varied and outstanding contributions on the theme from Wheaton College faculty members. May this issue give you much food for responsible thought.

Stan Guthrie, editor of Discernment

"The struggle between law and grace is as old as Christianity itself, going back to the cross."

Theological Foundations for Personal Responsibility

By David W. Gill

■ What is “personal responsibility”?

Responsibility means accountability. The basic meaning of “response” is “answer.” If you are responsible, you are answerable, you are accountable. In a second sense, “responsible” and “irresponsible” are terms of praise or reproach (not just statements of fact as in the first definition). Thus, to be personally responsible means that you willingly and reliably agree to care for something and be held accountable. We praise someone by saying, “She is very responsible.”



David W. Gill first gave these remarks during the CACE public forum on “Being Responsible in an Irresponsible Age,” held November 12, 1998, at Wheaton College.

The Theological Foundation

The theological foundation of personal responsibility begins in Creation. Man and woman are created by the word of God and then are addressed by their Creator. Man and woman are made in the image and likeness of God. We will note three aspects of God’s creative word and act that serve as the foundations of personal responsibility: freedom, knowledge, and relationship.

First, just as the Creator is free to choose to make something, name it, and care for it—so the creature-in-his-image is made free to choose to make something, name it, and care for it. Personal responsibility is grounded in *freedom*. Human beings have the capacity and the opportunity to make such choices. If they did not, any notion of personal responsibility would be a sham. Part of this might be described as “freedom of the will.” Humans are capable of making choices, of self-transcendence, of willing one thing or another. Of course, no one is wholly free and unconditioned (by genetics, chemistry, social conditioning, demonic influence, psychological need, the Holy Spirit, etc.); but neither is anyone wholly bound and conditioned. (If the hard-core determinists or hyper-Calvinists are correct, there is no point in talking about personal responsibility.)

Now everyone does not experience the same degree of freedom, capacity, and opportunity. “To whom much has been given, much shall be required” (Luke 12:48). A greater degree of responsibility attaches to greater maturity, intelligence, power, awareness, and opportunity.

Second, personal responsibility is grounded in *knowledge*. No matter how free we may be, if we don’t know about something, we cannot be held responsible for it (except in the case of willful ignorance). Adam and Eve were personally responsible not just because they were free but because they had been told by God what they could and could not do. They *knew*. Of course, knowledge without freedom relieves one of personal responsibility, except in the case of antecedent irresponsibility.

Third, personal responsibility is grounded in *relationship*. To respond is to answer to someone else. A “response” requires a “stimulus.” In the creation accounts of Genesis, we can see both vertical and horizontal relationships. The Creator/creature “vertical” relationship brings with it responsibility. God speaks to man and woman, giving them tasks, opportunities, and duties, making them responsible. God pursues and questions them: “Where are you?” “What have you done?” “Where is your brother?” and so on. Human beings are accountable, answerable, responsible to God.

We are also responsible to others. The commission to be fruitful and multiply and to care for the earth was given to man and woman in partnership. They communicate with each other; they depend on each other—it is not good to dwell alone. We cannot live without others; it is subhuman and practically impossible.

Now, all relationships are not the same; responsibilities vary according to the characteristics and expectations of various relationships. Friends have responsibilities that exceed what they owe to others. We have responsibilities to those with whom we work, to our neighbors with whom we share a space, to our fellow Christians with whom we share

a Lord and a life, to our fellow citizens with whom we share a political order, and to our fellow human beings with whom we share an earth.

The same goes for the more hierarchical, role-related responsibilities of parents and children, employers and employees, church leaders and members, elected officials and the electorate. Roles and relationships determine responsibilities. In general, the more powerful partner in such relationships has greater responsibility: "We who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1).

On Holding Ourselves and Others Responsible

We must hold ourselves accountable. Accountability, of course, requires authority. But to the extent that we have freedom, we have authority over ourselves; we have choices to make about what we are and do. Responsibility begins, then, with self-examination, self-judgment, self-control, self-discipline (see Gal. 5:23).

We also hold each other accountable. Sometimes the only sanction we can bring is our disapproval or rebuke. We can confront the irresponsible one. Of course, we should always try to restore him or her in a spirit of meekness and gentleness (Gal. 6:1). Recall, too, the counsel of Peter to persuade non-Christians in a spirit of meekness and gentleness (1 Pet. 3:16).

In extreme cases, we may withdraw from the relationship (the friendship, business, church, political movement, nation); we may invest our energy and support in a rival or a replacement of the one judged irresponsible. If we are in a position of special authority and responsibility, we may be able to force the one who has been irresponsible either to compensate for losses due to his or her irresponsibility, or to give up a position so as to preclude future losses and harms. Not to exercise such authority and hold people under our leadership accountable is itself irresponsible. Often it is actually demeaning and harmful not to hold people responsible for what they do. It is demeaning because we are implying that they are too weak, sick, or foolish to be responsible. It is harmful because people cannot grow in strength and health unless they face discipline and resistance.

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Ultimately, in a theological perspective, all people are accountable to God. We will all have to give an account to God some day. Of course, this truth must not become an excuse to evade the exercise of responsible oversight and discipline. Nevertheless, it is a strange irony that sometimes those who most fervently proclaim their belief in human responsibility to the living God show the least confidence that God actually will hold people accountable. Vindictiveness signals the absence of true faith in God.

A Call for Responsibility

Only Christians who believe in the Creator and the authority of Scripture are likely to be leveraged into more responsible lives by my argument. But we Christians could well use a regular call to personal responsibility from our pastors and teachers. Responsible Christians in businesses, schools, and neighborhoods would have a powerful salt and light effect on the world. As in all things, "judgment begins with the household of God." Let's put our own house in order.

To those who are not likely to respond enthusiastically to biblical authority, Christians can at least offer a proposal for thought, something like this:

1. Without more responsible behavior, our culture will certainly become more dangerous and violent, more wasteful and filthy, more lonely, more corrupt.
2. Responsibility goes with freedom—let's crusade for freedom for all the people and for the responsibility that accompanies it.
3. Responsibility goes with knowledge—let's work against ignorance and for education and the responsibility that accompanies all true knowledge.
4. Responsibility goes with good relationships—let's build good friendships, families, neighborhoods, and work teams, holding each other accountable to rise to our highest potentials.
5. Responsibility accompanies having the right kind of personal strength and character—we can't have true, lasting dignity and pride if we are irresponsible.



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Understanding Personal Responsibility

By W. Jay Wood

■ If the first sin was eating the forbidden fruit, the second was foisting the blame on someone else. Editorialists, educators, and clerics across the land routinely express concern that personal responsibility is eroding in contemporary American society, that we are fast becoming a nation of “victims” whose faults are always traceable to someone or something other than ourselves. We’ve gone from Truman’s “the buck stops here,” to Clinton’s “pass the buck at all costs.”

In a recent interview with some Wheaton College faculty, C. Everett Koop, former surgeon general of the United States, listed the loss of personal responsibility as one of the three gravest ills besetting contemporary American life. (Greed and racism rounded out Koop’s trio). So, at his prodding, the Center for Applied Christian Ethics chose personal responsibility as its theme for 1998-1999. I cannot solve the problem posed by Dr. Koop. Instead, I wish to explore some of the complexities that make solutions so elusive.

The Forces that Shape Behavior

Perhaps there is truth in the charge that contemporary Americans are more prone than in times past to claim that their personal failings are attributable to forces beyond their control. But it is also true that science has made us more aware of the forces that shape our behavior. We now know that Ritalin, rather than a spanking, can enable Johnny to read by allowing him to pay attention, and that Prozac, not a pep talk, will lift Susie’s depression. Clearly, science is causing us to rethink the extent of our personal responsibility.

My own puzzlement was highlighted recently when an acquaintance lamented about

the troubles he and his wife were having with their teenage son. The kid had indeed been in a peck of trouble at school and with the law, prompting in his parents feelings of anxiety, guilt, self-doubt, and regret. This acquaintance then explained how these ill feelings had been relieved when a psychologist gave them a booklet entitled “Nobody’s Fault.” There they were told how ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), ODD (Operant Defiant Disorder), and various chemical imbalances were the real culprits underlying their son’s difficulties, not lack of discipline, parental supervision, and personal effort. I checked my initial uncharitable suspicions. The business of imputing blame, I realized, has indeed become more difficult than it used to be.

A Gardener and His Garden

Once upon a time, the prevailing view was that a moral agent bears a relationship to his moral character analogous to that of a gardener to his garden. If I am a moral agent, then I am responsible for my “character garden” and whatever crop grows there—be it anger, laziness, lust, generosity, compassion, jealousy, patience, and so forth. But don’t we believe nowadays that a gardener is never entirely responsible for the soil, quality of seed, weather, presence of pestilence and blight, and the agricultural practices into which he is initiated? In the same vein, do we think that a person is responsible for his body’s biochemistry, the presence or absence of morally acute and nurturing parents, the moral traditions into which he’s reared, and the opportunities for moral growth and reflection that will play so important a role in yielding the fruit of his character? While such considerations may not lead us to absolve the agent of all responsibility, they do suggest that responsibility is a state that comes in degrees. In most cases I act neither independently of all causal forces, nor am I their hapless puppet.



Photos by Dave Wittig

W. Jay Wood explores some of the complexities of understanding personal responsibility and why solutions are so elusive.

The Necessary Conditions for Responsibility

We need to consider the scope of personal responsibility and the conditions often thought essential to it. The analogy of the gardener shows that the scope of responsibility extends forward into the future and backward into the past.

“Backward-looking responsibility” looks at the things I have done and left undone. If, owing to my neglect, my garden yields stunted specimens of vegetative life, I am answerable. “Forward-looking responsibility” requires that I see to it that certain things happen. As a gardener I take on the burdens of tilling, sowing, weeding, and watering in a timely fashion, along with whatever personal training is needed.

As a teacher I am responsible to make sure that my grades are turned in; as a driver, that I obey the laws of the road. Not all of our duties, however, are ones of our choosing. I am a child of God and of earthly parents, and have corresponding obligations of religious and filial piety that I did not choose. I may be required to defend my country and participate in its democratic processes. Sometimes we are rightly praised and blamed for things we do not do, but which fall under our purview, that happen “on our watch,” so to speak. CEOs, military commanders, and department chairs might be fit subjects of praise and blame for the actions of those under their authority.

Two conditions have traditionally been deemed essential if I am to be held responsible for my behavior. First, actions for which I am responsible are ones with respect to which I am *free*; that is, any action for which I am held responsible must be one in which I could have acted other than I did. My actions must be ones over which I had a suitable measure of control. The old dictum “ought implies can” says that if I am obligated to act in a certain way, then I must be able to do it, *however difficult it may be*. Consequently, we do not

blame babies for lacking bladder control, or narcoleptics for sleeping through classes.

Actions done under compulsion or coercion typify what we mean by lacking “a suitable measure of control.” We do not blame the clerk for handing over the money while being threatened with a gun. We say the clerk was under “rational compulsion”; no other choice makes rational sense in the circumstances. Here the easy cases end and controversy begins.

An incident from Chaim Potok’s novel *My Name Is Asher Lev* illustrates this question of freedom. Asher Lev is an art prodigy. But he is also a Hasidic Jew, part of a community whose devotion to the Torah, and to the cause of persecuted Jews,

leaves no room for idle artistic pursuits. The conflict between his gifts and his tradition draws to a head when he sketches nudes and defiles a holy book by drawing in it. Asher claims not to have been in control of his actions nor even to remember doing them, even when his parents press him, saying, “An animal can’t help it. A human can always help it.”

Where Do We Draw the Line?

And there’s the rub. Where do we draw the line between it being difficult to act other than we did, and it being impossible?

How much are we willing to attribute to sickness and other mitigating and exonerating excuses? When do such appeals lessen the degree of our responsibility, and when do they eliminate it? An alcoholic may not now have the power to refuse a drink, but his loss of control may be the result of choices at an earlier stage over which he did have power.

Further, we sometimes think it appropriate to hold persons responsible for involuntary sins, sins that it is reasonable to think the agents were unable to avoid. If a child is reared in a racist home, attends a white supremacist church, and is

“We now know that Ritalin, rather than a spanking, can enable Johnny to read by allowing him to pay attention, and that Prozac, not a pep talk, will lift Susie’s depression.”



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“Our judgments imputing responsibility to others can be very complicated. Yet our social context requires us to make such judgments.”

surrounded by racial bigotry, the child may well become a racist. As Aristotle notes in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, “So the difference between one and another training in habits in our childhood is not a light matter, but important, or rather, all-important.” Or, as Proverbs puts it, “Train a child up in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). While a child so reared may be able to help acting in a cruel or racist way, he may not be able to help being cruel and racist. Social structures thus pass along the sins of the fathers into the third and fourth generation, showing us that personal responsibility is usually nested within a larger context of social responsibility.

Knowledge of Good and Evil

The second condition for our being responsible is that we *know what we are doing*. A 12-month-old waddles over to the family dog and pulls its ears. We scold him (a pedagogical device), but we don’t blame him; he lacks a proper moral awareness of his action. Similarly, certified sociopaths and the mentally insane are absolved of responsibility because they are, if not altogether unaware of their behavior, not aware of its significance. Either they cannot tell the difference between right and wrong, or they are incapable of discerning what features of their circumstances are morally salient. Was Jesus’ request, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do,” made because those who crucified him couldn’t grasp the significance of their actions?

Simply being ignorant, however, does not excuse us if we could have remedied our ignorance. First, our ignorance is sometimes due to our own negligence. “You would have known the paper was due today,” we tell our students, “if you had gotten notes for the day you were absent.” Second, we may not intend a specific action, but we are still rightly held accountable. I may not know in advance that my ox will gore that man, but I’m still responsible if I know it has gored others (Exod. 21:28–29). Third, our consciences may be ill-formed, so that while we believe we

are doing good, we are doing wrong. Many hippies may have indulged in sexual promiscuity under the banner of peace and free love, but they were culpable nonetheless.

A Final Complication

The conditions for responsibility arise from factors within the moral agent: an awareness of one’s actions and a suitable measure of control. I conclude, however, with yet another complication. Sometimes responsibility accrues to us, not by virtue of the way we are as persons but because of the way the world is. Suppose David, Bruce, and Mark set out to assassinate the mayor. David fires his rifle, but as he does so, his hand is blown by a gust of wind and the shot goes wide. Seconds before the mayor is lined up in the cross-hairs of Bruce’s rifle, he is overcome with a sneezing fit, making it impossible for Bruce to shoot him. Mark, however, fires his rifle and succeeds. While Mark will be held responsible in ways the others are not, it is merely luck that the others are not equally to blame. We’ve all acted irresponsibly and maybe even malevolently and been the beneficiaries of good luck: Our bald tire held out and no accidents occurred, our rough play resulted in no injury, our failure to prepare for class came on the one day the professor was out ill. While good fortune has made us less responsible than others, it has not made us morally superior.

Discernment Needed

Our judgments imputing responsibility to others can be very complicated. Yet our social context requires us to make such judgments. We do not have the luxury of sitting back and letting God sort it all out, even if that sometimes seems the best approach. And, as is plain to see, such judgments do not submit to any mechanical decision-making procedure, but call for a healthy measure of discernment, understanding, and practical wisdom. We can only expect that such judgments will grow increasingly difficult as we learn more about the ways our bodies and environments influence our behaviors.

The Bible and Conflict Management

By Mischelle Causey-Drake

■ Often we think of conflict as something negative, but conflict itself is neutral. Your response to it is what is important.

Indeed, there are absolute benefits to conflict. Through conflict you can glorify God, by growing more like Christ and serving others.

As a Christian, how can you deal with conflict responsibly? As an attorney, sometimes I successfully

completed my tasks morally, but only because I was willing to listen to God, look for the answer in the Word, and follow the steps below. While it's not easy, if you are responsible in your management of conflict, people will begin to honor your approach, respect it, and perhaps implement it in their own lives.

While the Bible presents numerous ways of dealing with conflict—including church discipline, arbitration, and other formalized systems—I would like to focus on mediation, or negotiation. Instead of bickering about the command to eat unclean food, Daniel negotiated a plan allowing him to eat just vegetables. As Daniel's jailers moved through the process, they realized that Daniel's was the better plan. In this case, conflict was beneficial. In other cases, inner conflicts particularly, it can be very detrimental. Consider Judas. After his inner conflict, he betrayed the Lord and killed himself.

Looking Inside

Conflict is basically caused by the frustration of a need. The question is, How do you respond to it? If the offense is minor, Scripture tells us to overlook it, assuming that doing so will not hurt you or someone else. So you walk away from it, so to speak. But

if the offense is major, first remove the log from your own eye (Matt. 7:5). Look at your attitude. What do you bring to the situation? Why is there a conflict? What are the circumstances? You must first address your own issues, and then be willing to confess whatever sinful words or actions you have engaged in, so that people can be reconciled.

Second, go beyond the conflict and look at the root. What is the other person attempting to gain? What are this person's expectations? When you begin to look at the other's motives or interests, you can really begin to understand the conflict. If you try to understand how someone else is dealing with this conflict, you gain a different perspective. You are able to move beyond yourself and your own desires and look at what the other person needs or may want out of the process. That leads you to a healthy resolution, to a way of communicating more effectively, so that both of you can win.

Confrontation and Reconciliation

Third, Matthew 18:15 and Galatians 6:1 tell us to go and show our brother his fault. It may

just be a minor confrontation, when you have to say there is something that you just don't want to do because it's not right. How? First, you are personally responsible to demonstrate meekness and gentleness. You are to encourage and build up the person as you go through the process.

Finally, after you've shown your brother his fault, the ultimate goal is reconciliation. Remind him of what God has done for him through Christ. That will make your job a lot easier. When we resolve conflict as Christians, we are fortunate, because we don't have to do it ourselves. We have an instruction manual, and we have Christ Jesus as an example, as it says in Ephesians 4:32. Ultimately, our strength for resolving conflict comes from God.

“Conflict is basically caused by the frustration of a need. The question is, How do you respond to it?”



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Personal Responsibility in Economic Relationships

By James Halteman

■ In *The Fable of the Bees*, Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733) satirically commented on the concept of individual liberty central to the worldview being proposed by many. Speaking of the bees, he wrote: “Thus every part was full of vice, Yet the whole mass a Paradise.”¹

Tragically, the notion that each person can be self-centered to the core and yet the entire society can be a paradise permeates much of economic thinking. In this analysis, called “rational choice,” individual freedom is idolized and personal responsibility and community-

mindedness are forgotten or considered incidental byproducts. Here I would like to compare today’s “rational choice” approach with the ideas of Adam Smith, the 18th century “father of economics.”

Presuppositions of “Rational Choice”

Rational choice analysis is based on several presuppositions. Among them, people maximize their self-interest, and people’s interests are broadly similar. Also, more is better than less, and risk aversion—rather than risk loving—is the norm. In addition, people are free to make choices, and so their choices reflect their preferences. Within the bounds of the rules of the game, the individual does what is in his or her best interest.

This model is widely accepted because it predicts most of the behavior we see in most people. A person usually employs a cost-benefit analysis in which benefits and costs are personal, not social. If the personal benefit exceeds the personal cost, the action is taken and is considered efficient. For most, the family is part of the personal domain. There is no moral expectation except to obey the law and no social responsibility other than what the law mandates. Even where laws apply, a person would be

expected to consider violating the law if the penalty was less than the benefit of breaking the law.

We see the power of this model when we observe people’s everyday behavior. People generally sell to the highest bidder and buy more when the price falls. They tend to speed when no police are around and slow down when radar traps are known. They marry those who meet their needs best rather than those who need them the most. Business owners pollute when the law allows and pollute less as the fines go up. Even church people are increasingly church-hopping to find the church that meets their needs rather than committing themselves to a church program that provides for others. In this model, the individual is king.

We may never know whether explaining behavior in this way actually encourages people to behave self-centeredly. We do know that those trained in rational choice analysis are more likely to expect self-centered behavior in others and therefore to respond in a more self-centered fashion themselves.² Whatever its direct effects, it is obvious there is no moral and ethical content attached to the process, except individual freedom and obedience to the law. Like the bees, people can be full of vice, but the beehive, or social order, led by some invisible hand will be a paradise.

Working toward some shared vision of a productive and caring economy that is based on common values is said to be counterproductive. In the modern world, the way to get a better social order is for people to look out for themselves.

Enter Adam Smith

One of the great ironies of intellectual history is that rational choice is often attributed to Adam Smith and his classic *The Wealth of Nations*. Most ignore the earlier book Smith wrote and kept revising until his death. In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith illustrates how behavior is conditioned by human interdependence and moral considerations. It is this concept of interdependent moral behavior that underlies the notion of self-interest in *Wealth of Nations*.



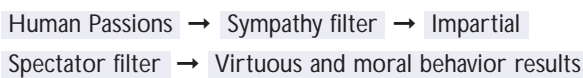
Photos by Dave Wilzig

James Halteman compares today’s “rational choice” approach with the ideas of Adam Smith, the 18th century “father of economics.”

Smith holds that humans are created with built-in passions that are conditioned by two significant forces. If properly conditioned, the passions lead to virtuous behavior that ultimately promotes the public good as well as individual welfare. The first is the ability to “sympathize” with others, to put oneself in another’s shoes. This makes it possible to know how they will respond to our own behavior and, since we seek the approval of others, helps us condition our passions in socially desirable ways. Thus, the undesirable passions of hate, revenge, and envy are subdued in normal relationships. The social passions of generosity, compassion, esteem, and the desire for approval are expressed in benevolent behavior and an ability to exercise self-control. The selfish passions of self-preservation, grief, joy, and pleasure-seeking are made socially acceptable if they are expressed in prudent and just ways.

But sympathy alone is not sufficient. There must also be a sense of an “impartial spectator,” which reveals what would seem right to someone with no personal investment in a given situation. While there are elements of impartial human judgment in the spectator, there are also elements of a moral force planted in nature by the Deity that make the impartial spectator so significant. In Smith’s words, “it is only by consulting this judge within, that we can ever see what relates to ourselves in its proper shape and dimensions; or that we can ever make any proper comparison between our own interest and those of other people.”³ While it is not always clear in Smith exactly how this impartial spectator is so wisely informed, it clearly represents a moral dimension to behavior that is missing from modern rational choice theory.

Here is the model:



The two tribunals of behavior, as Smith calls these filters, have different jurisdictions. The first relates to the desire for praise and the second to the

desire to be praiseworthy. Neither alone is sufficient to bring social harmony from the passions, but both working together can provide the social glue for a natural and free society.

Effects on Society

While neither the rational choice nor the moral sympathy model derives from explicitly Christian moorings, the latter is far more amenable to integration with Christian concepts and values. There is room in the moral sympathy model for the impact of emotions other than self-interest, for the existence of social norms, and for values and ethical influences that qualify behavior on moral grounds.

If citizens function within this framework of moral sympathy, we can expect that personal behavior will reflect at least two things. First, people will adopt the community sense of what is appropriate behavior. Second, a quality of morality will evolve that would be approved of by an impartial observer who had a full grasp of the nature of social propriety and the created order. Things like self-sufficiency, honesty, stewardship of personal and public resources, a concern for the poor, respect for the law, and increased attention to family solidarity would become important in the lives of citizens. The social order should become more civil and enduring.

No social order can guarantee its long-term existence, but one that models itself as an opportunistic collection of self-focused, freedom-loving individuals will much more likely run aground than a social order that recognizes interdependence and moral responsibility. We would do well to pay more attention to those like Adam Smith and less to those who believe that worthy normative values will become linked with a value-free social science. Personal responsibility is not a simple byproduct.

“Tragically, the notion that each person can be self-centered to the core and yet the entire society can be a paradise permeates much of economic thinking.”



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¹ Bernard Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, ed F.B. Kaye (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924), 24-25.

² Robert H. Frank et al., “Do Economists Make Bad Citizens?”, *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Winter, 1996, 10, 187-192.

³ Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. A.L. Macfie and D.D. Raphael (Indianapolis: Liberty Press. 1976 with minor corrections 1979), 134.

Neglected Responsibility: Promoting Multicultural Diversity on Campus

By David B. Fletcher

■ Wheaton College's motto is "For Christ and His Kingdom." What is the kingdom of Christ and who are its citizens? In

Revelation 7:9 the apostle John relates that he saw "a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and peoples and tongues, . . . before the throne and before the Lamb." Are we serving this kingdom of Christ? Or a kingdom of our own making—a predominantly white, upper-middle-class suburban kingdom of like-minded evangelicals?

We need to promote multicultural flourishing at a number of levels. We need to promote the flourishing of students who do not represent the dominant culture. We also need to promote the flourishing, not of just the students as individuals, but of their cultures. Christ is incarnate not only in the cultures of Europe and modern middle-class white North America, but in the cultures of Latin America, Africa, Asia, and among Native Americans and others.

Promoting Diversity

We are, first of all, expected to model our Lord, who welcomes this diversity of kingdoms, tribes, and tongues. As a professor, I need to include materials from outside the predominantly male-

oriented, Western European, and American intellectual tradition whenever I possibly can. In my ethics class I include readings from female as well as male authors, from nonwhite authors, from secular feminists, and people from outside the Western tradition. In Asian Philosophy, I take the students to a Hindu temple so they can encounter real Chicagoland Hindus.

Second, we need to promote flourishing at the institutional level. Our white evangelical middle-class American culture has very definite and constrained notions as to what is appropriate. Traditionally, the Wheaton evangelical expresses an opinion quietly and with reserve. For us, being Christian involves being nice. And that means being self-controlled, not being particularly loud, not being too enthusiastic. So the person who comes to Wheaton with a more expressive way of relating to others may find people responding negatively. Embracing multicultural diversity means moving out of our comfort zone in how we expect people to relate to us.

Shaped by Culture

We can't expect all people to conform to our way of doing things before we can interact with them. Further, our notion as to what is appropriate academic study is shaped by contemporary

mainstream academic culture. In our renowned Artist Series, for example, it is very rare for African American, Latin American, or Asian music styles to be featured.

In our campus rules, what does it say when we make exception to our dancing prohibition for American square dancing, a predominately white, rural cultural expression? We don't make exceptions for the dancing through which African American or Latin American people celebrate.

Today's American evangelicals are not the first Christians to wrestle with diversity. In the book of Acts and elsewhere in the New Testament we see the early church of Jewish believers wrestling with what to do with Gentile newcomers. How can we do less than take up our responsibility to make all God's people truly welcome in our community?

Wider Society

We also need to look beyond our campus to the wider society. What efforts are we making to understand different religious or ethnic groups around us? Do we even understand the Roman Catholics or Eastern Orthodox? And then there are the growing Hindu and Muslim populations. Our students will be serving Christ in a country that looks very unlike the America of a few years ago.



Photos by Dave Wittig

David B. Fletcher is associate professor of philosophy at Wheaton College. He serves as vice president of the Illinois Philosophical Association and as chair of the CACE Faculty Steering Committee. He presented these remarks at the CACE public forum on "Being Responsible in an Irresponsible Age," held November 12, 1998, at Wheaton College.

Maybe It Isn't All About Me

By Jillian N. Lederhouse

■ One of my favorite daily comic strips in the *Chicago Tribune* is “Dave.” Dave and his longtime girlfriend, Darla, exaggerate the distinctively differing perspectives often held by men and women. For example, her idea of an important topic for discussion is commitment, while his idea is Ford pickups.

In one conversation, Dave is rather upset. He says, “I can’t understand it.”

“Can’t understand what, Dave?” asks Darla.

“My former girlfriend is getting married and she didn’t even send me an invitation,” he responds.

“Well,” says Darla, “maybe their wedding really isn’t all about you.”

Maybe it isn’t all about me.

Looking from the Back Seat

When riding in a car on a clear night, as the trees and buildings quickly pass from view, the moon is still observable no matter how many miles you go. To a young child, the moon seems to be following him or her throughout the trip. This childhood “discovery” only lasts a few years. By the time children start school, they come to understand that it only appeared that they were the very center of the universe.

Today we live in a childish world that looks from the back seat window and still sees the moon following it. Our culture has exchanged a focus on person-

al responsibility for one on personal fulfillment. Some spiritual philosophies of the Nineties call us to “find the God in ourselves”—which is very convenient if we are the sole judges of our individual ethical conduct.

We are not God

Into the world of self-help, self-discovery, and self-actualization comes a breath of fresh air called Christianity. It reminds us that we are not God. Through the gospel it offers us a relationship with God that we do not have to achieve, barter for, or work toward by ourselves. In fact, this gift is only available to those who realize that it isn’t about us at all. It’s all about Christ. He alone is worthy.

Christian discipleship deepens the realization that maybe this isn’t all about us. As John the Baptist said of Jesus, “He must become greater; I must become less.” For all John’s wonderful accomplishments, this cousin of Jesus said that he was not worthy to even untie Jesus’ dusty shoes.

A Change of Focus

Recognizing that this isn’t just about me is freeing. Between the third and sixth week of the school term, the student teachers I supervise usually stop focusing on the lesson and start focusing on the learner. They realize that the lesson they have prepared isn’t nearly as important as how the child understands the concepts. At

this point, teaching becomes powerful, rewarding, even a bit magical. These novice teachers recognize it just isn’t all about their teaching.

Understanding that this isn’t just about me helps in another way. It keeps my nose from getting out of joint when the congregational vote doesn’t go the way I think it should or the college administrators, public school policy committees, or state certification boards choose a plan I don’t like. Especially in the church, we need to realize that we are all in this together. Paul told church members in Corinth not to call themselves disciples of Apollos, Paul, or Cephas; they were disciples of Christ (1 Cor. 3:22-23). Focusing on personal responsibility rather than personal achievement enables us to see ourselves as a small part of something much larger and more valuable than merely fulfilling our own dreams.

The Christian life is not without its struggles, however. At times, I need reminders when I start to think the moon is following me around again. That’s why God gave me a family. I remember enumerating for my husband a long list of things I had to get done on campus and out in schools one particular week. I ended by saying, “And to top it off, my department chair is going to the doctor for a stress test.”

“Well, Jill,” Jon said, “maybe that isn’t all about you.”



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CACE News & Notes

CACE Resources

■ We record all our on-campus events, so we have an extensive collection of video- and audiotapes available for purchase. This year's programs include "Forgiveness and Justice: The Case of President Clinton" from February. Participants, including Dr. Klyne Snodgrass and Dr. Kenneth Vaux, debated the appropriateness of forgiving President Clinton for his admitted wrongdoings. For more information, or a complete backlist, write to us at CACE.

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A Reminder to Our Readers

■ You can keep *Discernment* coming to your door at \$5 for one year (three issues) and \$8 for two years (six issues). This rate is below our cost, so additional gifts are greatly appreciated. Back issues and extra copies are available at \$3 each, or you may download select issues off our website. For quantities, call for special pricing.

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