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As we enter the decade of the 1980s it is clear that such societal problems as high unemployment and inflation, dwindling supplies of energy and national resources, and threats to peace and security continue to plague modern society. But there is an increasing awareness that the real crisis of our day is that modern man does not know how to address these and other societal problems and that trusted methodologies are no longer adequate to meet the modern challenges. It is a crisis of confidence that has affected individuals searching for purpose in life and social institutions which are no longer channels of significant participation and decision-making. The crisis extends to the very meaning of life and society.

In such a time it is natural that basic questions are asked concerning social life. It is not surprising, therefore, that we are returning to such enduring questions as what is the nature of society? In the course of Western

*As the editorial to this *Pro Rege* issue indicates, this essay will serve as the basis for an introduction to a Reader on societal pluralism. The references to "we" and "authors" in the essay refer to the communal approach to scholarship being taken by the Studies Institute.

thought it has not been possible to arrive at a single, unified answer to this question. The many diverse formulations of what constitutes a society may cause some confusion. But it is possible to identify a number of positions which social philosophers, political practitioners, and public opinion have taken over the centuries. These positions take the form of different conceptions of social reality, and each model has had its champions as well as its critics.[1] They are generally referred to as the universalist or collectivist, the individualist or atomist, and the pluralist models.

The terms universalist, individualist, and pluralist can be vague. When they represent specific social philosophies, however, they symbolize very different views of social reality. It is therefore necessary at the outset to define these different views, and for this task history is indispensable. History supplies context; it is one way to analyze and clarify the meaning and structure of the different societal models. History also shows concretely what social philosophers who championed views of universalism, individualism, and pluralism intended to accomplish. Though significant social philosophies can exist as mere theoretical models, they have often determined the actual structuration of a society. For these reasons, we must appreciate, as an indispensable aid to analysis, the historical as well as the theoretical meaning of the three societal models.

The following discussion examines these three models. It pays particular attention to the assumptions upon which each model rests, the institutional arrangements considered appropriate for society, and the resulting definition of justice which emerges as the norm for society within each model. In reference to this last point, the analysis will make clear that one cannot avoid the recognition that there is no netural, scientific definition of justice. Indeed, the adherents to each of the three models define justice in radically different ways.

Universalist Societal Model

Societal universalism, however consistently or inconsistently it comes to expression, always conceives of a temporal societal whole in which other societal spheres are but organic parts. It sees all that exists within temporal reality as mere parts derived from the coherence of the whole. What is real is society in its entirety, and individuals and institutions have meaning only as members of this universal. Justice is defined in terms of that which is good for the universal, for it alone has intrinsic properties and rights. One of the attributes of justice is harmony which results when each individual and institution perform the function appropriate to its place within the whole. Other attributes which most often define a unviersalist view of justice are stability and order.

In classical Greek thought the societal whole was the *polis* (city-state). It achieved an axiological priority as all individuals and institutions were reduced to parts of this universal. An all-embracing *polis* became the most significant shaping force in Greek culture in the fifth century B.C.

During the age of Pericles all life was considered as a public expression of reverence to the *polis*. At the occasion of a public funeral for the Athenian soldiers who first fell in Athens' struggle with Sparta in the Peloponnesian War, Pericles challenged the citizens to ". . . fix your eyes upon the greatness of Athens, until you become filled with the love of her." They were to follow the example of the Athenian soldiers who ". . . freely

gave their lives to her [Athens] as the fairest offering which they could present."[2]

A public life of self-sacrifice to the *polis* was the true meaning of Greek life. For the *polis* was not only a social, economic, and political unity; it was also a moral and ethical one. A man was a man only so far as he participated fully in the life of the *polis*—otherwise he was a barbarian.[3] The *polis*, the temporal societal universal, defined the meaning and identity of all human and institutional life in fifth century B.C. Greek culture.

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In the thought of Plato we find another example of societal universalism. Plato was the first writer to offer a detached analysis of society. As Shelden S. Wolin points out, Plato was responsible for "the first great paradigm in Western political thought" because he was the first ". . . to think of political society in the round, to view it as a 'system' of interrelated functions, an ordered structure."[4] The first work that deserves to be called political science, in that it applies systematic analysis and critical inquiry to political ideas and institutions, is Plato's *Republic*.

The occasion for Plato's reflection on the nature of society was his attempt to revitalize the Greek *polis* in the wake of the profound crisis in Athenian culture at the end of the fifth century B.C. According to Ellis Sandoz, Plato's aim was to save the *polis* by setting forth the rational grounds for social peace in a crisis situation.[5] The *Republic* contains Plato's understanding of how the Greek *polis* should be restructured and how the nature and scope of the authority of the rulers should be implemented.

Plato's universalism was absolute and unconditional. His conception of the *polis* defined concretely what life was to be like. Censorship, selective breeding, educational indoctrination, and the death penalty for "incorrigible impiety" were just a few aspects of its universalist character.

The societal universal envisioned by Aristotle was only slightly less compact than that of his mentor. Both Plato and Aristotle favored a hierarchical society. In the Platonic community the hierarchy consisted merely of a threefold division of society into classes. The ruler-philosophers were first, then the civilian-military administrators, followed by the mass of the people ("community of pigs"). In the *Republic* there was no recognition of the structural identity of societal institutions. In Aristotle's hierarchical society differentiation included the recognition that the ". . . components which are to make up a unity must differ in kind."[6] The difference in kind included classes of persons as well as a hierarchy of lower and higher levels of communal life.

In Aristotle's view every lower community (the family through the village to the *polis*) strives for its perfection in a higher association. As Herman Dooyeweerd points out, "The ultimate perfection of communal life is found in the *polis*, which is therefore the perfect human society and embraces all the

other communities as well as the individual men, as its *parts* determined by the *whole*."[7] This organically influenced universalist view of the state was clearly set forth by Aristotle when he declared that ". . . the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part . . . ."[8]

It is a serious mistake, therefore, to see, as Robert Nisbet does, even a "kernel" of societal pluralism in Aristotle's thought.[9] While there is assuredly an important difference between Plato's *Republic* in which the identity of different communities are not acknowledged (individuals are cutoff from communal or institutional ties), and Aristotle's *Politics* in which institutional life is recognized, both thinkers give expression to a universalist view of the *polis* as the all-inclusive whole of Greek society. In each case the whole defines the parts and thus both Plato and Aristotle championed a universalist rather than a pluralist societal model. In this regard Leonard G. Boonin's assessment of Plato and Aristotle is much closer to the mark than that of Nisbet. Boonin writes:

> In the *Republic* of Plato the organic model is employed in characterizing the relation of man to society. Both are conceived as organic unities containing functionally interrelated parts. The virtue of justice becomes basic and is defined in terms of fulfilling one's function. In Aristotle's *Politics* one can find a developmental version of the organic model. The individual is seen as realizing himself in various social unities, starting with the family and culminating in the *polis*. Both Plato's and Aristotle's social philosophies are made possible by a metaphysics which finds reality in forms. Individuals are only real to the degree to which they participate in these forms or realize the forms within them.[10]

One can further observe that not only are the identity and freedom of individuals swallowed up in the universalism of Plato and Aristotle, but this is the case as well for every non-political societal institution.[11]

Social philosophers committed to a universalist societal model are not limited to the classical age. In the nineteenth century the perspective of G.W.F. Hegel profoundly influenced Western social thought. The best statement of Hegel's political ideas is to be found in his *Philosophy of Right* (1821) and *Philosophy of History* published posthumously in 1837. In these works he sets forth the belief that the state is the complete actualization of reason in temporal reality. It is "the Divine Idea as it exists on Earth." The state is the ethical whole, "The march of God in the world, that is what the state is."[12] He states further that "Man must therefore venerate the state as a secular deity . . . ."[13] While Hegel, even more than Aristotle, recognizes the importance of a differentiated social order, every institution and every individual must find its meaning, identity, and fulfillment in the universal "Idea" which is the state.

Hegel was a devout admirer of the Prussian absolute state. The Prussian police state of the nineteenth century appeared to him as the historically most perfect realization of the absolute "Idea" in history. In some significant ways Hegel anticipates the totalitarian organization of the state in the twentieth century by his emphasis that individuals and non-political institutions must be sacrificed when necessary for the good of the universal order. Hegel and other German thinkers like Herder, Fichte, and Schelling stood in the

tradition of societal universalism, a tradition which extends from the classical age of Greek thought down to the twentieth century. It is one of the three societal models that has attracted the commitment of scholars and provided guidelines for the structuration of society.

According to an individualist or atomist model, society is merely a collection of individuals. Social reality is made up only of individuals. . . . Institutions are thus merely artificial creations of human initiative and simply represent the sum total of the wills of the individuals who compose society.

It should be clear that the judgment made throughout this analysis, that a universalist model inevitably leads to a totalitarian society, is the critical judgment of the authors of this volume. The supporters of societal universalism would radically disagree with this evaluation. This demonstrates the intrinsic relationship between the meaning given to justice and the societal model adhered to. As the analysis of the three societal models continues, the bias of the authors with respect to the models will become clearer to the reader.

Individualist Societal Model

According to an individualist or atomist model, society is merely a collection of individuals. Social reality is made up only of individuals. In the language of metaphysics, societal individualism is most often associated with nominalism. The absolutization of individual relationships is complemented by a nominalistic view that sees every social entity, except individuals, as mere abstractions or fictions.[14] Institutions are thus merely artificial creations of human initiative and simply represent the sum total of the wills of the individuals who compose society.

In this individualist perspective justice is premised on the basic assumption that sovereign individuals are inherently free of every associational relationship and have inalienable rights which cannot be abridged. Fundamental rights are basic to the very identity of the individual. A just society is one in which individual rights are acknowledged and protected, and individuals advance in their capacity for rational self-governance. Nisbet puts it this way:

> A free society would be one in which individuals were morally and socially as well as politically free, free from groups and classes. It would be composed, in short, of socially and morally *separated* individuals . . . . Freedom would arise from the individual's release from all the inherited personal interdependences of traditional community, and from his existence in an impersonal, natural, economic order.[15]

The Greek Sophists in the fifth century B.C. held to an individualist conception of society. They were viewed by the defenders of the Greek *polis* as heretics and social revolutionaries. Plato, for example, abhored the Sophists and their doctrines because they were preaching a gospel of individual sovereignty which called into question the basic assumptions and institutional organization of the *polis*. The Sophists taught that society is not something real with an independent

existence. Society is essentially a means to satisfy the desires and needs of the individuals who constitute it.

There is a bias toward anarchy inherent in societal individualism. To avoid anarchy most individualists see the necessity of communal relationships and institutions. The conceptual device used to account for the formation of society and institutions is that of the contract. The contractarian theory of society and the state was developed by the Greek school of Epicureanism. The Epicureans held that as society does not exist by nature but arises out of a voluntary association of individuals, the state emerges from a contract made by individuals in order to protect themselves against every effort to limit their freedom and sovereignty. One can see in the views of the Sophists and the Epicureans a radical challenge to the universalist perspective of Plato and Aristotle.

Greek culture became a world culture when Alexander the Great created an empire. Just as societal universalism entered the mainstream of Western thought due to the Greeks, they were also responsible for the spread of an individualist perspective which became one of the major models of social philosophy to influence thinkers for centuries.

In the eighteenth century John Locke gave renewed expression and meaning to an individualist societal model. Indeed, many consider Locke the founder of modern liberalism. An ambiguity in understanding liberalism in America is the ever persistent problem of terminology. To avoid confusion it is necessary to keep in mind that what Americans call liberalism, the liberalism of Franklin D. Roosevelt, John Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson, and what Americans call conservatism, the conservatism of Herbert Hoover, Barry Goldwater, and Ronald Reagan, are but different forms of liberal thought in the theoretical and historical meaning of that term. John Locke is the intellectual father of both liberals and conservatives in the United States.

At the heart of Locke's understanding of social reality is the assumption that a hypothetical "state of nature" precedes all social life—a precontractual condition characterized by the free association of sovereign individuals. In the original "state of nature" a "law of nature" rules: "The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions . . . ."[16]

The law of nature determines the rights and responsibilities of individuals in the precontractual state of nature. The sharp bias toward societal individualism is nowhere more evident than in Locke's statement that in the state of nature ". . . truth and keeping of faith belongs to men as men, and not as members of society." Man in the state of nature, according to Locke, is the ". . . absolute lord of his own person and possessions . . . ."[17]

Locke proceeds to show that because of some "inconveniences" in the state of nature, men are quickly "driven into society."[18] The fact that free and sovereign individuals consent together to form a society by way of a social contract does not differ substantially from Epicurean thought or other contractarian theories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. What is unique in Locke's thought is that when it comes to his understanding of the formation of government, he sets aside the social contract and replaces it with the concept of a "trust." A contract implies an agreement between equals. In a trust this is not the case. In this

arrangement all rights remain with the beneficiary, and all obligations or duties are those of the trustee. The trustee is little more than a servant who may be recalled by the beneficiary in the event of neglect of duty. According to Locke's view of government created by the trust, the beneficiary is the people and the trustee is the government. It is in line with this belief that a consistent liberal speaks of the "rights" of individuals and the "duties" of government.

William Ebenstein points out that Locke's view of a trust goes far beyond the makers of the Glorious Revolution who accused James II of having violated the "original contract between King and people."[19] In this contractual relationship, people and king are put on the same plane as equals. But in ". . . Locke's conception of *government as a trust, only the people have rights*."[20] The trust arrangement was Locke's way of both creating an artificial entity known as government, and also insuring that individuals who alone possess rights are protected from the artificial creation.

In a liberal/individualist society like America, it is increasingly clear that institutions like the state and the corporation, often in a symbiotic relationship, emerge from the artificial status they share with every other institution to become *pragmatically* some of the most powerful institutions in society.

The individualist doctrines of Locke spread widely in eighteenth century Europe. But it was in America more than any other place that his ideas flourished. If we are correct to acknowledge Locke as the father of modern liberalism, is it not also the case that liberalism has become the American ideology? According to the eminent historian Louis Hartz, the United States is and always has been a liberal state. This is attested to by the fact that the master assumption of American political thought is ". . . the reality of atomistic social freedom."[21]

In the perspective of John Locke and the liberal tradition which emanated from this thought, only individuals have rights because only individuals are real—only individuals have ontological status. In the liberal tradition not only is the state an artificial creation, but every institution—family, business enterprise, church—every institution in society is but the artificial creation of sovereign individuals. For adherents to societal individualism this fact insures individuals their absolute freedom. No institution, certainly not the state, can claim rights over-against sovereign individuals.

Just as we looked critically at societal universalism and concluded that such a theoretical model leads to a totalitarian society, it is our evaluation that societal individualism can lead by easy stages to a collectivist society. This is not a new observation. After Alexis de Tocqueville's visit to America to study democracy and his return to France, he set before himself the task of explaining "What sort of despotism democratic nations have to fear."[22] According to Tocqueville, a new species of oppression was emerging. It results from the outworking of a "democratic state of society" in which most of the bonds of community are destroyed. What we find in such a society is ". . . an innumerable multitude of men, all equal and alike, incessantly endeavoring to procure the petty and paltry pleasures with which they glut their lives." Tocqueville continues:

> Each of them, living apart, is a stranger to the fate of all the rest; his children and his private friends constitute to him the whole of mankind. As for the rest of his fellow citizens, he is close to them, but does not see them; he touches them, but he does not feel them; he exists only in himself and for himself alone; and if his kindred still remain to him, he may be said at any rate to have lost his country.[23]

This is a vivid picture of a society in which extreme individualism is the norm for life. But Tocqueville makes the picture even more striking when he immediately goes on and describes how out of this atomistic society there emerges the institution of government to supply all the needs of the sovereign individuals.

> Above this race of men stands an immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratifications and to watch over their fate. That power is absolute, minute, regular, provident, and mild . . . . For their happiness such a government willingly labors, but it chooses to be the sole agent and the only arbiter of that happiness; it provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessity, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, regulates the descent of property, and subdivides their inheritances: what remains, but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living?[24]

Tocqueville believed that this new form of oppression came from combining ". . . the principle of centralization and that of popular sovereignty."[25] That both principles emerge from a democratic state of society is, according to Tocqueville, one of the "strange paradoxes" of such societies.[26] It is clear to him that no matter how profound this paradox might be, some of the principal outcomes of a democratic (individualist) society are a state of narcissism, the concentration of power in a powerful state, and the corresponding weakening of the power of the many intermediary groups that stand between the individual and the state. Tocqueville observed such developments in France and he feared these developments in such democratic societies as America.

We agree with Tocqueville's judgements and believe there is an explanation for the strange paradox he observed—the combination of the principle of centralization and that of popular sovereignty. While it is true that the liberal/individualist tradition vigorously defends the rights of individuals, it also creates a society in which a handful of institutions can become so powerful that they can actually threaten human freedom. This development can be traced in part to the fact that popular sovereignty and the absolutization of individual rights undercut the structural integrity of institutional life in society. But because it simply is not the case that individuals can be self-sufficient, they are forced by necessity to turn to some institutions to provide basic needs in life.

In a liberal/individualist society like America, it is increasingly clear that institutions like the state and the corporation, often in a symbiotic relationship, emerge from the artificial status they share with every other institution to become *pragmatically* some of the most powerful institutions in society. In such a society the rights of individuals and some of the smaller nonpolitical institutions are often sacrificed to these and other megastructures. There is

therefore an ever-present danger that an individualist societal model will actually result in a form of centralization which, in fact, begins to function with collectivistic tendencies. It only has the functional characteristics of a collectivist model because while the transformation is occurring people remain committed to an individualist perspective. But true freedom can increasingly become an illusion which is championed by the rhetoric of individualism, but pragmatically given up to such entities as an ever-growing bureaucratic state and technocratic corporate structure.

Pluralist Societal Model

Societal pluralism is a much more ambiguous term than either societal universalism or individualism. There are at least two complementary reasons that help explain why this is the case. The first reason is highlighted in Kenneth D. McRae's 1979 Presidential Address to the Canadian Political Science Association. Entitled "The Plural Society and the Western Political Tradition," McRae's address points out that theories envisaging a genuine societal pluralism have been notable chiefly by their absence in Western thought.[27] We agree with this judgment and conclude that the lack of theoretical thinking about societal pluralism helps to explain the ambiguity that surrounds it. This first reason is complimented by a second. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there developed a reaction to the extremes of modern univeralism and in some cases modern individualism. While this reaction produced more adherents to pluralism, it did not necessarily mean greater clarity with respect to pluralist assumptions, a pluralist view of societal structures, or a pluralist interpretation of justice. Today there are more champions of pluralism than ever before, but their positions are often contradictory and thus the ambiguity surrounding pluralism continues.

But true freedom can increasingly become an illusion which is championed by the rhetoric of individualism, but pragmatically given up to such entities as an ever-growing bureaucratic state and technocratic corporate structure.

These two reasons require further elaboration. With regard to the first reason, the absence of pluralist thinking in the mainstream of Western thought can be accounted for by the persistent bias for societal unity and a corresponding fear of societal diversity. A characteristic feature of both societal universalism and individualism is the absolutization of some aspect of social reality. In the perspective of universalism, societal unity is achieved by absolutizing some whole—whether that be society or some institution like the state. In individualism societal unity is accomplished by absolutizing the individual who alone possesses ontological status. Individuals are the source of all creative power and from them emerge everything else in society. In both of these traditions, therefore, unity is achieved by making some aspect of social reality the integrating factor for all of life. Given this overriding concern for societal unity in Western thought there has been little appreciation for the understanding that only through the recognition of the true diversity that exists in society can there

emerge a lasting unity.

With regard to the second reason, there is evidence to suggest that because the appeal of pluralism grew in part as a reaction to the extremes of modern universalism and in some cases individualism, it has become for many a symbol rather than a clearly developed alternative view of society. Today the term pluralism functions in much the same way as the term democracy. While many people claim allegiance to democracy there are serious questions as to what different individuals and groups mean by it. Sometimes all that is clear is that to be anti-democratic is to set one's self outside of the mainstream of popular thought. In somewhat the same way pluralism has become a code word; no one wants to be considered anti-pluralistic. In America, for example, the terms democracy and pluralism are used interchangeably to describe a supposedly tolerant and freedom-loving people and culture.

For these two reasons, and possibly more, there is a great deal of ambiguity surrounding a pluralist societal model. Precisely because of this fact David Nicholls took up the task of distinguishing the principal ways in which pluralism is used by social and political theorists. In a small monograph entitled *Three Varieties of Pluralism*, he identifies forms of pluralism emerging in British and American thought and in colonial societies and their post-colonial successor states.[28] It is clear from Nicholls' study that significant differences of opinion exist amongst social and political theorists as to the meaning of pluralism. This is particularly the case with respect to two of the three varieties of pluralism which we will discuss—British and American pluralism.

The first variety of pluralism that Nicholls examines is represented by the English pluralists of the early decades of the present century. This was a time in which writers and politicians both in England and on the continent were frequently making extreme claims concerning the role and the power of the modern state. In France the government was pursuing a policy of establishing a secular society in which the rights of institutions such as churches and trade unions were denied. "There are and there can be no rights," wrote Premier M. Emile Combes, who served 1902-1905, "except the right of the State and there are and can be no other authority than the authority of the Republic."[29] The English pluralists recognized that there were few in England likely to go quite so far as the French Premier. But they did believe that there were those in England who uncritically accepted the claims of state absolutism, and, therefore, there was a clear threat to the rights of corporations that must be met.

The writings of Lord Acton (1834-1902) and F.W. Maitland (1850-1906), who in turn inspired a younger generation which included J.N. Figgis (1866-1919), Harold Laski (1893-1950) and G.D.H. Cole (1889-1959), express a concern to protect the rights of groups as a bulwark of liberty against the dangers of an all powerful state. It is important to emphasize that the English pluralists used the term "group" in a non-individualist way. The term stood for the many associations and institutions in society, both voluntary and involuntary, which exist as corporate social entities. The family, the school, the labor union, and the churches are some of the social entities whose meaning is not exhausted by the sum of their individual members.

The English pluralists followed the great German historian and legal theorist Otto von Gierke who argued that groups have a personality of their own and an existence not derived from individual will or the state. Figgis

helped Maitland to translate part of Gierke's great work *The German Law of Associations* (*Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht*). It was published in 1900 under the title *Political Theories of the Middle Age*.[30] In his work on associations Gierke sets forth his conception of "group personality," which became the theoretical foundation for much of the social philosophy of the English pluralists.

It is the opinion of the authors that only from a transcendent view of reality is it truly possible to break from the assumptions, institutional arrangements, and definitions of justice of a universalist and individualist societal model.

Nicholls identifies a second variety of pluralism with a group of American scholars represented by A.F. Bentley, David Truman and Robert Dahl. The depth of the ambiguity surrounding pluralism becomes clear when one recognizes that these contemporary scholars understand a group to be a collection of individuals who share a common interest or purpose. This is a radically different perspective than that of the English pluralists.

In *The Government Process* Bently sets forth his group theory of politics. He describes the political process as essentially the interaction of a large number of groups of individuals each attempting to gain or maintain some special interest. The government's role is to establish an equilibrium or balance between the many competing groups. What this means is simply that the government is controlled for a time by a particularly powerful group or set of groups who use it to serve their ends. Since the power of groups fluctuates, a government controlled by certain groups for a time will be controlled by others sometime in the future. Scholars ascribe to this process of politics the term pluralism because of the interaction of many different groups.

Another phrase that describes this process of politics is interest-group liberalism.[31] It is most appropriate that the term liberalism is used, because true to a liberal perspective a group is defined as a collection of individuals. This perspective stands in sharp contrast to that of the English pluralists for whom a group was a basic association or institution in society.

David Truman and Robert Dahl stand in the liberal/individualist tradition of Bentley. When their work is taken as a whole, another sharp contrast emerges between these American pluralists and the English pluralists. Figgis, Maitland and other English pluralists saw in pluralism a guide to the way society ought to be structured. They were committed to a social philosophy which defined justice as the recognition not only of individual rights but also of the fundamental rights of the many groups that stand between the individual and the state. This "normative" view of pluralism is radically different from the "descriptive" or "functional" view of Bentley, Truman and Dahl. The primary concern of these behaviorist scholars is to explain how the political process works. The assumption is that when an equilibrium develops between groups in society it is not the result of reason or morality but of simple group pressure. Nicholls points out that in this view of pluralist politics ". . . there is no right other than might, 'justice' is but a term cynically employed by the combatants to camouflage self interest,

'legitimacy' means that which is accepted by the powerful."[32] Politics is essentially an amoral struggle between contending groups, each acting in its own self interest. There is an obvious contrast between this empirical approach and the normative perspective of the English pluralists.[33]

The Nature and Structure of the Present Study

Nicholls' study and the evidence of the radical contrast between the British and American understanding of pluralism, illustrates the ambiguous meaning of the term. The purpose of the present work is to analyze pluralism in a different way than Nicholls does. Nicholls' approach is to identify the different uses of the term by social and political theorists. He makes no effort to determine whether or not a particular view represents an authentic pluralist alternative to a universalist or individualist societal model. Against the background of the theoretical and historical overview of a universalist and individualist societal model, our approach will be to identify and analyze societal pluralism as a third model which is unique in its conception of social reality.

Most scholars agree that the emergence of a pluralist societal model is a recent development in Western thought. Our primary focus, therefore, will be on the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The focus will also be limited to scholars who link their understanding of societal pluralism to a transcedent view of temporal reality. It is the opinion of the authors that only from a transcendent view of reality is it truly possible to break from the assumptions, institutional arrangements, and definitions of justice of a universalist and individualist societal model.

Given the foci just outlined, the present work identifies and illustrates three different approaches to societal pluralism. In each approach the theorists assumed they were breaking from a universalist or individualist view of society. We have identified the three approaches according to the following criteria:

1. **Natural Law and Subsidiarity**
   This section introduces those theorists who root their view of societal pluralism in an understanding of natural law which provides for an ordering of societal diversity. The character of the societal diversity is tied to a concept of subsidiarity—the idea that a diversity of social institutions and relations exist in a hierarchical order requiring that "lower" institutions and associations be granted autonomy by the "higher" unless special circumstances require intervention. The moral rightness of the natural laws and the character of the social diversity are upheld, reinforced, sanctioned, and testified to by common reason and the church.

2. **History**
   In this section we discuss and illustrate the view of those theorists who anchor their understanding of societal pluralism in the fact that God has acted and/or will act in history. Given God's past actions in history, we are shown how we ought to continue living both because that revelation was authoritative and because past human responses have given shape to habits and institutions which should not be overthrown without disobedience to God and disruption to tradition. Others in this approach emphasize the fact that God's action in history comes primarily to over-

throw bad human institutions and to liberate human beings to a richer, fuller life of diverse responsibility. These theorists place their confidence in the fact that God is now acting and will continue to act to bring about an eschatological realization of human justice.

3. **Creation and Sphere Sovereignty**
The focus of this section is on those theorists who contend that societal pluralism is fundamentally linked to the fact that the creation order is one of normative diversity and interrelatedness. In God's providence and grace He has upheld and is restoring that order in His Son Jesus Christ. This view of the creation order encompasses an understanding of sphere sovereignty. According to this insight absolute sovereignty belongs only to God. In His creation,by His Word, and through Jesus Christ, the Lord has given subordinate sovereignty to different human associations, each in its "own sphere"—the family, the church, the school, the business corporation, the state, etc. Each of these derives its subordinate sovereignty directly from God and, therefore, has its own God-given identity, rights, and duties.

Some of the theorists we will be considering in these different approaches to societal pluralism are not well known. As Kenneth McRae pointed out earlier, one of the reasons for this fact is that positions envisaging a genuine pluralism have been notable chiefly by their absence in the mainstream of Western thought. But after making this comment McRae goes on to ask if there is any evidence "of other streams, of lesser channels, eddies, backwaters, or even swamps, where different and possibly more interesting life forms may be discovered?" He continues:

> Have we, under the 400-year old spell of national sovereignty, unwisely neglected other sectors of Western thought that are more relevant to societal pluralism? Should we turn from the nation-building efforts of France, England, Spain to the less familiar complexities of the German Empire or the Eastern marches of Europe? Should we devise an alternative curriculum in political thought that would stress Althusius over Bodin, Montesquieu over Rousseau, von Gierke over Hegel, Acton over Herbert Spencer, Abraham Kuyper over T.H. Green, Karl Renner and Otto Bauer over Marx and Engles? In short, have we been studying the wrong thinkers, and even the wrong countries?[34]

These are important questions. We invite the reader to explore with us the channels, eddies, backwaters and swamps to discover evidence of societal pluralism and to evaluate with us in what ways this tradition stands as a radical alternative to a universalist and individualist view of society.

Notes

[1]The philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd points out that ". . . every theory concerning the structure of human society is based upon a specific conception of the basic structure of reality." He believes that what can be referred to as ". . . the ontological question really lies at the foundation of every analysis of emperical societal facts. Human society belongs to reality." Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1957), 3, 222.

[2]Thucydides, "The Funeral Oration of Pericles," in *History*, Translated by Benjamin Jowett, 2 (Oxford: The Claredon Press, 1900), 34-47.

[3]H.D.F. Kitto, *The Greeks* (Baltimore: Penguim

Books, 1951), pp. 9-11.

[4]Sheldon S. Wolin, "Paradigms and Political Theories," in *Politics and Experience*, ed. by Preston King and B.C. Parekh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 147; Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Boston: Little & Brown, 1960), p. 33.

[5]Ellis Sandoz, "The Civil Theology of Liberal Democracy: Locke and His Predecessors," *The Journal of Politics*, 34, No. 1 (Feb. 1972), 5.

[6]Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 73.

[7]Dooyeweerd, p. 201.

[8]Aristotle, p. 11.

[9]Robert Nisbet, *The Social Philosophers: Community and Conflict in Western Thought* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1973), p. 396.

[10]Leonard G. Boonin, "Man and Society: An Examination of Three Models," in *Voluntary Associations*, ed. by J. Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman (New York: Atherton Press, 1969), pp. 76-77.

[11]For Dooyeweerd's penetrating critique of the social philosophy of Plato and Aristotle see *New Critique*, pp. 397-398.

[12]G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 279.

[13]Hegel, p. 285.

[14]Dooyeweerd is careful to point out that while nominalism is frequently associated with sociological individualism, it can also be linked to sociological universalism. "One should especially guard against an all too frequently occurring identification of the contrast between sociological individualism and sociological universalism with that between nominalism and realism in the famous contest concerning the reality of *'universalia.'* Though it is true that sociological individualism is usually accompanied by a moderate or extreme nominalism, the latter may also occur with sociological universalism." Dooyeweerd, *New Critique*, p. 183.

[15]Robert A. Nisbet, *The Quest for Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 227.

[16]John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, ed. by Thomas P. Peardon (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1952), p. 5.

[17]Locke, p. 10, 70.

[18]The "inconveniences" can be summarized by the fact that in the state of nature not all men were guided by pure reason, and, therefore, there was a lack of protection of individuals' "life, health, liberty, or possessions."

[19]William Ebenstein, *Great Political Thinkers*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 396.

[20]Ebenstein, p. 396.

[21]Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1955), p. 62.

[22]This is the title of chapter six of Tocqueville's fourth book which is part of his larger study entitled *Democracy in America*, ed. by Phillips Bradley (New York: Vintage Books, 1945).

[23]Tocqueville, p. 336.

[24]Tocqueville, p. 336.

[25]Tocqueville, p. 337.

[26]Tocqueville, p. 339.

[27]Kenneth D. McRae, "The Plural Society and the Western Political Tradition," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, XII: 4 (December, 1979), 676.

[28]David Nicholls, *Three Varieties of Pluralism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974).

[29]Quoted in John Neville Figgis, *Churches in the Modern State* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1973), p. 56.

[30]*Political Theories of the Middle Age* is a translation of a section of the third volume of *Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht*. In 1934 Ernest Barker translated and published five sections of Gierke's fourth volume under the title *Natural Law and The Theory of Society: 1500 to 1800*. Another section of Gierke's work has recently been translated by George Heiman and titled *Associations and Law: The Classical and Early Christian Stage* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

[31]For a contemporary critique of interest group liberalism see Theodore Lowi, "The Public Philosophy: Interest Group Liberalism," *American Political Science Review*, 61 (1967) 5f.; *The End of Liberalism* (New York: Norton, 1969); *The Politics of Disorder* (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

[32]Nicholls, p. 2.

[33]It would be a serious mistake to assume that American theorists of pluralism are mere neutral or objective chroniclers of American politics. It is clear that these scholars attempt to justify the system of politics found in the United States and attempt to demonstrate how it produces the most democratic society in the world.

[34]McRae, "The Plural Society," p. 685-686. The streams and channels run deeper than is sometimes assumed. In some cases spokemen for societal pluralism have been influential in determining the history of specific countries. This is particularly the case in the Catholic tradition which has been the dominant force behind Christian Democracy in Europe and Latin America. The influence of this movement in Europe is well documented in the following works: Michael P. Fogarty, *Christian Democracy in Western Europe: 1820-1953* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1957); R.E.M. Irving, *The Christian Democratic Parties in Western Europe* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979).