

Is There Only Secular Democracy? Imagining Other Possibilities for the Third Millennium

Cardinal George Pell
Archbishop of Sydney, Australia

Ed. note: An abbreviated version of this text was delivered by the Cardinal on October 12, 2004, to a crowd of approximately four hundred assembled at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan, as the honored speaker of the Acton Institute's Annual Dinner Address. In his wide-ranging discussion of law, morality, politics, and culture, Cardinal Pell proposes a renewal of Christianity's engagement with contemporary legal and political institutions in the light of the transcendent dignity of the person—a project he labels as *democratic personalism*.

One of the great vices of our age is that we get used to things too quickly. The German philosopher Nietzsche, a master of the dubious aphorism, once remarked that what does not kill us makes us stronger. He held that this was one of the marks of “a human being who has turned out well.”¹ For most of us, however, and for most of human history, it is truer to say that what does not kill us we learn to live with. Those of a more pessimistic bent than myself are even tempted to claim that there is nothing that human beings cannot accommodate themselves to, whatever their personal misgivings or fears might be in a given instance.

The course of democratic life in the West over the past forty years seems to bear this out. Television is a handy barometer of this. In recent times, one very popular American daytime television show ran a program interviewing people whose intimate partners are animals, including a man who spoke of his five-year relationship with a horse called Pixel.² It is not the whole story of contemporary television, of course, and against this example we have to put shows

such as *Judge Judy*, to name only one, which rate just as well and whatever their shortcomings make it very clear that bad behavior—even on television—should not be rewarded. That daytime television should cover bestiality in the same way as it might cover a school's Fourth of July celebrations does not really cause us much surprise. This is a long way from the first night of television in Australia in 1956 when the comperes wore tuxedos and it was unthinkable—literally impossible to imagine—that the *f*-word would become a staple of dialogue in adult television dramas.

Other more important examples could also be given. Today, Catholic teaching on artificial contraception is incomprehensible, not only to secularists and some other Christians but also to many Mass-going Catholics. It is not that the teaching is unreasonable or difficult to understand but something more fundamental: Many people do not see why the Church should insist on treating contraception as a moral issue of any sort at all. Forty years ago, prior to the United States Supreme Court decision in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, many American states had laws prohibiting or restricting contraception, and opponents of these laws had failed in every attempt they had made to have them overturned or diluted, both in the courts and in the legislatures. Even in the midst of the sexual revolution, the state of New York continued to ban the sale of contraceptives to minors until 1977 when the Court struck the law down.³

Treating artificial contraception as morally objectionable is now considered one of those strange Catholic things, like devotion to the Infant of Prague. Only a little more than a generation ago, however, there was nothing strange about Catholic teaching in this area at all because it was just one part of a wider moral consensus. It was from this consensus that laws against contraception arose. They were not the result of a conspiracy to keep the population ignorant and progenitive but of democratic deliberation, debate, and decision.

The same is true in the case of abortion. Attempts to repeal or liberalize antiabortion laws, sometimes entailing referenda, were defeated by large majorities in most American states prior to the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*. These voters were the same people who voted against racial discrimination and for civil rights measures in the 1960s.⁴ Since *Roe v. Wade*, there have been, by one count, more than forty million abortions performed in the United States.⁵ The numbers in Australia are not quite so great because we are a much smaller country, but proportionately they are just as alarming—averaging out at approximately ten abortions for every twenty-five live births.⁶

We have become used to this, too, or at least, large numbers of our compatriots have. Whereas not so long ago abortion was prohibited and reprobated, politicians today who query the rate of abortion and the suffering it causes, as

the Federal Minister of Health in Australia has on several occasions this year, are treated as suspect, if not dangerous; and nominees to judicial office in the United States run the risk of being disqualified if they betray any pro-life convictions or sympathies.⁷ This is despite the indications that, a generation on from the liberalization—or abolition—of the law in this area, growing numbers of people are uneasy about the accommodation democracy has made with abortion.

The point of these comparisons of now and then is not to indulge in nostalgia for how things used to be, or to suggest that everything was fine forty years ago and dreadful today. Nor should they be taken to mean that I believe the best way to deal with moral and social problems is always to legislate against them. Christians are realists. We do not live in the past, and we understand there is no golden age available to us, at least not before the angel Gabriel sounds the trumpet. There is no room for nostalgia, no looking back once we have put our hand to the plow (cf. Luke 9:62). We work for the kingdom in the here and now, and, in doing so, we should keep in mind how Jesus praised the shrewdness of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1–13) and his advice to be “as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves” (Matt. 10:16). It would make things very easy if we could legislate for virtue, and some have been trying to do this ever since Calvinism or the French Revolution. However, while there are some things that should or can be appropriately legislated, legislating to require virtue, as I will explain shortly, is not a regular Christian option.

The purpose of my observations about television standards, and the past and present situation on contraception and abortion, is to highlight the point that for secular militants today democracy, more than anything else, means that anything is possible. Freedom today, in its everyday sense, means the limitlessness of possibility: Whatever you want, whatever you like; you can do it. This is nonsense, of course. A moment’s reflection on any number of possibilities reminds us that they are impossibilities. The American sociologist Philip Rieff has written of the important part that culture plays in creating a basic resistance to possibility, something within us that can give a compelling answer when our desire and our will ask us the question “Why not?”⁸ Compelling answers to this need for self-restraint, for delayed gratification, are in short supply. The resources secular democracy has for this purpose seem to be exhausted in a sea of rhetoric about individual rights.

I use the term *secular democracy* deliberately, because democracy is never unqualified. We are used to speaking of “liberal democracy,” which as currently understood is a synonym for secular democracy; in Europe there are (or were) parties advocating “Christian democracy”; lately there has been much

interest in the possibility of “Islamic democracy,” and the shape it might take. These descriptors do not simply refer to how democracy might be constituted but to the moral vision democracy is intended to serve. This is true even, or especially, in the case of secular democracy, which some commentators—John Rawls, for example—insist is intended to serve no moral vision at all. In his encyclical letter *Evangelium Vitae*, Pope John Paul II makes just this point when he argues that democracy “is a means and not an end. Its ‘moral’ value is not automatic,” but depends on “the ends which it pursues and the means which it employs.... [T]he value of democracy stands or falls with the values which it embodies and promotes.”⁹ Democracy is not a good in itself. Its value is instrumental and depends on the vision it serves.

An attempt is sometimes made to evade this point by drawing a distinction between procedural democracy and normative democracy. Procedural democracy’s claims are minimalist: Democracy should be regarded as nothing more than a “mechanism for regulating different and opposing interests on a purely empirical basis.” There is no doubt that this is part of what democracy should do, but as the pope points out, unless it is grounded in the moral law, the regulation of interests in participatory systems of government will occur “to the advantage of the most powerful, since they are the ones most capable of manoeuvring not only the levers of power but also of shaping the formation of consensus.” If democracy is only procedural, the pope argues, it “easily becomes an empty word.”¹⁰

To speak of normative democracy, however, especially if one is a Catholic bishop, is to provoke panic in some quarters and derision in others. Many things underlie this response, not least certain ideological convictions about secularism. Most important of all, however, is a failure of imagination. George Weigel has recently pointed out the urgent need for a Catholic theory of democracy.¹¹ To some, this can only mean theocracy, with bishops as party bosses and the citizenry being denied the opportunity to think or speak for themselves. To others, it can only be a contradiction in terms. Catholicism and freedom, it is assumed, cannot go together. In Richard Rorty’s words, democracy is “an endless, proliferating realization of Freedom.”¹² Making democracy Catholic or Christian could only mean the end of this proliferation. Democracy can only be what it is now: a constant series of breakthroughs against moral prejudice and social taboo in pursuit of the absolute autonomy of the individual.

Here we face a paradox. When it comes to self-realization, there is a mythology that there is almost nothing that cannot be done or desired. There are no limits to what we might will. When it comes to how we should arrange

our life in common and how we should order society and politics, we only have a very limited range of ideas. Over the course of history, there have been monarchies of various sorts, republics of various sorts, dictatorships and tyrannies, and now secular democracy. What else can there be? It is impossible to imagine anything other than what we know now—except dictatorship. Limitless desire and limited imagination constitute another indication of the peculiar situation in which we find ourselves in the present age.

Think for a moment what it means to say that there can be no other form of democracy than secular democracy. Does democracy need a burgeoning pornography industry worth billions of dollars to be truly democratic? Does it need a rate of abortion that produces totals in the tens of millions? Does it need high levels of divorce and marriage breakdown, with the growing rates of family dysfunction and individual suffering, especially for children and young people, that come with them? Does democracy need homosexual or polygamous relationships to be treated as the moral and functional equivalent of families based on monogamous marriage? Does it need these choices to be protected from any sort of public criticism? Does democracy (as in the case of Holland) need legalised euthanasia, extending to children under the age of twelve? Does democracy need assisted reproductive technology (such as in vitro fertilization) and embryonic stem cell research? Does democracy really need these things? What would democracy look like if you took many or all of these things out of the picture? Would it cease to be democracy? Or would it actually become more democratic?

These are the things by which secular democracy defines itself and stakes its ground against other possibilities. They are not merely epiphenomena of freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of movement, freedom of opportunity, and freedom of choice. In most countries in the West, they are not just options that may be taken. Increasingly, they are the default position of the dominant forces of democratic social life, things from which one must opt out if one does not want to be part of them. The situation varies from place to place, of course, but many of the examples I have given are protected and sanctioned by law in most Western countries. The alarm with which sections of the media treat people in public life who are opposed to these things often implies that they are a danger to democracy. This overreaction is of course a bluff, an attempt to silence opposition, almost suggesting that these practices, reprehensible to me, are necessary for secular democracy.

What would democracy lose from dramatically lower rates of abortion or divorce? How would it be diminished if there were some successful controls in place on pornography, or if marriage was properly promoted and protected

over other forms of relationship? Would democracy be poorer or more insecure if we had less family breakdown, leading on to lower rates of juvenile crime and welfare problems? Would young men and women really be disenfranchised if they were freed from the obligation to sleep with anyone they happen to go out with? Is the “right” of children under twelve to be euthanased what sets democracy apart from other forms of government? Does science in democratic countries need to insist on the manufacture and destruction of embryonic life for research purposes?

If we think about the answers to these questions, we begin to have an inkling about what a form of democracy other than secular democracy might look like. Having a name for this alternative form of democracy would obviously be useful. While Catholic democracy has some slight appeal for me personally, I do not think it would help us to corner the market. For the same reason, Christian democracy should be passed over. Taking a leaf from the pope’s work in this area, I would like to propose that we call it *democratic personalism*.¹³ It means nothing more than democracy founded on “the transcendent dignity of the human person.” Placing democracy on this basis does not mean theocracy. It does not mean legislating for virtue. It does not mean the seizure of power by religious fundamentalism. Christian truth is not an ideology. It “does not presume to imprison changing sociopolitical realities in a rigid schema.” Instead “it recognizes that human life is lived in history in conditions that are diverse and imperfect”; and because it constantly reaffirms the transcendent dignity of the person, its method “is always that of respect for freedom.”¹⁴ As the Russian writer Victor Serge once remarked, ideology “can only impose its solutions by running people over.” Christianity is not an ideology. It respects freedom. It does not offer programmatic solutions, and it imposes itself on no one. It has to win majority support for any legislative measure proposed to limit abuses and protect the public good.

Instead, Christianity proposes the truth about the human person. The foundations of secular democracy are coming to be seen as implausible, relying on the invention of “a wholly artificial human being who has never existed” and pretending that we are all instances of this species. “The pure liberal individual,” as described by the English theologian John Milbank, is above all else characterized by the possession of will; “not a will determined to a good or even open to this or that, but a will to will.” This concept of human nature, deriving from Rousseau and Hobbes, represents a complete repudiation of the transcendent dignity of the human person. The human individual is not “thought of as a creature, as a divine gift, as defined by his sharing-in and reflection-of, divine qualities of intellect, goodness and glory, but rather as a

bare being.” The only thing that distinguishes “this bare existence from a blade of grass or an asteroid” is its will, “which might be equally for good or for evil.”¹⁵ The “human experiences connected with love, family, friendship, church, citizenship, responsibility, and even death that make life worth living” are devalued and disregarded in pursuit of a frankly utopian vision of life freed from alienation and oppression through being “unconstrained by nothing but personal choice.”¹⁶ Secular democracy is democracy without transcendence where the key point of reference is the supremacy of the individual and his unimpeded will.

At the level of lived experience, of normal day-to-day life, what has democracy without transcendence given us? Professor Jean Bethke Elshtain of the University of Chicago refers to the “mountain of data” from the social sciences showing that secular democracy in America today is “civically depleted, politically cynical and rootless, socially mistrustful and personally fearful.”¹⁷ She warns that “an anemic and faltering democratic faith—a decline of confidence in our basic institutions—threatens to render us incapable of sustaining these institutions over the long haul.” She draws particular attention to the insistent denial of the proposition that “human life finds any point beyond itself,”¹⁸ and how this undermines notions of the common good and the formation of character for democratic citizenship.¹⁹ If democracy fundamentally means “the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life,”²⁰ there can be no consensus about—perhaps, even, no concept of—the good life from which the development of individual character can take its orientation. The good life is something we make up or define for ourselves.

It is significant that Elshtain refers to the fearfulness that has crept into secular democracy. Terrorism has nothing to do with this, other than to amplify and provide a new focus—gated communities, after all, are not a post-9-11 phenomenon. One of the more interesting and important commentators writing in defense of secular democracy today is the English political philosopher John Gray. Gray takes fear as his point of departure. “The root of liberal thinking,” he argues, “is not in love of freedom, nor in hope of progress, but in fear—the fear of other human beings.” Democracy aims at nothing more than to deliver its subjects from death at the hands of their fellows. Gray’s secular democracy is secular with a very small *s*.²¹ In fact, he prefers to speak of “the liberal state,” and repudiates the secularist expectation that the world’s peoples and cultures will eventually converge in a universal civilization based on the absence of religion and the mania for rights.²² His view of democracy is pragmatic and particularist—partly in an attempt to solve or evade the problem

of finding a unifying moral consensus on which to place it. The state “is not the embodiment of a civil religion or a philosophy of history, nor the vehicle of a project of world-transformation, nor a means of recovering a lost cultural unity, but rather an artifice whose purpose is peace.” Democracy is only one means of pursuing this purpose, and it may not have universal applicability.²³

Gray opens up the bleak logic that has run its course in secular democracy. At its heart is fear, and fearfulness is increasingly part of the experience of life within it. The pursuit of radical individual autonomy creates a “war of all against all,” in the form of an increasingly ruthless assertion of self against others. The limitlessness of possibility in secular democracy is also the limitlessness of power. It is not a matter of state surveillance, although that is also becoming an issue as secularism seeks to impose through administrative and judicial means certain “enforceable understandings” on issues such as homosexuality.²⁴ More importantly perhaps is the way this plays out “at the level of fundamental personal relations. Seeking at once to remain ‘in control’ and to evade the weakness and vulnerability that reliance on others entails, we conduct our most important relationships in a way conducive to high levels of anxiety, disappointment and hardness of heart.” For when the individual is autonomous—alone able to determine when he will and will not be obligated to someone else—“being needed or dependent means being exposed to the power of others, especially the power of those closest to us.”²⁵

The social and political consequences are considerable. Family life becomes unstable, community begins to erode, regard for the common good becomes a secondary priority to the imperatives of self-realization. Perhaps most importantly of all is that people stop having children, or only have one or two. This is less of an issue in the United States compared to other Western countries, and there are reasons for this. All Western democracies have fertility rates below replacement level, including the United States—although at 2.0 births per woman per lifetime it is just below the replacement rate, unlike some European countries, which are dramatically below this level. The French demographer Jean-Claude Chesnais has drawn attention to the relationship between low birthrates and the temper of a culture. He argues that fertility will continue to decline until “there is a change of mood, ... a shift from present pessimism to a state of mind which could be compared to that of the ‘baby-boom’ era.” Chesnais argues that “the trivial interpretation of the baby boom as a response to economic growth does not hold; the real crucial change was the change in the state of mind, from mourning to hope.”²⁶

Many things feed hope, especially lived Christianity. Love, courage, and trust are certainly part of the equation, but these virtues have to be fostered by

the culture. They cannot flourish in a vacuum, or in a situation where radical individual autonomy disorders our most important relationships and disfigures life in common. When these conditions obtain, fear and confusion will be the consequence, and these work powerfully to undermine hope. Faith feeds hope, too, not least by leading us out of disarray in relationships and mayhem in communities and directing our efforts toward others. The recuperation of hope pays real social and human dividends, and “it is no accident”—as the Marxists used to say—that “there is a strong correlation between religious conviction and high fertility.” In the West, the people who are having children are people with faith.²⁷ If modernity and democracy mean secularism, then demography is against them.

Religious people have more children not because of mind control but because they have hope. Having children literally embodies confidence in the future and in the goodness of existence. Love is fruitful. It leads to life and life in abundance. When we feel that we are part of a community where we are welcomed, where our contribution is valued, where we can take the risk of depending on others—and that the culture we are part of supports and protects these things—we embrace life and the future with a sense of expectation and trust. This is what hope means. Just as fear takes us to the heart of secular democracy, hope takes us to the heart of democratic personalism. We are now miles away from clichés about theocracy and Christianity’s being inherently antidemocratic. The difference between secular democracy and democratic personalism is the difference between democracy based on fear and democracy based on hope.

As Professor Elshtain reminds us, hope comes from transcendence, from the knowledge—not wishful thinking, but *knowledge*—that human life has a point beyond itself. The transcendent dignity of the person can be known from the fact “that we are stuck with living morally demanding lives,” and that we cannot free ourselves from the experiences of alienation and meaninglessness through our own efforts.²⁸ In his great encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, Pope John Paul II shows how the search for truth, the need for belief, and dependence on others orients the individual—and human life in general—to transcendence.²⁹ These needs reflect the indivisible unity of freedom, reason, and love that constitutes human nature and sets us apart from all other creatures. Freedom is not merely “the will to will.” Reason is not merely a form of instrumental intelligence, a sort of cunning that helps us get what our will wants; love is not just a personal and private experience for the self, but if we regard them in isolation from each other and from the truth, as things that we possess rather than things we have been given, this is what they become. We turn in on

ourselves and away from others, leaving ourselves nothing in the end but the comfort of carrion.

Transcendence directs us to our dependence on others and to our dependence on God, and dependence is how we know the reality of transcendence.³⁰ There is nothing undemocratic about bringing this truth into our reflections about our social and political arrangements. “A genuinely human society flourishes when individuals dedicate the exercise of their freedom to the defense of others’ rights and the pursuit of the common good, and when community supports individuals as they grow into a truly mature humanity.”³¹ To refound democracy on our need for others, and our need to make a gift of ourselves to them, is to bring a whole new form of democracy into being. If we have difficulty grasping this, it is because secularism itself has worked to undermine, “both in theory and in practice, at almost every level of society, ... the intellectual capacity to understand any reasonable alternative to a modern or post-modern understanding of man’s purpose in being.”³²

Democratic personalism, basing social and political life on the transcendent dignity of the person, is perhaps the last alternative to secular democracy still possible within Western culture as it is presently configured. From outside Western culture, of course, come other possibilities, in particular that of Islam. It is still very early in the piece, of course, but the small but growing conversion of native Westerners within Western societies carries the suggestion that Islam may provide in the twenty-first century the focus and attraction that communism provided in the twentieth, both for those who are alienated or embittered, on the one hand, and for those who seek order or justice, on the other. We assume that Western individualism and Islam are antithetical. In a context of personal and social disorder, it is not such a very great leap to make from the sovereignty of the individual’s will to the sovereignty of God’s will, loosely defined in many areas. In fact, this could be a much easier transition than the transition from seeing oneself as supreme to seeing oneself as dependent on God and Christian constraints.

So alternatives are required. “If today there is a problem with the recrudescence of intolerant religion,” this is not a problem that secular democracy can resolve but rather a problem that it tends to engender.³³ The past century provided examples enough of how the emptiness within secular democracy can be filled with darkness by political substitutes for religion.³⁴ Democratic personalism provides another, better possibility; one that does not require democracy to cancel itself out. It is based on a reading of modernity alternative to the secular reading that we are used to, and it has been provided by Pope John Paul II. Democratic personalism does not mean seizing power to pursue a

project of world transformation. It means a broadening of the imagination of democratic culture so that it can rediscover hope and reestablish freedom in truth and the common good. It is a work of persuasion and evangelization more than political activism. Its priority is culture rather than politics, and the transformation of politics through revivifying culture. It is also about salvation—not least of all the salvation of democracy itself.

Notes

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* (1908), “Why I am so Wise” §2.
2. Harry Stein, “Daytime Television Gets Judgmental,” *City Journal*, Spring 2004 (web-version: www.city-journal.org).
3. Russell Hittinger, “Abortion before Roe,” *First Things*, October 1994 (web-version: www.firstthings.com).
4. Ibid.
5. Larry L. Eastland, “The Empty Cradle will Rock,” *Wall Street Journal*, 28 June 2004 (reprinted from *American Spectator*, June 2004).
6. There are approximately 100,000 abortions performed in Australia each year. In 2003, there were 252,000 live births registered (Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics*, March Quarter, 2004).
7. Cf. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (1991) §46: “Those who are convinced that they know the truth and firmly adhere to it are considered unreliable from a democratic point of view, since they do not accept that truth is determined by the majority, or that it is subject to variation according to different political trends.”
8. Philip Rieff, *Fellow Teachers*, 3d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 67 *et passim*.
9. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (1995) §70.
10. Ibid.
11. George Weigel, “The Free and Virtuous Society: Catholic Social Doctrine in the Twenty-First Century,” in *The Fourth Annual Tyburn Lecture* (London: Tyburn Convent, 19 May 2004) (www.eppc.org).
12. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), xv–xvi.
13. Democratic personalism should be distinguished from *personalist democracy*, which the French philosopher Jacques Maritain promoted in the wake of the Second World War (and which inspired the European Christian Democratic parties)

as an alternative to both radical individualism and totalitarianism. Rather than seeing democracy as one possible means of realizing the common good, Maritain came close to reading democracy off from the concepts of divine authority and natural law. He tended to see democracy as a good in itself—as the final flowering of the demands and values of the gospel in the political realm, and as the end to which the social and political history of the West has progressed after long years of turbulence and injustice. His argument for democracy as the best possible regime—and possibly the only one consistent with the transcendent dignity of the person—strains the ancient and medieval sources, and goes further than the Church itself—or Pope John Paul II—have gone. Another reason for the distinction is that personalist democracy is sometimes associated (for example, from the work of Maritain’s colleague Emmanuel Mounier) with legislating for virtue. While democratic personalism may include legislating to assist in addressing social and moral problems, this should only occur on the basis of a more fundamental conversion of the culture.

14. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* §46.
15. John Milbank, “The Gift of Ruling: Secularization and Political Authority,” *New Blackfriars* no. 996 (March 2004): 215.
16. Peter Augustine Lawler, “Communism Today,” *Society* (May–June 2004): 24.
17. Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Democratic Authority at Century’s End,” *Hedgehog Review* (Spring 2000): 24.
18. *Ibid.*, 36 (quoting Charles Taylor from an unpublished essay).
19. *Ibid.*, 29.
20. *Planned Parenthood of South Eastern Pennsylvania et al. v. Casey, Governor of Pennsylvania, et al.* 505 US 833 (1992), at 851.
21. John Gray, “Two Liberalisms of Fear,” *Hedgehog Review* (Spring 2000): 9–10.
22. *Ibid.*, 22–23.
23. *Ibid.*, 12–13. Gray seeks to manage the “divisive commitments” that arise in secular democracy by repudiating the requirement that they be privatized and fostering instead “political institutions whose cultural identities are not singular, comprehensive, or exclusive (after the fashion of nineteenth-century nationalism and twentieth-century *Weltanschauung*-states), but complex, plural, and overlapping” (*ibid.*, 18–20). Like others before him, he seems to believe that this “postliberal pluralism” will avoid degenerating into relativism (cf. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953], chapters 1–3) and moderate “the legalist culture of unconditional rights” that has been engendered by conflicts over values in democracy. The example he gives of this new dispensation—the European Union—tends to discourage optimism.

24. Jean Bethke Elshtain, "The Bright Line: Liberalism and Religion," *New Criterion* 12 (March 1999). For one interpretation of the imposition of "enforceable understandings" in the West, see "Thought Crime Becomes a Reality in Canada: An Interview with Michael O'Brien" (www.ignatiusinsight.com). Reprinted from *Our Sunday Visitor*, 15 August 2004.
25. M. A. Casey, "Authority, Crisis, and the Individual," *Society* (January–February 2002): 82.
26. *Determinants of Below-Replacement Fertility*. Expert group meeting on Below-Replacement Fertility, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat, New York, November 4–6, 1997. UN/POP/BRF/BP/1997/2. Cited in Pontifical Council for the Family, *Declaration on Decrease of Fertility in the World*, 27 February 1998.
27. Phillip Longman, *The Empty Cradle* (New York: Perseus Books, 2004), chap. 4. Longman uses the higher fertility rates of believers in an attempt to scare secularists into addressing the problem of subreplacement fertility. For example: "In a world of falling human population only fundamentalists would draw new strength. For the deep messages of the Bible and the Koran, and of all the world's ancient religions, are relentlessly pronatal. And so, too, are the fundamentalist ideologies of fascism and racism ..." (5). Longman clearly sees this as a major threat to secularist democracy.
28. Lawler, "Communism Today," 29.
29. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (1995) §§28–33.
30. *Ibid.* §33: The individual's search "looks towards an ulterior truth which would explain the meaning of life. And it is therefore a search, which can reach its end only in reaching the absolute. Thanks to the inherent capacities of thought, man is able to encounter and recognize truth of this kind. Such a truth—vital and necessary as it is for life—is attained not only by way of reason but also through trusting acquiescence to other persons who can guarantee the authenticity and certainty of truth itself" (emphasis added).
31. Weigel, "The Free and Virtuous Society."
32. James V. Schall, S.J., "The Culture of Modernity and Catholicism" (forthcoming March 2005). See also Lawler, "Communism Today," 29: "The resources human beings have been given to live well as self-conscious mortals are love, virtue, and spiritual life, and the main effect of modern ideology has been to deprive human beings of the words or the self-understanding required to see this truth."
33. Milbank, "The Gift of Ruling," 235.
34. *Ibid.*, 233.