Article

Between Public Justification and Civil Religion: Shared Values in a Divided Time

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Abstract: Civil religion as formulated in Robert Bellah's seminal 1967 article, recalling Rousseau's *Social Contract*, has recently been proposed to build shared values and bridge deep partisan divides. A competing approach to shared values, based on public reason, relies on overlapping consensus in the works of John Rawls. In this paper, we present an in-between strategy that recognizes the insuperable empirical and normative problems of civil religion while using university civic engagement programs to bring about a public square in which religious reasons are found alongside neutral ones, ultimately for the sake of public justification. Having documented recent polarization trends, we consider the last major attempt to defend civil religion from the perspective of democratic solidarity, Phil Gorski's *American Covenant*, but believe it falls short: based on sociological work and Augustinian insights, we show the risk of domination that Gorski's strategy still entails, not least because of the definitional indeterminacy of civil religion and its overlap with religious nationalism. Paradoxically, a late Rawlsian approach that allows for the initial use of religious reasons, with a generosity *proviso* of necessary translation into public reason *at some point*, can lead to a public square with more religious arguments than one theorized explicitly from the perspective of civil religion. This is especially important because, given the discussed polarization trends, universities have taken on an increasingly important civic engagement role even as some still rely on a civil religion approach. We insist on public justification in university civic engagement, and for the sake of doing so take as a starting point Ben Berger's work in favoring *civil* engagement, which we define as combining moral, political, and social rather than exclusively political commitments. In proposing a novel university shared values mechanism, intended to expose learners to a maximum diversity of opinions and lived experiences, we offer a fresh approach to building trust in cohorts that increases the likelihood of true dialogue across difference.

Keywords: civil religion; liberalism; republicanism; overlapping consensus; public reason

1. Introduction

Can the American project survive, or are the centrifugal forces pulling it apart simply too great? Should unity be cultivated, and if so, how? Numerous observers of the US political scene, both in and out of academia, point to alarmingly high rates of polarization. Disagreement persists as to the causes of these divisions.[1] However, two different strategies (broadly speaking) to deal with them are civil religion versus the pursuit, through continued dialogue and discursive practice, of an ever-broadening sphere of consensus.[2] In this paper, we propose an in-between approach that draws on the work of Augustine and the late John Rawls, and that is implemented through engagement on university campuses. The idea is to somehow construct or reconstruct shared values. However, how one does so is critical: we agree with Rawls that public reason needs to remain the ultimate justification of proposed policies. We also go beyond Rawls, who adds a proviso stipulating that comprehensive or religious justifications *can* help in public, so long as citizens circle back *at some point* to

language everyone can affirm. We go beyond Rawls by proposing maximum generosity (see below) as an important component of our civic engagement university offerings. This means that all students in structured dialogues are not just allowed but encouraged to remain in the conversation, no matter the degree of inexperience of their first attempt at communication.

First, we show that public unity is not a momentary concern. Since the mid-1990s, as reported by reputable centers and polling firms, levels of polarization have reached new heights. The percentage of Americans reporting deep worry about the future of the American project is greater than ever before. What started on the periphery of talk radio has clearly moved into mainstream contexts and institutions.

Second, we unpack one strategy to address these frayed bonds of union and build shared values. This is "civil religion", understood as originating in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract* (Rousseau 1762), and most recently updated by Phil Gorski. After framing both religion and civil religion using Phil Gorski's definitions and providing background on the civil religion debates since the late 1960s, we show how Gorski is aware of the oppressive potential of the concept, as well as of its different and problematic historical associations. In light of these issues, he himself tries to broaden civil religion's appeal: Gorski democratizes the set of awe-inspiring civic stories he has in mind and expands its number.

However, even Gorski's liberalized and significantly more inclusive civil religion risks domination because of its proximity to religious nationalism, a. conceptual closeness reinforced by the definitional indeterminacy of civil to religion. For example, there is both a bottom-up (in Gorski and Bellah) and a top-down (Rousseau) view of civil religion. The latter is positioned to reinforce authoritarianism, and in light of recent empirical findings its existence cannot be dismissed. This risk of religious nationalism and associated domination, as a result of adopting civil religion for the sake of shared values, is further supported by Augustine's own critique of civil religion. We therefore outline the Bishop of Hippo's incisive points against even a well-meaning political framework of divine narrative, demonstrating how for Augustine, this approach can amplify lust, ambition, and imperialism.

It is hardly an accident that Augustine offers an alternative. Augustine presents this alternative in Book XIX of *City of God*, wherein shared values are achieved not through civil religion, but instead through public reason supported by an overlapping consensus. We turn to this model in the Section 4, and in eschewing a normatively significant ambiguity in Rawls, we endorse an atypical defense of public reason that avoids the pitfalls of civil religion while retaining many of its benefits. We take seriously Rawls' stipulation added to clarify his stance towards religious participants in public forums: a comprehensive perspective *can* remain valid, in debate, so long as translation back to neutral or non-religious language takes place *at some point*.

But what does that mean? It is not clear that Rawls has one answer in mind. In adding a *positive* reason for the initial introduction of religion into politics, which is that participants benefit from becoming an active part of the translation process, Rawls further opens the door to the prolonged benefit not just of civil, but of actual religious reasons in public contexts or background settings connected to them.

In considering our own specific shared values program recommendations, we include an additional normative stipulation. It calls for maximum generosity. Moreover, it does not allow for the presumption of bad faith, or the exclusion of a religious person from robust debate, based simply on the perception of a lack of progress towards immediate reliance on exclusively public, and non-religious, reasons. The effect, we show, is *in-between* civil religion and shared values: a public sphere ultimately guided by public reason, but *resembling in some ways* civil religion, and causally impacted by a significant number of both civil religious and religious arguments. Our suggestion here builds on the work of Andrew March and others, who have already pushed back against a "maximalist" view of public reason. March and others show that, especially given the right circumstances and context,

there *are* situations in which the expression of a religious opinion is, for some amount of time, consistent with public reason.

This expanded and later Rawlsian view of public reason welcomes and relies on the work of religious leaders. These individuals are uniquely positioned to encourage those under their care to express themselves in increasingly public, and less narrowly religious, ways. We rely on Eric Morrow's work on civic engagement in the Orthodox church to discuss the importance of pastoral involvement towards this end. Even as individuals start to participate in politics or politics-related discussions based on commitments drawn from upbringing, identity, and even religion, the insistence is that justification in public terms remain the goal over time.

This leads to the key question taken up in Section 6: outside of religious bodies that implement Morrow's strategy, where should socialization of people in a divided time, for the sake of building shared values using a public reason rather than civil religion strategy, occur? Who, or what, is the primary agent of socialization? We make the case that universities are uniquely situated, given their history of fostering engagement and connecting people to public life, to play the role of these shared values builders. Yes, universities have also been involved in *disengaged education, but more recently, greater involvement has been prioritized by academics and administrators themselves, and this is altogether fitting given contemporary polarization.* We survey the sizeable literature that characterizes universities as engines of engagement since the 1990s, *sui generis* in their capacity to promote the kind of engagement that, down the road, results in a public-reason oriented overlapping consensus.

However, as mentioned above, there is more than one way to attempt to build shared values. Is it possible that some academic frameworks would still pursue this goal, on campus, *based on civil religion*? The answer is yes. In Section 7 the article, we therefore survey the academic scene, considering both civil religion and public reason-oriented "civic engagement" programs, distinguishing each from the other. The former generally affirm the importance of the Constitution, or study of the Federalist papers combined with discussion of classical liberal principles, for the sake of equipping people to *engage* as informed and thoughtful citizens. These programs generally represent a high level of civic information and do not *necessarily* morph into civil religion, but it is easy to see how they might. The latter tend to prioritize "service learning", community service, and interactions with underserved populations. One can see how these programs, insofar as they do not reverentially elevate a specific understanding of American history or privilege a particular set of stories, can more straightforwardly avoid the civil religion temptation. At the same time, they do not always insist on pairing work in the community, with the robust acquisition of civic facts and subsequent discussion of the material. This dominant civic engagement paradigm then privileges activism and grassroots experiences to successfully protect against civil religion but to the detriment of information and dialogue. We ask if there is a way to design a university engagement program firmly rooted in public reason as the preferred mode of shared values construction, even as it delivers some of the benefits of other programs that veer uncomfortably close to civil religion?

We believe it is, but before providing specifics in Section 9, consider in Section 8 the practical importance of trust, in whatever blended but still public reason strategy is ultimately adopted. Recent literature on Rawls and shared values emphasizes the importance of this affect: without trust, it is simply not possible to maintain a stable overlapping consensus. This is still a neglected area of research, but those involved have already made the case persuasively. Unfortunately, but in a way that leads to an opportunity, these scholars show that trust is not guaranteed. It is exogenous, in a sense, to the desired agreement, and so may require creative introduction from "the outside".

In Section 9 of the article, then, and building on existing programs at Tarleton State University, Swarthmore College, and Wake Forest University, we finally provide our own model of university engagement, open to some religious giving while maintaining a commitment to public reason, focusing on building trust and real connections with people in community, while not forgetting about the value of information and reasoned

dialogue. Indeed, to accommodate all of these elements, we find that Ben Berger's expanded understanding of what is at stake, as he moves from "civic" to "civil" engagement, is useful and focuses our attempts. Under the umbrella of "civil", Berger recommends exposing students not to activity that is political or narrowly information based (though he recognizes this as important), but to any combination of social and moral involvement. We take him up on the possibility, though for our purposes define "civil engagement" as bringing together political, social, and moral connections. In a framework of trust, we want to insist that students sample *all* these modes of engagement for the sake of sustainable participation in our democracy.

As in the article generally, in Section 9, we seek to thread the needle and find the *in-between*. In the end, it turns out that the key to practical implementation of a civic engagement program combining the best elements of civil religion *and* public reason-oriented frameworks, which nevertheless ultimately upholds a standard of public reason, is to adhere to our "maximum generosity" guidelines as outlined in Section 5. The fact that, on a public university campus, students in intense community–university exchanges (on criminal justice reform, homelessness, environmental policy, etc.) are exposed to a maximum diversity of opinions, both academic and non-academic, increases the likelihood of dialogue across difference. The fact that trained moderators are in place to *encourage* everyone in the deliberation to keep participating, regardless of whether their initial arguments have been made in neutral or religious terms, further increases the likelihood of dialogue across difference (as students are exposed to some religious points). That students see moderators encouraging religious and non-religious reasons equally (on the way to participants learning how to communicate in public reason) increases this civic affect to an even greater extent. Thus, our framework of engagement at the University level is novel insofar as it takes this question of trust with the utmost seriousness, both practically and theoretically. In addition to instituting intense and deliberative community–university exchanges, our model amplifies trust further still by building on a program exemplified by Tarleton Town Hall. As we will explain, Town Hall allows students in intro government classes to move through a semester in the standard way, by attending lectures twice weekly, but it also requires attendance once a week in a significantly smaller policy section, where getting to know fellow students is actually possible. All of this again, and as it cannot be repeated enough, increases trust, at Tarleton State and other likeminded universities, to the extent that pre-existing student–faculty–community networks are leveraged and mobilized towards engagement ends, without the need to start at the very beginning. In our era of increasing polarization and in this way, what becomes clear is the importance of university public reason based civic engagement that equips us to encounter, in a mode of civility, "the other" in the perspectives of our fellow citizens.

2. Polarization

How bad is the state of American polarization? The answer, it would seem, is ominously so. At the end of 2019, the Georgetown Institute of Politics and Public Service Battleground Poll released results indicating the average respondent believed the country is two thirds of the way to a Civil War. Answers to questions were recorded on a 100-point scale, with 100 indicating perception of the country as on the edge of a complete breakdown. The mean respondent was at 67.23. Those conducting the poll noted some contradictions. For example, even in expressing concern, respondents wanted representatives to "stand up" more to politicians with different views, as well as to special interests they considered powerful. Nevertheless, the dire assessment held up across age, cultural and racial, and party groups (Goeas and Lake 2019).

Consistent with this finding, the Pew Research center has been keeping polarization data since 1994. Its most recent report notes that the measure of polarization as of 2017 is the starkest since polling began. This is based on the distance of the median Republican from the median Democratic voter on issues related to the perceived severity of racial discrimination, value of public assistance to the needy, and benefits to the US from im-

migration (Pew Research Center 2017). That polarization has taken a significant turn for the worse, in ways that people can intuitively affirm, is further demonstrated empirically by the growing percentage of respondents who would not be OK with a son or daughter marrying someone of the same party: shifting from a quarter of Republicans and third of Democrats who would prefer same-party union in 1958, to 63% and 60%, respectively in 2016 (Vavreck 2017).

It is instructive to note the movement of this discourse from talk radio to the results reported by a bipartisan Georgetown poll, and to academic studies and books. It may not have been a surprise that Alex Jones, having speculated that the Sandy Hook school shooting was staged, that the Oklahoma City Bombing was planned, and that 9/11 was an inside job, whipped up his supporters in June 2017 with lurid images of civil conflagration (Ohlheiser 2018). Two days after the Unite the Right rally on 11–12 August 2017, however, it was an August 14 article by Robin Wright in the New Yorker that asked, "Is America Headed For a New Kind of Civil War? (Wright 2017)" Wright interviewed a number of historians of the Civil War as well as Keith Mines, a State Department expert with experience on the ground in different civil wars around the world. Having made these predictions a few weeks before in Foreign Affairs (Ricks 2017), Mines estimated that the likelihood of a late 1850s repeat in the US was 60% in the next 10–15 years. A number of conservatives were dismayed: *Business Insider* published a piece decrying what it characterized as the irresponsibility of the New Yorker in amplifying a far-fetched possibility (Barro 2017).

In 2018, however, the dynamics of the situation continued to evolve. It was the turn of a respected classics professor and controversial political commentator on the right to push these considerations closer to the mainstream. Victor Davis Hanson, writing in National Review, compared contemporary tension in the US to the run-up to 1861, speculating that especially given the multiplier of geographic separation, we were well past 1968 (Hanson 2018). Later that year, as a commentator of Tom Friedman's centrist caliber joined the chorus speculating that a civil war is conceivable, it was now undeniable that speculation about this scenario is no longer the preserve of either left or right, and that it is hardly a fringe phenomenon (Friedman 2018).

As the conversation has continued to shift into academic spheres, cause for concern has only increased. Phil Gorski has thus referred, in his scholarly treatment of civil religion and in a comment whose significance has not been picked up in the literature, to the current state of incivility in America as the "Cold civil War". In the very next sentence and by way of an aside that cannot be disregarded, Gorski adds, "lest our Cold Civil war turn hot (Gorski 2017, p. ix)". Brown economist Jesse Shapiro has concluded that the "US is polarizing faster than other democracies (Shapiro 2020)". In comparing levels of polarization among affluent and democratized countries since 1950, Jennifer McCoy (Georgia State) and Benjamin Press (Carnegie Endowment) have also emphasized that "the United States is in uncharted and very dangerous territory (McCoy and Press 2022)". Moreover, Lilliana Mason at Johns Hopkins University, commenting on the risks of polarization, sees "a huge risk of violence, partisan violence" (Kurtzleben 2021), which she connects to a resurgence of white supremacy following gains in civil rights.

Yes, it is the case that things have been worse, especially depending on the metric. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was more domestic terrorism in the US than today, as measured by the actual number of bombing incidents (Barro 2017). It is also true, during that violent time, that the country did not experience an attack on the nation's capital. At a minimum, therefore, whether one thinks that the discourse about coming apart at the seams is alarmist or not (Bouie 2022; Douthat 2022), every political scientist and right-thinking American should be concerned about what can be done to decrease polarization, to bring people together, and to start to restore a sense of shared civic purpose.

3. Shared Values—Civil Religion?

In this hyperpolarized present, Phil Gorski's project, *American Covenant: A History of Civil Religion from the Puritans to the Present*, is the attempt to reclaim a "vital center (Gorski

2017, pp. 1–2)" and "sustain democratic solidarity" (ibid., p. 13) in a specific way. Gorski proposes a strategy of civil religion. Although he is aware of several objections to it, as already mentioned above, he believes the polarization situation is dire enough to fully justify its deployment. Further encouraged by Barack Obama's example and setting out to make civil religion as palatable as possible, Gorski gambles that, in the early 21st century, it holds the greatest hope of maintaining and keeping alive the promise of shared values in the United States.

3.1. "Religion"—Definition

However, what is "civil religion?" As a category, it has proven notoriously hard to define. This is especially true considering the difficulty, across several fields, of neatly encapsulating the meaning of "religion" itself. Thus, in anthropology, one thinks of the great James Frazer's emphasis on the "propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man" (Frazer [1890] 2003, chp. 4, para. 3) or of Clifford Geertz's broader view of religion as "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations" (Geertz [1973] 2017). In sociology, and especially relevant in this article, Emile Durkheim classically connects religion to the distinction between the sacred and the profane.[3] Talcott Parsons presents what is often considered a functionalist perspective, emphasizing the integrative role of religion in the maintenance of civil order in its interaction with multiple social spheres (Parsons 1935, pp. 293–300; 1979, pp. 1, 13–21). Parsons does so even as he also acknowledges at length its power for the individual in affects related to religious experience and individual expression (ibid. 1935, p. 291 and Parsons 1974/1999, p. 316 (mentioned by Turner 2005, p. 313)). And he characterizes religion this way even as he critiques Durkheim for *not* including a functionalist perspective (Parsons 1968, p. 448), which is a claim in the early book that, as one important author has shown, suffers from serious problems (Pope 1973, pp. 411–12). In theology, Paul Tillich refers to religion as reflecting matters of "ultimate concern" (Tillich 1964, pp. 6–7). Given this proliferation of definitions and disagreements among influential thinkers, one can see how some observers would simply conclude that the category of "religion" should be discarded, even as others warn against insisting on essentialism and instead picking one definition, and then sticking with it.[4] Since this article explores civil religion and alternatives, we provisionally accept Bellah's view: religion is "a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence" (Coleman 1970; Bellah 1965).

3.2. "Civil Religion"—Definition

Civil religion, as it turns out, is just as indeterminate as "religion". Robert Bellah's (1967) definition—presented in the 1967 Daedalus article—is straightforward. It implies the religious dimension of political life, "a collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity". It is a tradition, and Bellah was especially struck by it in considering the references to divinity in key Presidential inaugural addresses. The body of thought in question was not a substitute for Christianity, and it was broader than Christianity. It was deistic, although in Providentialist moments not simply referring to the equivalent of a watchmaker God. Later, especially by the time of *The Broken Covenant* (Bellah 1975), he incorporated an element of myth into his understanding of civil religion.[5]

Jones and Richey took the indeterminacy to the next level: categorizing five different kinds of civil religion. These are folk religion, religious nationalism, democratic faith, Protestant civic piety, and transcendent universal religion of the nation. Thus, folk religion emphasizes that the emanations of this belief are the everyday, be it a Memorial Day celebration, or a Fourth of July parade, etc. Religious nationalism suggests a greater degree of idolatry of the nation as a whole, and its association with spiritual power, while democratic faith tends to refer (in humanistic terms) to something of which James Dewey might approve. Protestant civic piety, then, is less threatening than religious nationalism

even as it ties the feelings in question to a specific and particular context; transcendent universal religion of the nation is more general, with the suggestion that the nation itself has been associated with certain *general* ideas. The authors list Bellah in the transcendent universal religion camp (Jones and Richey 1974, p. 16)

In case these additional categorizations did not sufficiently complicate the picture, the important 20th century church historian Martin Marty (1974) also suggested a different set of four distinction based on binary distinctions, along two axes. Civil religion, on his account, can see the nation as directed by divinity (a commitment is made *to* America, which is the Nation *under* God) or civil religion can characterize America as itself expressing a divine purpose (so that one speaks of the promise *of* America, with the Nation transcending itself). Within both these boxes, civil religion can undergo further division into a priestly and prophetic mode, with the former preserving and the latter critiquing social conditions. "Priestly" and "*Under* God" civic religiosity, for Marty, thus represents political and religious ideas as combined by Dwight Eisenhower; "Prophetic" and "Under God" may find instantiation in the preaching of Jonathan Edwards. Priestly and national self-transcendence for Marty is on display in the rhetoric of both Kennedy and Nixon; prophetic national self-transcendence is illustrated by the thought of Bellah himself (Martin Marty 1974, pp. 139–57). In addition to these problems of categorization are challenges of periodization[6] and, more recently, additional classifications.[7]

Which definition to accept? We affirm that of Phil Gorski, who announces with some modifications that he is on board with Robert Bellah's framework. As does Bellah, Gorski acknowledges that the in-between of civil religion, connecting politics to religion, is a tradition. The modification, on Gorski's own account, is that whereas the story Bellah tells about civil religion is one of decline (though admittedly with the possibility of renewal), Gorski's is significantly more upbeat, with the tradition of civil religion constituting a living stream. Moreover, its dynamic nature is especially evident in the democratization of the civil religious tradition that Gorski undertakes; there is a holding up of the conventional stories, traditions and practices that unify us, related to George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, but there is now special attention paid to many of the exemplars of civic virtue who number Anne Hutchinson, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King, Jr., in addition to many others among them.[8]

However, the benefits of Gorski's civil religion strategy are outweighed by the risks of domination, as a result of what remains (on Gorski's own admission) the conceptual proximity of Gorski's civil religion to religious nationalism, to an extent that even Gorski underestimates. To show this, we need to go step by step. Thus, Gorski presents two main alternatives to civil religion, neither of which is "worthy of our allegiance:" religious nationalism and radical secularism. Religious nationalism does not separate church and state.[9] Radical secularism, on the other hand, involves more than the institutional separation of church and state: "It attacks religious faith from the vantage point of scientific reason, claiming that the one cannot be reconciled with the other, and demands that religion be ejected from public life which should be a realm of pure reason" (ibid., p. 29).[10]

4. Civil Religion—Dangers of Domination

4.1. In Gorski's Own Account

Given that these three possibilities may involve different judgments about the extent to which politics and religion overlap (Gorski illustrates civil religion with two circles that point to "'partial overlap;'" religious nationalism involves "'maximum fusion'" (ibid., p. 18), how exactly does the author intend for civil religion to *avoid* shading into or valorizing the language of religious nationalism? Gorski acknowledges, after all, that the sociologist Robert Bellah, whose seminal 1967 article reignites related debates and who defended civil religion, was misrepresented as a religious nationalist (ibid., p. 24). Even as he himself pursued greater inclusivity, the originator of the phrase "civil religion" in an American context himself dropped it in the mid-1980s. Bellah acknowledged that he found himself "tired of arguing against those for whom civil religion means the idolatrous worship of the

state (Bellah 1989, p. 147; Lienesch 2019, p. 3/31)". Gorski admits that not differentiating clearly enough between civil religion and religious nationalism is a weakness in Bellah's account (ibid., pp. 16–17), *without then going on to say how he addresses this issues in his revised presentation of Bellah's project.*

Further reinforcing the possibility that civil religion can shade (even imperceptibly) into religious nationalism is that at least one author in the special edition on Civil Religions does not believe questions of overlap have been sufficiently addressed. The definitional fuzziness of civil religion, the proliferation that we considered above, itself extends this logic, as some of the definitions that Jones and Richey provide do smack of religious nationalism. Others have also called attention to definitional ambivalence in attempts to understand civil religion. This is not to underscore, as we have just now, that civil religion can morph into religious nationalism. It is simply to make the less alarming point that, as a result of the multiplicity of meanings imputed to it, civil religion becomes so multivalent that it is no longer helpful (Demerath and Williams 1985; Lienesch 2019, p. 3/31).

4.2. With Reference to Rousseau

Especially connected to the concern about domination is that, historically, there have been *two* major kinds of civil religion. One is implemented in top-down fashion and associated with Rousseau. The other is spontaneous, developing ground-up. Bellah's approach valorizes the latter. Gorski himself favors it, (ibid., p. 16) believing that the scribe of American civil religion should have emphasized it to a greater extent, given the decreased risk of state oppression and religious nationalism.

Disturbingly, a recent treatment of the subject in Religions 2019 emphasized that, in fact, for most scholars a paradigm shift has occurred. There is empirical evidence today that top-down varieties of civil religion have become the norm (Cristi 2001, pp. 73, 77). To emphasize again, in constructing his version of shared spiritual narrative, Bellah insisted that it was not engineered in this way, but that it arose spontaneously in a "bottom-up" fashion. This is one way, interestingly, in which Bellah remains within the tradition of the French sociologist Emile Durkheim) (Wallace 1977; Lienesch 2019, pp. 3–4/31). As a reminder, it is also an example of how Durkheim (following Tocqueville) *breaks* with Rousseau. This is because the characterization of a designed civil religion imposed from the top-down is reminiscent of Rosseau, who in the Social Contract describes the Legislator as re-creating human nature (Jean-Jacques Rousseau) (Social Contract Book 2 Chapter 7, "The Legislator"). The verified presence of more Rousseauvian civil religion, undoubtedly, would have caused Bellah to question further his openness to this understanding of politics and religion integrated for the sake of unity.

Indeed, other recent articles, for the most part, also paint a bleak picture of civil religion. They focus not on any integrative feature, but instead on its tendency and potential to lead to various outcomes of oppression and domination. Even if these articles approve of civil religion as integrative, they also emphasize its "fuzziness", which we have argued is connected to dominating potential. Moreover, this possibility of domination is thrown into still greater relief through the conceptually distinct scenario of a bottom up, spontaneous form of civil religion that is *converted,* that changes, in effect, to a *top-down* and *instrumental* citizen religiosity, over time (Danielson 2019; Weiss and Bungert 2019; Johnson 2005). Given significant evidence that this happens, and with "civil religion" also a site of contestation as various groups seek to protect power and project it downwards using spiritual imagery, the case for caution grows stronger. It turns justifiably into a case for distrust, lest civil religion intensify our differences and contribute to Rousseauvian projects of revolution and authoritarianism on both the left and the right (Lienesch 2019).

4.3. With Reference to Augustine

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is a broader philosophic concern that reinforces the undesirability of civil religion in our era, or in any era. Namely: any republic, not just Rome, that is motivated by lust and using religion as a political tool to strengthen

affect or loyalty without reference to Christ, will see civil religion subsumed into a dynamic or matrix of domination, cruelty, and excess. This is, after all, the distinction Augustine makes between the cities of God and man in Book XIV of *City of God* (Augustine 2003, pp. 539–94), which also allows him, in perhaps an unlikely way, to enter into contemporary civil religion debates *in political theory.* It is especially with reference to it that the scathing critique of Varro, the Roman civil theologian, in Book VI of *City of God*, makes sense. Straightforwardly, the preface to this part of Augustine's masterwork could not be clearer in its condemnation of civil religion, or theological outlook used as a political tool: "The argument of my first five books has, I believe, given a sufficient refutation of those who suppose that many false gods are to be venerated and worshipped for advantages in this mortal life and for benefits in temporal things. They would accord them the ceremonies and the humble devotion which the Greeks call *latreia*, a worship due only to the one true God. Christian truth proves those 'gods' to be useless images or unclean spirits and malignant demons, creatures at any rate, and not the Creator" (ibid., pp. 539–94). The text here indicates that *any* set of religious precepts, adopted for utilitarian purposes or this-worldly benefits, is dangerous. It is harder to imagine a deeper and more unambiguous critique of civil religion.

Indeed, in his critique of the thought of the civil Roman theologian Varro, whom he considers quite shrewd, The Bishop of Hippo distinguishes in his thought among mythical, natural, and civil theologies. For Varro, these represent three different religiosities. Moreover, whereas Varro tries to distinguish especially among the fabulous (mythical) and the civil deities, acknowledging that the former are obscene whereas the latter are not necessarily so, Augustine points out that the same logic the civil theologian employs against the creations of the poets applies to the fictions that are enacted in the temples (civil religion). Thus, in Chapter 7 of Book VI, this is especially evident for Augustine in a story about a guardian of the temple of Hercules who plays with one hand for himself, and with another for the god—the bet he makes is that if Hercules wins, the guardian will provide dinner for the god as well as provide a mistress for him (ibid., pp. 240–41). For Augustine, this is obscene, and evidence that there is no real difference between mythical and civil theology. At the end of the day, only true religion (never an instrumentalized version) is normatively acceptable (ibid., pp. 254–97).[11]

Perhaps one could argue that these are just Augustine's pointed comments about *Roman* civil religion. Might other alternatives, even Bellah and Gorski's, suffice? Yet the broader point of the critique in *City of God* (one applying not just to Roman beliefs) is appreciated by at least one influential commentator (Balitzer 1974, p. 42). Augustine himself, later in the book, doubles down on the critique of instrumentalized theology in his engagement with the Neo-Platonists Apuleius and Porphyry. As thinkers, they affirm civil religion, and Augustine condemns it in their specific intellectual context. He objects especially to the inegalitarian implications of believing that *false* beliefs are necessary for most of humanity, even as an elite can grasp truth (Augustine 2003, pp. 410–13). As Mary Keys has pointed out, the openness of Apuleius and Porphyry to prescribing certain thoughts for the philosophers and others for the masses is repugnant to the true message of equality that Christ brings. This is also reflected in their neglect of the body, which is a reality that all human beings share and again that Christ confirms (Keys 2021).

Still further support for Augustine's critique of civil religion as intended in a general way, not just to point out the shortcomings of Roman civilization, is found in Veronica Roberts Ogle's work on the political theologian's assessment of the political dimension of idolatry (Roberts Ogle 2021). Strikingly, Ogle makes the case that Augustine considers idolatry *the* source of injustice in politics. Unpacking three modes of misdirected worship in *City of God*, which she identifies as pride, greed, and a subservience to mediators wrongly supposed to have a true ability to connect man to God, the author shows how all these manifestations of idolatry compound the justice perverting tendency of the human city to make itself its own foundation—to worship itself. Theology used as a political tool exacerbates this dynamic, leading to further injustice as the city is magnified in the short

term and legitimation accrues to the view that God is to serve the ends of human beings in power, not the other way around (Roberts Ogle 2017, pp. 69–78).

Roberts Ogle extends this logic from idolatry to civil religion, or political religion, in a compelling treatment of the fallacy of political religion as Eric Voegelin has understood the term (Roberts Ogle 2021, pp. 73–89). Discussing Voegelin's observations about how the religious impulse to worship easily manifests itself in the 20th century in politics, Ogle faults this important thinker for not providing an Augustinian anthropology that would explain *why* human beings, based on their nature, have the proclivity to worship. Now, it is true that in discussing political religion, Voegelin is referring to 20th century totalitarian regimes (Gontier 2013, pp. 25, 36–41). Ogle does not discuss Varro, or the ways in which Augustine likely critiques Apuleius and Porphyry for defending civil religion. However, Ogle's own willingness to apply this thinking to "civil religion"—to the danger of civil religion *misdirecting* the impulse towards worship that is properly oriented only towards God—is evident in the one mention of civil religion in the chapter: "Citing Mucius Scaevola's contention that religious myths are useful for cultivating heroic courage, Augustine links this attitude towards civil religion with a wiliness that is content to use any means necessary to bind citizens to their *patria*" (Roberts Ogle 2021, pp. 73–89). Ogle also notes Augustine's approving not of Constantine, the exemplar par excellence of civil religion, but of Theodosius—who *disregards* the advice of his bishops in allowing for a massacre to take place.

That Augustine has entered American civil religion debates in political theory, and in fact that he does so on both sides, is further evident in the work of Kody Cooper and Dan Burns, respectively. Cooper, in "Existential Humility and the Critique of Civil Religion in Augustine's Political Theology", elaborates on some of the themes mentioned above (Cooper 2021, pp. 189–206). Throughout this piece, he goes to lengths to showcase differences between philosophical and pagan perspectives, on the one hand, and Christian, on the other, on this question of pursuing character formation and then binding those characters together in a single unit. Burns, on the other hand, rehabilitates the idea of civil religion with Augustinian support, showing how Augustinian resources can in fact help it to maintain civil religion in place (Burns 2022). The point being, two commentators as different as Burns and Cooper agree that Augustine is relevant here, meaning that he matters to these debates.

John Wilsey's work on civil religion also links the dynamic of these narratives, in a US context, to Manifest Destiny and the inevitable Otherization and degradation of entire groups of people that ensued (Wilsey 2015, pp. 64–90). This is true even though Wilsey agrees with Gorski on the *possibility* of open civil religion, which is defined as inclusive and promoting democratic solidarity. Indeed, Wilsey contrasts theological commitments of the antebellum South with the ones articulated by Abraham Lincoln. The latter are "open"; the former, as the paradigmatic example of ethnic/national elections not admitting outsiders, are "closed" (Wilsey 2015, pp. 19, 39, 67). One kind of civil religion leads to injustice and oppression, whereas the other does not.

This may again raise the question of why *not* to pursue open, or pluralism affirming forms of civil religion. Here we hold that Wilsey simply does not emphasize enough the depth of Augustine's critique of civil religion. It is, for Augustine, inseparable from idolatry. Wilsey mentions the seminal Christian thinker several times (ibid., pp. 45–46, 111, 131, 236, n16), but at no point (despite his own highlighting of the distinction between the city of God and man) does Augustine's linking of the political uses of religion to matrices of power, around which the wicked and earthly city revolves, appear. There is no discussion of the critique of Varro, or engagement with Apuleius and Porphyry. What it all amounts to is that Augustine's deep critique of civil religion withstands Wilsey's attempted rehabilitation.[12]

Indeed, Augustine's profound critique of the instrumentalization of religion is supported further by the classic work of a seminal 20th century thinker, Ernest Lee Tuveson, whom Wilsey mentions, writing about one particularly noxious form of civil religion that certainly resulted in domination and religious nationalism. This was Manifest Destiny.

At its core, of course, it was the anticipation of an unavoidable future arrival of Anglo settlers on America's West Coast and the civilizational benefits this would bring. It was nothing if not a civil religion, as affirmed by recent work showing the dangerous merger of nationalism and eschatology involved (McDougall 2019; Gomez 2012; Coles 2002). And according to Tuveson, it was made possible by a turn *away* from Augustine (Tuveson 1968, pp. 1–25).

The missing piece, according to Tuveson, is the millennium, or period of 1000 years mentioned in the 20th chapter of the Book of Revelation. Tuveson is clear that Puritans and, interestingly enough, Progressives who accepted various ideas about the improvement of human beings over time, based their interpretations of the directionality of history on a specific view of the millennium. It was *not* the perspective that the City of Man and the City of God would remain *separate* until the end of history. It was also not the view that God's people would experience hardship and travail until the Second Coming. Rather, the kind of millennialism that Tuveson links to pernicious civil religion envisions the City of Man progressively *becoming* divine over the 1000 years in question, at the end of which time the Son of God is to come again in glory. Secularized versions of this idea include social reform in the 19th century, as in the thought of Edward Bellamy; Manifest Destiny itself, and numerous ideas animating the Civil War as well as Woodrow Wilson's vision of America leading the nation to an era of global peace (Tuveson 1968, pp. 91–137, 187–214).

However, the eschatology presupposed by Manifest Destiny, as Tuveson explains, required a jettisoning of Augustine's interpretation of the millennium. It necessitated replacing early metaphorical interpretations, supported by Augustine, with a literal account, which Augustine did not support. At the end of the day, as Tuveson's work makes clear, the civil religion of Manifest Destiny required moving away from Augustine's view of the millennium and embracing one that he opposed.

5. Shared Values—Public Reason?

5.1. Augustine, Public Reason, and Consensus

If, in all these ways, Augustine trenchantly critiques civil religion in ways that dissuade us from resorting to it, even in a dangerously polarized time, does he offer any alternatives? As it turns out, he does. This is yet another way in which this political theologian is relevant to political theory debates. At the end of the day—Augustine recommends a strategy of public reason, but one that remains maximally open to religion. A vital component to Augustine's strategy of public reason is to promote unity and peace rather than division to drive for the greatest number of participants into the policy arena for the public good. This has been likened to a Rawlsian overlapping consensus approach by, most famously, Robert Markus (Markus 1988), but since then by Paul Weithman (1991) and Edmund Santurri (1997). For example, in Book XIX of *City of God* Augustine does *not* endorse the Constantinianism of Theodosius. Rather, he emphasizes that pagans and Christians alike can appreciate the peace the Roman empire makes possible. Living in peace is a shared value, allowing Christians and pagans to function together in the same political unit, even as they value that earthly peace for ultimately very different reasons (Augustine 2003, pp. 877–79; Cochrane 2003, pp. 538–69)[13]

However, just as Augustine wrote *City of God*, broadly speaking, to persuade civil rulers against reliance on a Christian civil religion, so too, and importantly (Book 19), his work can be read to encourage Christian spiritual leaders *not* to embrace the power of the state, or a civil religion, to support their religious organizations. Ecclesiastical organizations must also decide, in other words, no different than is the case with civil rulers but *as a matter of the theology they teach*, how trained clergy are to orient themselves towards civil religion or its possibility. They must decide whether to educate leaders who, in engaging with public officials, use the language of civil religion or public reason.

Eric Morrow (2020), who has built on the guidance provided by the Orthodox church *to clergy* to increase civic engagement in a hyperpolarized time, argues for the overlapping consensus strategy. Morrow does not discount the importance of religious discourse in

navigating polarized environments. However, he avoids instrumentalizing any particular religious narrative, and in fact he does so openly on grounds of consensus informed by dialogue:

> One of the main strategies for this work [of civic engagement] is the focus on a set of interrelated values: dignity, humanity, decency, honesty, curiosity, imagination, wisdom, courage, community, participation, stewardship, resourcefulness, and hope. This list of values—values that can be part of a 'language of common social accord'—values that have clear biblical and theological foundations and that can be explained both in terms of our faith and in terms of civic engagement—is one example [italics mine] of how we can direct the pastoral, didactic, and homiletical ministries of the Church to a substantive understanding of the relationship of faith to life and offer a witness of how our communion with God guides us in our engagement within a challenging political environment and with critical issues in which government has a substantial role (ibid.).

Morrow emphasizes that the particular overlap described is one possible route to a viable framework of shared values. There may be other sets that achieve the same goal. What is important is not the specificity or ordering in the list. Instead, what matters is the decision to pursue overlapping purpose rather than a civil religion strategy.

In presenting this set of values, Morrow builds on the work of David Hoffman and Jennifer Domagal-Goldman (both of the American Democracy Project), Stephanie King (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators), and Verdis L. Robinson (American Association of State Colleges and Universities' The Democracy Commitment) (Hoffman et al. 2018). These four scholars develop a theory of change extended to democracy, understood not as an end-state or fixed goal but instead as a dynamic and open-ended process. In five essays that speak to this ever more perfect realization of the democratic idea, the authors ask about the ultimate purpose of civil engagement, reflect on the qualities and dispositions helpful in bringing it about, and consider pedagogical strategies instrumental in cultivating these qualities, including encouragement of vulnerability, prescription of language used in inclusive ways, as well as discovery of democratic stories in different narratives. Nevertheless, this series of essays begins with the above list of values. They are shared values, and Morrow as well as Hoffman propose to make them foundational *through open-ended dialogue, not any process of mystification.*

Significantly, and unlike Hoffman et al., Morrow emphasizes the other side of the Augustinian coin, which is that not just civil rulers, but also religious leaders, must orient themselves to these shared values, the latter *based on linguistic and faith resources.* Morrow complements Hoffman but in doing so also potentially addresses a blind spot in his work. Namely, what is the motivational source of these shared values, if not the internal resources of different religions and faith systems? Yet "faith" occurs in this work of Hoffman et al. only once; "church" not a single time.

A late modification of Rawls' position leads us to strengthen through a qualification to support of the "shared values" approach. Although not weakening Rawls' view that public reason must remain the standard in civic deliberation, it allows for a conceptualization of the public square that is *in between* civil religion and public justification. Therefore, what is Rawls' qualified view? What steps did he have to take in order to make possible the opening?

5.2. John Rawls, Religion and Public Reason, and the "In Between" Strategy

In 1971, Rawls presented the theory of justice that he and others characterized as Kantian, including (not Rawls' words) "reason that goes all the way down" (Rawls 1999, pp. 10, 28n, 38n, 121–22, 221–27). Included in his early 1970s articulation was a list of primary goods that covered rights but also income, with the difference principle added to ensure the prioritization of those at the very bottom of society (Rawls 1999, pp. 65–73, 78–80). What is well known, too, is that in the mid-1980s, and in *Political Liberalism* in 1993, Rawls modified his Kantian maximalism to emphasize the legitimacy of participating based

on a comprehensive view of reason or other comprehensive outlooks, so long as, in the public square, reasons given in support of particular policies were part of the "overlapping consensus" (Rawls 2005, pp. 461n, 482–83).

In 1997, however, Rawls introduced what has come to be known in the literature as his "proviso". Rawls' reason was to head off the objection, which persisted even after the original publication of *Political Liberalism*, that he was unfairly excluding religious people from the political process. Before introducing his "proviso", Rawls acknowledged the existence of "*many* [italics mine] forms of public reason specified by a family of reasonable political conceptions") (Rawls 1997, pp. 772, 774). After discussing (Section 3) several examples of the content of (this newly adaptable) public reason, Rawls arrived at the qualification in the last section ("The Wide View of Public Political Culture"):

> "The first [aspect of the wide of public political culture] is that reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious or nonreligious, may be introduced in public political discussion at any time, provided that in *due course* [italics mine] proper political reasons—and not reasons given solely by comprehensive doctrines—are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines introduced are said to support" (ibid., pp. 783–84).

For Rawls, this was quite a concession, different at least in emphasis from the articulation of earlier positions he had taken.

Rawls himself recognized that the timeframe provided by this proviso was not well specified. Thus,

> "Obviously, many questions may be raised about how to satisfy the proviso. One is: when does it need to be satisfied? On the same day or some later day? Also, on whom does the obligation to honor it fall? It is important that it be clear and established that the proviso is to be appropriately satisfied in good faith. *Yet the details about how to satisfy this proviso must be worked out in practice and cannot feasibly be governed by a clear family of rules given in advance*" [italics mine] (ibid., p. 784).

Again, it is hard to overstate the difference in emphasis relative to Rawls' earlier work.

A clear need for prudence and case by case judgment emerges (Interestingly, Rawls himself does not use the word in the article). A population that is religious may need to have the proviso applied very differently, within the requirements of public reason, than one that is comfortably and unambiguously secular. The possibility emerges, effectively, of an *indefinite* persistence of comprehensive justifications in political debates. This would be all the more true without an enforcement mechanism, which Rawls does not specify, to ensure that more traditional people are asked out of public office or asked to conform on a strict timetable if they do not comply.

Given the indefinite presence of civil religious arguments in the Rawlsian political process, is there any structural difference between his public sphere and that of Gorski[14]? Rawls further cements the possibility that there is not in the next paragraph, where he offers not a negative but what he calls a "positive" ground for the persistence of initially provided civic religious reasons in support of public policy (ibid., p. 785). The interaction with those of others provides fellow citizens with an active education: in the actual views of neighbors, especially through the discursive process of converting multiple outlooks into public terms that all can understand. Rawls does *not* definitively link secularization to modernization in his later work or suggest that comprehensive religious views will disappear (Rasmussen 2014, pp. 107–25). If this is true, then there will *always* be a need for human beings to grow through learning about the dynamic iterations involved in converting a partial perspective into more public terms.[15]

All of this applies especially since Rawls imposes no restrictions on the kinds of positions people take initially in the public square, even if they are coming straight from families, churches, and neighborhood communities.[16] Although a great deal hinges on the precise understanding of what constitutes a "reasonable comprehensive view", Rawls' background

culture may even include religious nationalist arguments, which Gorski certainly does not allow in the first place (ibid., pp. 766, 785). As ideas are given an opportunity to be aired in public and made consistent with public reason, the background culture will shift in a public direction. Interestingly, public reason may also be impacted by the background culture at the same time. Structurally, the public square may therefore become *more* religious than the one theorized by Gorski even as the background culture is moderated more effectively.

We welcome these developments of discourse in the public square. We would add only the further stipulation that those making civil-religious arguments, even as their initial articulation is allowed in a framework that requires ultimate conversion to public justification, *receive institutional encouragement to continue deeper into the public square despite them*. While the later Rawlsian formulation does not preclude encouragement of this kind, which reaches out in a special way to religious people who do not yet know how to speak the language of public reason, it also does not require it. Yet we believe that it is important to guarantee that it is in place (see our framework of university civic engagement in the final section), if only because of the significant alienation that religious people have experienced under what may be termed the hegemony of early Rawlsian liberalism, which a civic democrat like Eric Gregory sees as undermining liberal purposes (Gregory 2008, pp. 1–29). In stipulating that people who, in good faith, are making *provisional* religious arguments, are not only to be *allowed* to continue dialogue, but that they are institutionally to be *encouraged* to do so, we therefore add a proviso of generosity to the late Rawlsian proviso. We refer to it as the "in-between" strategy. It is, undoubtedly, ultimately guided by shared values and common reason, but given the presence at any given moment of more religious arguments (sincerely made) in the public square than even under a Rawlsian proviso, we hold that the civilly religious appearance of such a public square is itself significant, with the overall strategy therefore in an important sense "in between" common reason and civil religion.

To emphasize, this is also quite consistent with recent work showing that the line of separation between Rawlsian public reason and religion is hardly a wall, as the standard characterization of the Rawlsian project suggests. As Tom Bailey and Valentina Gentile (Bailey and Gentile 2014) put it in the thought-provoking introduction to their recent edited volume, *Rawls and Religion*, "it is our contention, and that of most of the contributors to this book, that this standard critical reading of Rawls is mistaken, and that he rather offers rich, neglected resources for accommodating religions in liberal political life" (p. 2). Some of these relate to the impossibility of *essentializing* reason: who is to say that the boundary between religion and reason is *one* thing, once and for all time? Indeed, as Andrew March demonstrates, there are several contexts in which the expression of a religious opinion, *in public*, can serve as a public reason (March 2014, pp. 97–132). This also addresses the concerns of background culture, where it points that theology and metaphysics can be made *separately* from the expression of these opinions in what are political institutions, strictly speaking. Yes, other scholars in the volume *Rawls and Religion* make similar arguments, showing that the boundaries are quite porous and allow for significant interpenetration between religion and reason. Paul Weithman, on top of this, has confirmed our reading of Rawls' "proviso". There is *not* a need, according to this impactful scholar of Rawls, to specify exactly when the translation to reason will begin or reach completion, and to this extent in the later Rawls greater trust between religious and non-religious citizens is required (personal communication). Most notably, some philosophers, Charles Larmore prominently among them, saw clearly the opening Rawls provided for religion in his later work, and warned against it (Larmore 1999, pp. 605–6). There is, really, no doubt that this turn in the work of the later Rawls does happen, and that the steps based on his proviso that we take may therefore be compelling to multiple readers of Rawls.

Now, Augustine himself, despite so clearly delineating a strategy of openness to public reason in Book 19 of *City of God*, never abandoned his commitment to *also* including religious reasons in the public square. We do not refer here, even principally, to Augustine's stand in the Donatist controversy, which in any case there is reason to believe he took based on considerations of civil order (as opposed to the desirability of bringing about forced

conversion). Thus, in Letter 189 to Boniface, Augustine makes clear that Christians are to serve in the army—and they are to do so *as Christians*, bringing both the symbols and the virtues of their faith with them into the public square in this sense (Augustine). In Letter 138, to the officer Marcellinus, Augustine scoffs at the suggestion that pagan Emperors have ruled more humanely or wisely than Christian ones, therefore indicating an opening to the pursuit of public piety through the law (Augustine). The point is, these modes of expression co-exist with the clear opening to secularity that Augustine provides in *City of God*. So, even as Robert Markus modified his thesis in *Saeculum* in later writings, admitting that he had overstated the extent to which Augustine would favor a completely non-religious public space (Markus 2006), he did not repudiate his earlier argument completely. It is, of course, hugely reductionistic to think that Augustine was a Rawlsian avant la lettre. However, to the extent that his reconstructed thought is able to provide resources for contemporary liberalism, it resonates surely with the later Rawls to a greater extent than with the Rawls of 1971.[17]

6. Shared Values: University Civic Engagement

6.1. Universities: A History of Engagement and Disengagement

Leaving aside public reason vs. civil religion debates, we ask: *where* is the production of shared values to take place? The suggestion that it is at universities seems strange: institutions of higher learning have historically taken quite seriously Aristotle's distinction between theoretical and practical virtue. John Henry Newman's ideal of liberal education avoids justification of education solely in terms of technical (or practical) benefits. In the *Ethics* of Aristotle, this focus on theory as separate from practice is pronounced (Aristotle 1984, pp. 318–52) and has been discussed widely in the literature (Bruell 2013; Leunissen 2007; McDonough 2012; Thompson 1994). None other than Alasdair MacIntyre has drawn a straight line from Aristotelian non-instrumentality to academic non-instrumentality, which also reflects the liberal approach to education that he favors (MacIntyre 2009, pp. 351, 359).

Although Ben Berger does not discuss Aristotle, he does consider several other thinkers who *continue* to support university distance from, rather than proximity to, community problems. Berger makes the case that Hannah Arendt and others, including Stanley Fish, continue to see "disengagement" as, at least, a necessary corrective to "engagement" (Berger 2010, pp. 4–9). The fact remains that disengagement was a significant part of what universities "did". Berger, who has written extensively about engagement in a number of contexts (Berger 2011, 2015) ends up defending *engagement*, but it is a *disengaged* kind of engagement that still reinforces the disconnected way in which the University *used* to see itself.

But universities *have*, historically, contributed to the construction of shared values through engagement with the public, if only through education that is broadly accessible and increasingly available. Disagreements, of course, persist with respect to the relative importance of different sites of socialization in producing young adults with stable and coherent sets of values and preferences (Course Hero n.d.).[18] If anything, however, given the arguably declining socializing power of families and religious organizations, universities today are more important in the production of values.[19] Given the polarized state of the US, it is fitting and justified that they resume and expand on this role.

Although Thomas Hobbes, at the end of his *Leviathan*, profiles a number of ancient "Schooles" of philosophy that arguably point to universities, the appearance of these institutions is usually traced to the medieval period. In medieval Paris, Bologna, and Oxford, theology faculties cultivated those who saw themselves as pilgrims en route to the heavenly city. However, as Quentin Skinner has shown, Italy's medieval academies also trained people to see free republican orders as best, interestingly enough through the teaching of rhetoric (Skinner 1998, pp. 23–48). In the mid-seventeenth century Thomas Hobbes perceived clearly that it was universities, through their teachings, that had brought on public turmoil.[20] As Ben Berger has pointed out, going back to even to colonial times, Yale understood its education mission in public terms, and Ben Franklin himself, as the

University of Pennsylvania's first President, believed that service (not just a disconnected glorification of God) was part of the University's purpose (Berger 2010, p. 10). Before that, with land grant colleges and especially as a result of the Morrill Land Act, Washington DC and institutions of higher education were already involved and significantly intertwined in the promotion of public purposes.

In the late nineteenth century, with the worry that technical education was failing to produce well-rounded gentlemen to engage in affairs of state, John Henry Newman wrote *The Idea of the University* (Newman 2014). Resisting an exclusively technical understanding of education, Newman wrote, "This process of training, by which the intellect, instead of being formed or sacrificed to some particular or accidental purpose, some specific trade or profession, or study or science, is disciplined for its own sake, for the perception of its own proper object, and for its own highest culture, is called Liberal education" (Newman 2014, p. 120) . . . Not mere technicians, but thinkers and engaged public servants would graduate from Newman's University. The German research model has prevailed in ways to which Newman would surely have objected, but the normative ideal of liberal education continues to exert power.[21]

6.2. Universities and Twentieth-Century Engagement in America and Around the World

Indeed, and encouragingly, given the growth of research needs fueled by World Wars and the Cold War, universities have also been extensively associated, both in public documents and in the academic literature, with the promotion of civic engagement and shared values in the twentieth century. President Truman's *Higher Education for Democracy: A Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education* (Zook 1947) illustrates this dynamic. The report, written when the nation needed to mobilize around democratic values in the midst of US-USSR competition, clearly emphasizes the involvement of universities in communities. The university system is to engage in new ways. It must jettison religious and racial discrimination and support a network of nationally funded community colleges. The call also goes out for increased federal scholarships, which means that the circle of engagement will expand. Of course, during both World War I and II, the federal government had sponsored research into defense (StateUniversity.com n.d., Education Encyclopedia), and Truman's intervention was only a continuation of a long tradition of American universities used for public purposes, even as these were not always consistent with liberal education or did not necessarily advance democracy as that concept is understood today.

Around the 1980s, however, a significant change took place: according to Ostrander, civic engagement took off as a movement on college campuses (Ostrander 2004). It was driven in part by Deans, Provosts, and University Presidents who were no longer content with institutional aloofness. Indeed, on numerous occasions, explicit guidance was provided for innovation-minded scholars to incorporate, in their own research, the needs and questions of surrounding local communities, and according to one scholar, "[t]op professional organizations in higher education have recently [since the 1980s] devoted their annual conferences to the topic [of civic engagement], major publications in academe have featured the issue, and the literature (both practical and theoretical) is growing rapidly" (Ostrander 2004, p. 75). As confirmed by Timothy Stanton, all this amounted to a major paradigm shift, felt especially in the palpable energy on campuses and in the numerous directives issued by administrators who sought to undo the perception that their institutions pursue learning only for its own sake (Stanton 2008, pp. 20–21, 35–38).

A milestone for this kind of activity came in 1999, with the Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education, supported by numerous presidents of different colleges and universities. They wrote:

> In celebrating the birth of our democracy, we can think of no nobler task than committing ourselves to help catalyze and lead a national movement to reinvigorate the public purposes of and civic mission of higher education. We believe that now and through the next century, our institutions must be vital agents and architects of a flourishing democracy (Ehrlich 1999).

It is hard to imagine a more explicit endorsement of the "university as site of civic engagement" model. Note how, as with Truman's report, the word "religion" is not used in a narrow sense. Indeed, here it is not used at all. What *is* referenced, repeatedly and despite this being a short statement, is the word democracy. Given its textual juxtaposition on more than one occasion to "pluralism", it is clear that "democracy" is not indicative of a majority vote. Rather, democracy is plausibly interpreted as referring to shared values and overlapping consensus.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (CFAT) quickly took a lead role in raising awareness about and supporting different civic engagement efforts, not least of which came through the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. Distinguishing among different kinds of engagement, including curricular and co-curricular engagement, professional activity and scholarship, outreach and partnerships, and other initiatives, CFAT as of 2020 had extended this designation to 119 colleges and universities in the US. Importantly, the framework supported by Carnegie and by now well-recognized in the US is "mutual and reciprocal:" the Carnegie Foundation envisions university-community engagement as " . . . the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Driscoll 2009, p. 6). Multiple approaches are possible, as is noted presently, but other important institutional actors that continue to prioritize this collaborative model include the American Democracy Project (American Association of State Colleges and Universities or AASCU), LEAD initiative (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators), and the Democracy Commitment (ASSCU).

The literature has also continued unabated, as evidenced by Robin Milne's important *Civic Engagement* (Milne 2018), the AAR Teaching religious studies *Teaching Civic Engagement* (Clingerman and Locklin 2017), and Dawn G. Terkla and Lisa O'Leary's *Assessing Civic Engagement* (Terkla and O'Leary 2014). Rhetorically speaking, the energy behind the movement is especially clear in an important 2011 edited volume titled *The Engaged University*, whose editors introduce their case studies in the following way:

> In universities around the world, something extraordinary is underway. Mobilizing their human and intellectual resources, institutions of higher education are directly tackling community problems—combating poverty, improving public health, and restoring environmental quality. Brick by brick around the world, the engaged university is replacing the ivory tower (Watson et al. 2011, p. xx).

The editors go on to mention a meeting of the heads of universities that took place in 2005, at the "Tufts University European Center in Talloires, France", leading to an assembly of "29 university presidents, vice-chancellors and rectors from 23 countries on six continents" (ibid., Loc 505/6765).

This movement is international: in describing positive developments since that meeting, the book profiles Charles Darwin University in Australia (ibid., pp. 41–46), with its insistence on two-way learning, especially applicable in Professor Michael Christie's Yolgnu Studies program, which focuses on engagement with indigenous groups while legitimating their traditions of knowledge production. It also considers the University of Haifa (ibid., pp. 74–80), in many ways the most liberal and culturally diverse Jewish university, with a significant Arab population. In Haifa, the President has made "social responsibility" a priority, and the University even hosted a conference supporting this theme a few years ago. Moreover, the creative ways in which the University of Haifa promotes civic engagement are worth mentioning. Those receiving financial aid are required to participate in community service. In terms of the actual service, there are two programs that require the students to live *off campus*, in the midst of the population they aim to serve, the better to understand them and their own privilege in attending a university about which most residents who surround them can only dream.[22] The volume describes several other universities that have invested in service learning. The movement, it becomes readily apparent, is not only international, but in large part spontaneous, with significant initiatives taken country by

country and at the local level without a significant degree of centralized coordination. As a whole, the book points to the benefits of a centralized service office on any one campus. It also stresses the need for more research on best practices.[23]

This is not to say that there is not a possible downside to the movement, because in any case, considering the observed diversity of programs that all identify as "civic engagement" in one way or another, finding a single consistent definition of the term is hard. Indeed, a survey of attempted definitions in the literature confirms this. One set of authors has stressed the different meanings of both "political participation" and "civic engagement", making the case that the latter is a more "latent" version of the former (Ekman and Amna 2012). Another pair has focused on engagement avenues, specifically as they relate to science—both the production and use of technical knowledge in the world. Rudolph and Horibe (2016) emphasize the intersection of science and community involvement. Kaskie et al. (2008) offer their distinct understanding. Meanwhile, Mary Prentice connects civic engagement to service learning, but makes clear that "civic engagement" is a broader category (Prentice 2007, p. 136). There are significantly more attempts at a definition,[24] with some even suggesting that under the guise of "civic engagement" a master–servant relationship might be inaugurated, with a university attempting to dominate the surrounding community. This dynamic seems less plausible,[25] and despite the admitted risks of multivalence, the proliferation of "civic engagement" definitions seems a positive development.

6.3. The Tocquevillian Connection

However, that still leaves a puzzle. As mentioned, it was a specific moment, coinciding in the 1980s and 1990s almost perfectly with the end of the Cold War, that saw public involvement of universities sold explicitly in terms of "civic engagement". The question is: *why* this exact time? In terms of political theory, might it have significance?

Ostrander (2004) identifies forces contributing to an explanation. There was, at this juncture, the increased need of universities to justify their missions, in an era of shrinking budgets. There also kicked in a nationwide and more general worry about declining civic participation, documented by scholars such as Robert Putnam, Theda Skocpol, and Morris Fiorina (Putnam 2000; Putnam et al. 2004; Skocpol and Fiorina 1999). The sense of isolation faculty members felt, which only intensified the call for production of knowledge bearing on problems everyday people were experiencing, was also real. Moreover, the enormity of public health and other issues, affecting all of society, did require the application of expert knowledge. Conversations among academic institutions and the towns of which they are a part also happened of necessity, as universities expanded up to the point where municipally further growth was no longer possible. One of these factors, alone, would have conceivably made a significant positive impact on momentum to elevate higher learning to a historic role in guarding and promoting democracy. Their confluence, Ostrander argues, helps us make sense of the momentum behind the "civic engagement" movement (Ostrander 2004).

However, a Tocquevillian dimension also merits reflection. In the decade after the Cold War ended, Robert Putnam described a decline in civic engagement—one of the very factors Ostrander identifies as motivating increased interest in civic engagement centers around the country. Putnam did this in *Bowling Alone* (2000). In *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Putnam et al. 1992), he also made connections between effective institutional performance, on the one hand, and the existence of civic community and social capital, which requires associational life and trust, on the other. He and social scientists inspired by him have pointed to declining social capital in our time, as measured by the numbers of Americans joining voluntary clubs and associations (Putnam 2000, pp. 48–133). The contexts on which we used to rely to socialize and civilize people, e.g., neighborhood civic associations, clubs that meet at bowling alleys, religious organizations, or any of a multiplicity of other voluntary groupings, have stopped fulfilling those socializing roles. The decline in voluntary associations has therefore meant a decline in connectedness and trust.

Putnam provides several reasons to be concerned about declining social capital. These include overall civic health, economic productivity, and trustworthiness (Putnam 2000, pp. 287–366). Putnam acknowledges Tocqueville's impact on his own thinking, and the French philosopher is clearly a continuing presence in his work. Without a doubt, Putnam links his worry about the separation of individuals from community to themes that would have been important for Tocqueville.

Tocqueville surely has still more to teach us about civic engagement. While Ostrander mentions Putnam in her important article on academic civic engagement, she does not mention Tocqueville in the body of her text. Moreover, Putnam himself does not consider the chief worry of the French political philosopher when it comes to the *negative* effects of the atomization that results from declining social capital: namely, that people will become weaker (not able to do things in concert), and therefore more susceptible to tyranny. Out of two kinds of despotism, Tocqueville has in mind the administrative kind (de Tocqueville 2000, pp. 661–65), through which all of society becomes "subject to a minute network of rules" and the desire to create is killed before it is even born (p. 663).[26] However, if Universities have stepped up in late democratic conditions to serve as a needed socializing agent, connecting students to communities precisely when an ever-more powerful movement towards equality (in Tocquevillian terms) is individualizing and separating people from one another as never before . . . this may be a development to celebrate, all worries about the value of disengaged University learning aside.

7. Engaged Universities and Shared Values—Civil Religion or Public Reason?

However, attempts to construct shared values can happen through civil religion *and* strategies prioritizing public reason. Since academies certainly have been used in the propagation of civil religion (Wechsler and Diner 2021, pp. 118, 136, 155),[27] it behooves us to ask: which, if any, University civic engagement programs, or ones that take place on university campuses, still rely on or leave an opening for civil religion? Which, if any, are closer to public reason and might, loosely but helpfully, be characterized as Rawlsian? In a nutshell: the first category includes those that prioritize the reading of great texts by faculty, with an eye towards conveying the insights gained to their students. These programs also tend to affirm the importance of high civic information content, and the value of critical debate and in fact dialogue across difference. The second category, better represented on American campuses, valorize immediate engagement with the community. Insofar as they generally do not require students to read any texts that could be construed as religious, and to the extent that they are more practical, they arguably leave a significantly smaller opening for civil religion. Nevertheless, they also tend to convey less civic information, and they seem less likely to emphasize the importance of a vigorous exchange of ideas in which students encounter the Other, relative to their own deeply held commitments.[28] Section 7 points to the final part of the paper, where we will ask: is it possible to combine the best features of both categories of civic engagement programs?

7.1. High-Information Civic Engagement Programs—Opening for Civil Religion?

It is possible to speak of a broad array of programs and conferences usually not characterized explicitly in terms of "civic engagement", but whose goals and purposes nevertheless reflect those ends. We refer to frameworks associated with the Jack Miller center and other likeminded groups. Founded as a public charity in 2004 by Jack Miller, the Jack Miller Center enables multiple and specific ways to get involved. However, the emphasis is not on direct action for the sake of change or contact with the community to make learning more experiential. Rather, it is on knowledge, specifically civic knowledge understood as covering the first principles of the American Founding (Jack Miller Center n.d.; Miller 2021, 2022).

The pedagogical mechanism is sponsored conferences and workshops at the graduate and post-graduate levels, to which participants are invited, and which are organized around the discussion of key texts. The classic example is the Jack Miller Center summer institute.

Alongside it, there is the Jefferson seminar series, and JMC provides scholarships for those pursuing graduate studies. The Jack Miller center also affiliates with existing institutes on campuses that are already committed to the advancement of liberal principles, broadly speaking. Examples include the Program for Constitutional Government at Harvard, the Program on Constitutionalism and Democracy at UVA, and the Political Theory Project at Brown University.

More recently, and importantly for our purposes, several secondary school initiatives that seek to reach learners before they make it to the tertiary level have been instituted (Jack Miller Center n.d.). These consist of JMC training high school teachers who will present a comprehensive and rigorous take on the American founding to those still in high school and bound for college. Although this is one of the more recent initiatives, it demonstrates the extent to which all JMC programming is geared towards high civic information content for students. It strengthens the case for characterizing JMC programming as "civic engagement".

To be clear, the Jack Miller Center gatherings do not use the vocabulary of "civic engagement". However, supporters of these and affiliated programs believe that the need is, in fact, being met. Strikingly, however, the implicit (and sometimes not so implicit) rationale underpinning this view of civic engagement also seems to fuel a civil religion concern. This is because of the specific way through which, on this understanding, the civic engagement benefits in question are realized.

These benefits, in a word, are seen as flowing from discussions of old books written by canonical authors. *If* a citizen is familiar with these foundational texts, he or she will be better able and prepared to relate to others in the polity. Admittedly, this is not *the* point of the reading, hearkening back to Aristotle and Berger's discussion of *disengaged* pedagogy, contemplation of texts containing deep thoughts and beautiful insights is seen as inherently rewarding, and worth pursuing for its own sake. However, the instrumental purpose is also real, and the fact that many of the authors taken into consideration, in particular the ancient ones, are predisposed to see political life as purposive, further reinforces the case for coming to know them so that *purpose and engagement* are better appreciated and implemented in our day (Jack Miller Center n.d.).[29]

Interestingly, Arizona State University has also recently been in the news for affirming intellectual diversity through its School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership (SCETL). SCETL takes an approach to civic engagement that is similar to the one supported by the Jack Miller Center. It is based on civic knowledge. The emphasis is on first principles that do not change, as opposed to change itself as the only sure way to produce just institutions. As Adam Seagrave told me, pointing to the expectations at SCETL (but not other parts of ASU):

> As Plato rightly said, we can only have knowledge of things that never change. Building knowledge in community–such as in a university setting–can, therefore, be in tension with a desire to apply that knowledge in order to change the world. The one task is embedded in the eternal; the other is caught up in flux. Both at ASU and throughout higher ed there has been a collective forgetting of what it means to build knowledge amid the rush to bring about change in society. Universities have forgotten what it means to learn and think only of applying knowledge; and so the cart barrels along without the horse (Personal Communication 3/4).

Here, quite vividly at Arizona State University, one can find the contrast between "active" and "knowledge-based" understandings of civic engagement on display.[30]

The issue, of course, is that the texts read for the sake of this conversation that conveys significant amounts of civic knowledge, and that connects readers and discussants to the subject of civic purpose as the ancients understood it, are finite in number. They include works by Plato and Aristotle, Augustine, Machiavelli, the Founders, and perhaps Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King, Jr., in addition to the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, and perhaps Magna Carta. They are few, in other words, and they are of

the kind that seem to lead easily to a sense of civic reverence. It is not hard to see, in other words, how this high information and purposive approach could shade, for some, into the elevation or even quasi worship of the ancients, the American Founders, or Abraham Lincoln. Of course, Lincoln himself, in the Lyceum address, seems to call for something resembling civil religion in the way he calls for reverence for the laws. It might be hard, therefore, for any individual or organization sympathetically reading the 16th President not to acknowledge that he prescribed civil religion as a remedy for lawlessness based among other things on motives of wishing to protect minorities from domination, not subjecting them to it (There is also the consideration that Jack Miller Center colloquia are known for spirited and collegial conversation at every state—for more on this see below—so the idea that civil-religious ideas would go unchallenged in one of these intense faculty reading groups is unfounded).

7.2. Public Reason Civic Engagement Programs—Virtually No Civil Religion Risk—Lower Information Content?

However, it is fair to say that the above approaches do not represent most undergraduate civic engagement programs, which rely instead on a public reason justification. Interestingly, this public reason approach is already exemplified in the recommendations of the Truman administration mentioned in the previous section. That report emphasizes the advancement by universities of democratic values. The rationale for doing so, quite explicit in the text, is broadly understood to rest on a shared values (overlapping consensus) approach. Writes the commission, "Some people will find the satisfactory basis for a moral code in the democratic creed itself, some in philosophy, some in religion. Religion is held to be a major force in creating the system of human values on which democracy is predicated, and many derive from one or another of its varieties a deepened sense of human worth and a strengthened concern for the rights of others" (ibid.). The passage, in other words, clearly references religion as a contributor to overlapping consensus, but *not* religion understood as a political tool. The programs considered below are in line with this understanding.

Since we refer to these frameworks as "Rawlsian", broadly speaking, even though they do not explicitly mention Rawls and in the absence of evidence that Rawls himself saw the "civic engagement" movement of the 1980s and 1990s as especially important, a word about this terminology is in order. First, it is possible to characterize these civic engagement initiatives as Rawlsian because, in line with Rawls' exposition of public reason, they do not support social action based on a particular religious tradition or denomination. Secondly, insofar as in general they prioritize, not the gaining of civic information through the reading of important texts, but instead the participation by students in processes that potentially lead to greater resource transfers to underserved communities, these programs are consistent with Rawls' difference principle. Third, despite not referencing "civic engagement" programs at any point, Rawls does hold in *Justice as Fairness* that "one of the great goods of human life is that achieved by citizens through engaging in political life" (Rawls 2001, pp. 143–44), a statement that among others leads Richard Dagger to conclude that Rawlsian political theory cannot be appreciated without grasping Rawls' focus on civic virtue.

This virtue, it turns out, is inseparable from Rawlsian education, which "should also encourage the political virtues so that they [citizens] want to honor the fair terms of social cooperation in their relations with the rest of society" (Rawls 2001, p. 156; Dagger 2014, *loc.* 299). His lack of a complete theory of civic virtue (which Dagger acknowledges) notwithstanding, then, Rawls' positive statements about political engagement, alongside his linking of education to virtue that aids in the realization of the Rawlsian project—in addition even to his reference in *Justice as Fairness* to "civic friendship" (Rawls 2001, p. 126; Dagger 2014, *loc.* 299)—all make clear that Rawls understood that *some kind* of civically engaging education, however defined, was needed.

What complicates the broad, public-reason oriented frameworks below, as Ben Berger has pointed out, is that they represent at least three major distinct strategies. These are

CERL (Community Engaged Research Learning), CBRL (Community Based Research and Learning), and PART (Participatory Action Research and Teaching) (Berger 2010, pp. 1, 7). Moreover, they may be used interchangeably without those doing so recognizing what is taking place. Further variations on terminology may include the simple distinction between community service, on the one hand, implying distance from academic pursuits, and service learning, on the other, indicating incorporation of the service into the university curriculum (ibid.).[31] Of course, a combination of different insights from the various traditions is also possible (Morgridge Center for Public Service n.d.). Moreover, differences in approach among these kinds of civic engagement programs may go beyond even the differences that Berger outlines. Multiple variations are clear from an inductive consideration of engagement centers as listed on the American Political Science Association civic engagement website (American Political Science Association n.d.).

Thus, Tennessee State University applies what appears to be a CERL or CBRL approach. The Center works with faculty in the development of service-learning classes. Every year sees 200+ of these courses offered. Moreover, the feedback provided by students speaks to the effectiveness of the Center in bridging the space between theory and practice. According to one learner, "This course was amazing, and has truly helped me make the connection between the theory that I learned in class and the experience that I had in the community setting. This was one of the best classes I have taken this semester. I will continue to explore more about nonprofit service in the community". Strikingly, this collaboration extends to more than 200 non-profits based in Nashville.[32]

There is certainly overlap among different ways to understand service learning, but if Tennessee State University seems to point to CBRL or CERL, Arizona State University appears to illustrate Participatory Action Research Teaching. This is because the emphasis in PART is not only on learning about the needs of the community, and in some way addressing those, but changing systems that perpetuate injustice. With respect to civic engagement, the University embraces a Social Embeddedness model, prioritizing both people and systems across a variety of program offerings. This itself points to action, as the very idea of embedded knowledge is a rejection of the idea of a detached Cartesian observer who can simply go in and out and meet or engage with community members. The reason for this is that *any* project that an embedded researcher takes on inevitably changes, in one direction or another, the community of which he or she is always, inevitably, already a part of. The Office of Knowledge Enterprise Development Research applies its rapidly growing research budget to bear on questions of embedded solutions for communities, further suggesting action for the sake of change.[33]

At Baylor, whose service-learning modalities somewhat surprisingly do not make it on to the APSA (American Political Science Associations) list, a prioritization of grassroots activism is also front and center. The Office of Engaged Learning coordinates a variety of activities, in a way that makes sense from a CBRL or CERL (but not necessarily a PART) perspective. Baylor also stands out for the way in which it allows students to become engaged especially in communities, as part of its academic philanthropy initiative, through the practice and art of giving. Examples of the kinds of causes and organizations to which students have recently made available grants, facilitated by the University, include Waco Habitat for Humanity, Shepherd's Heart, Communities in Schools for the Heart of Texas, and the Talitha Koum Institute. The sizes of these donations, addressing everything from extreme poverty to food scarcity to mentorship, range from $7000 to $20,500. At the outset, Baylor makes clear that its community engagement initiatives are driven by a biblical and comprehensive account of human nature; not civil religion, but instead an orientation of the service-learning initiatives towards a broader framework of purpose.[34]

CBRL, CERL, PART, and various degrees of emphasized integration into academic classes are therefore all different approaches in evidence in APSA's public-reason oriented list. Is there a way to understand *how* these programs manage to avoid civil religion? This would require development at greater length, but to the extent that great texts are not the central focus in the same way, the risk of undue elevation (or reverence) of these

texts is less. Of course, JMC seminars are known for the *critical* reading of articles and books, followed by debate, so careful reading is hardly synonymous with civil religion. However, these programs also have going for them the direct connection to practice, i.e., the world of practical affairs, which is ever changing, and shifting, and which therefore requires more flexibility and makes it harder to adopt *one* principle and elevate it in an undue way. Admittedly, some of the definitions of civil religion that we considered allow for an understanding of civil religion as practice. However, as indicated in the discussion of different ways to understand civil religion above, we adopted Phil Gorski's definition, which requires a tradition and stories. *Because of their praxis and change orientation*, CBRL, CERL, and PART programs all clearly decrease the likelihood of a transition to a culture of civil religion, which tries to fix principles or stories in place.

Interestingly, if despite their issues the civil-religion oriented approaches tend to involve high levels of politically relevant knowledge, one view is that the strengths of the above public-reason oriented programs notwithstanding, they also suffer from a deficiency, namely, that of a deficit of successfully conveyed civic information. Thus, the emphasis in Baylor's service-learning offerings on deep integration into the classroom points to a concern that "civic engagement" would become just another form of community service, taking universities away entirely from one of their historic functions, which is the transmission of knowledge.[35] Going forward (see our last section), will it be possible to maintain a broadly public-reason oriented (Rawlsian) civic engagement approach while insisting on a civic knowledge focus?

7.3. Public Reason Civic Engagement Programs—Less Dialogue across Difference?

Some of the more early-Rawls-friendly approaches could use a bit more civic information, but it is also the case that they could benefit from pushing learners with more urgency to dialogue with those whose opinions they truly find inconsistent with their own. Too many of the Rawls-friendly programs, in other words, seem to affirm that, on important questions, there is only one right answer. Too many of them create the impression that dialogue across difference is not a necessity. This is where, it seems, the public-reason oriented civic engagement frameworks, whose unapologetic emphasis on public reason we value, could take a page from Jack Miller Center and other frameworks: JMC colloquia and structured conversations are famous for subjecting any position articulated by a participant to critical inquiry leading to spirited discussion. They are intensely conversation-focused, which increases the likelihood over the course of several days that disagreements are exposed and used productively.

Our sense that this is indeed an additional weakness, even of those programs that avoid civil religion-based approaches to cultivating shared values, is heightened by an empirical survey of 100+ civic engagement programs around the country. These programs are listed on the APSA civic engagement website (American Political Science Association n.d.) Here, as already emphasized, public-reason frameworks predominate. Given the problematic conditions of polarization outlined earlier in this article, it would seem important to us that these programs in particular attempt to realize shared values and overlapping consensus, by acknowledging that *complex* issues currently divide reasonable people of good faith. It would strike us as helpful for them to recognize that real *disagreements* exist, and that these disagreements require some amount of *trust* among *citizens* to navigate.

Across the 100+ programs listed under the link, we therefore checked to see which mention any or some combination of the following terms: *trust*, *complex*, *disagree*, and *citizen*. For the sake of thoroughness, our survey of the APSA programs to see if these important concepts were highlighted involved not just the main site of a service learning or engagement center on campus, but connected links, e.g., the "About" page, listed examples of service initiatives, etc. Admittedly, the presentation by programs of their own priorities may be biased and not reflect what happens on the ground. Nevertheless, even self-presentation contains valuable information: it indicates what a center considers important enough to advertise, and it is therefore in a real sense indicative of priorities.

The results are sobering. We found that only a vanishingly small percentage of conventional and APSA supported civic engagement/service-learning programs featured use of all the words. Even more strikingly, very few of them mentioned "trust" a single time. Though these more Rawls-oriented frameworks, to their credit, avoid civil religion, they are therefore distinguished by a shortcoming all their own. This is the relative lack of insistence on a diversity of ideas that participants are expected to encounter, which would have to be remedied in pursuit of effective civic engagement.

8. University Civil Engagement and the Importance of Trust

We desire, then, a university civic engagement program that avoids civil religion even as it preserves the high information content of some programs that may leave an opening for civil religion. We want *immediate contact and connection for students with surrounding communities*, as is more the case arguably with the public reason affirming frameworks listed on the APSA website. Moreover, we want real *dialogue across difference*, given the problems with polarization discussed at the beginning of this paper, as exemplified by the conversational approach of the Jack Miller center. All our efforts, to emphasize, stay within a public reason framework. Before suggesting our pilot program, reflected in developments at Tarleton State University with parallel innovations around the country, we mention a final consideration with implications for engagement and shared values on campus. This is, namely, the development of trust.

The process of producing a stable overlapping consensus may take a while, as Rawls himself seems to recognize through his "proviso". This, then, makes further sense of our putting dialogue participants through shared experiences *first*, without allowing them to discuss where they stand on issues under exploration. An overlapping consensus may not only be delicate and require a long time to form. It may also depend contingently on a high degree of trust, which does not always follow simply as a result of the passage of time. Trust has been recognized as key in the peer-reviewed literature, related *specifically* to the viability of overlapping consensus. Without it, the agreement in question cannot survive. The specific mechanism we employ, which may at first glance seem odd, of having learners participate in activities that are not necessarily political as a *preliminary* step to discussing *political* activities, on the way to truly *civil* engagement, therefore finds support from a trust-building perspective in the peer reviewed literature.

A helpful discussion is offered by Lawrence Mitchell in *Columbia Law Review* in the mid-1990s (Mitchell 1994). When it comes to the overlapping consensus, which is that later version of Rawlsian thought on which we rely, stability is key. Rawls acknowledges that neither fear, nor compromise, nor self-interest is the binding glue that definitively ensures stability. Rather, he himself motions towards civic friendship and trust (Mitchell 1994, pp. 1919–21, n. 17; Rawls 1999, p. 435). Trust produces numerous benefits, which Mitchell emphasizes with reference to Luhmann and numerous other social theorists who include John Dunn and Alasdair MacIntyre (Mitchell 1994, pp. 1920, 1922–25). However, paradoxically, and as Mitchell argues, that later version of Rawls' thought makes trust *harder*.

Why? This is because the commitment to principles of justice can be arrived at from different directions, not just necessarily the Kantianism of Rawls' early thinking. When it comes to the overlapping consensus, as opposed to previous versions of Rawls' thought, people could be motivated at the deepest level to arrive at the principles of justice based on utilitarianism, or virtue ethics, or other non-Rawlsian philosophies. So, fundamentally, those in agreement on the surface do not, *actually*, see eye to eye. If trust requires, as seems the case, an agreement on underlying ideals, then by allowing for a total *lack* of agreement on those guiding ideas, later Rawlsian thought contains the seeds of its own dissolution. It makes impossible the very trust of which an overlapping consensus would seem to stand most in need (ibid., pp. 1925–32).

What is the answer? As Mitchell reads Rawls, the right empirical conditions must be in place. This is not a question for philosophy alone; it may be the case, if an overlapping consensus strategy is to have a chance of viability, that a coincidental and happy level

of trust is already in place (ibid., pp. 1932–35). This is what our emphasis on *civil* team building ahead of the dialogues aims to accomplish: we do not take anything for granted, through an exclusive reliance on deductive theory, but instead view with the utmost seriousness a needed and pre-existing *empirical* component. We are trying, in other words, to *first* bring into existence a level of trust (not related to, and preceding, the following discussion). This is for the sake, going forward, of the increased likelihood of a viable and successful overlapping consensus.

Claran O'Kelly has also considered this fascinating dynamic in the context of Northern Ireland, in the pages of the *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* (O'Kelly 2006) Surprisingly, as he shows, agreement on basic liberal principles in this historically volatile part of Europe exists. In theory, from the perspective of an overlapping consensus that holds, one might expect this agreement to suffice. However, the concrete problem, as O'Kelly demonstrates, is the absence of trust. The conflict itself has stood in the way of generating it—of producing a positive attitude that is exogenous to the acceptance of liberal principles, but ones that is nevertheless key (ibid., pp. 560, 562–65, 568). Both Mitchell and O'Kelly, then, show the need for trust that is both critical to overlapping consensus, and yet decidedly *external to it*. To emphasize, our team building civic engagement activities recognize this dynamic. This is illustrated especially by our seeking to bring about feelings ordered towards the possibility of community *before* the beginning of dialogue on campus, and not simply as a result of it.

Putnam himself speaks at great length to this theme. Trust is necessary for civic association, as he emphasizes especially in the chapter on "Reciprocity, Honesty, and Trust" in *Bowling Alone* (Putnam 2000, pp. 134–47) and in his work on networks in Italy (Putnam et al. 1992, pp. 167–70). As the University aids other civil society groups in the role of a master associator, it increases the vital store of social capital to which they have access, which includes trust. Putnam would argue that this is key and itself necessary to the ongoing development of social capital, and in fact he recognizes the vital importance of education institutions in rebuilding community (Putnam 2000, pp. 402–14), even if he does not prioritize universities, or endorse the specific university-based trust building framework that we propose.

Other work has expanded on this key dimension, and specifically the significance of trust deficits, to the loss of support for the kind of institutions and programs that later 20th century liberalism has desired. Thus, Marc Hetherington of Vanderbilt has detailed the stage at which it seems that the liberal project experiences a decline in momentum. This happens amid attempts to onboard more ambitious programs intended to address poverty and discrimination in systemic ways. In this era, according to Heatherington, trust begins to evaporate (the reasons are complicated and not necessarily related to the main point of this article, but they produce the deficit in confidence in government that is important to note) (Hetherington 2005). The research Hetherington has performed refutes the view that, because liberalism is predicated on the individual, openness to sharing our fate with the community is irrelevant. The fact is that trust matters not just with respect to general considerations of overlapping consensus, but also in the context of the implementation of specific programs of public assistance. Here, without a belief in the good intentions of our neighbors acting through government, there is significantly more difficulty.

If more support is in order, republicanism in its different articulations also provides it. Thus, on at least one important occasion, theorist of modern republicanism Philip Pettit has discussed the significance, to *his* view of republicanism, of being willing to work without suspicion alongside fellow citizens. That importance of trust might seem less surprising in the context of ancient republicanism, where the city undoubtedly is prior to the individual. However, Pettit's version of republicanism is not Skinner's. His system of concepts has been likened to liberalism, insofar as non-domination privileges individual autonomy over the unity of the collective. To show, as Pettit has done, that trust reinforces republican non-domination and not just a generic version of virtue cultivation and character building, is therefore an accomplishment (Pettit 1995, pp. 223–24). Michael Sandel, long

considered a neo-republican critic of liberalism, has provided still further reinforcement of the significance of trust (Sandel 1996, pp. 123–67, 201–49).

The point of this survey: whether related to overlapping consensus in a framework that allows us to theorize civil engagement *in-between* civil religion and public justification, or with reference to civic or later versions of republicanism, this feeling of openness to fellow citizens matters. Our trust building exercises, as part of the campus civil engagement framework that we recommend, will therefore represent an integral part of starting to construct viable overlapping consensus among university learners. The importance of these exercises is underscored through the fact that other traditions of thinking about politics, not just liberalism but republicanism as well, are also characterized by a commitment to engagement that presupposes trust. The idea is that, with universities uniquely positioned to make real an overlapping consensus for the sake of civic engagement, they are also well situated to cultivate the trust needed to render that agreement viable long term.

9. University Civic Engagement Reform: Pluralism and Maximum Generosity

To reiterate: the objective is to design a university civic engagement program that elevates public reason over civil religion, provides high civic information content, and remains committed to community encounters outside the classroom while also elevating authentic dialogue across difference. Our model program starts with (1) intense university–community exchanges to which students are invited and in which they can participate. It then builds on (2) existing civic engagement offerings at Tarleton, specifically in what is known as the "Town Hall" framework. It becomes clear how our "maximum" generosity proviso to the late Rawlsian proviso helps; for many, religious arguments *are* the "other". To the extent that students are exposed to *initially* religious arguments, and insofar as those points are not merely tolerated but affirmed (even emphasizing the importance of moving over time towards public reason), students gain exposure to strange sounding rationales which become public over time but arguably in unexpected ways.

On the way to our model program that incorporates a maximum generosity proviso, and amid the proliferation of definitions of civic engagement discussed above, we follow Ben Berger: "civic engagement" as an umbrella term has outlived its usefulness, and a more precise typology is needed (Berger 2009, pp. 337–38). How does Berger, who heads the Lang center for social involvement at Swarthmore, make his case? Building on the typology of John Gerring, who seeks to unpack the usefulness or "fit" of a category related to the applicability of core concepts to eight dimensions, Berger finds a deficit (ibid., pp. 337–38). As it turns out, "civic engagement" does not apply in a helpful way when it comes to criteria that include depth, field utility, and coherence (ibid., pp. 337–38).

Berger, to support his point, references the famous distinction that Hannah Arendt made between the political and the social, differentiating between moral activity (including forms of charity) that requires anonymity (and hence is not political or social) and specifically political activism that openly benefits others. There is also the broadly defined category of social activities and engagement. A new term is therefore needed: *civil* engagement (ibid., pp. 344–45). In proposing it, Berger builds on the kinds of societies that Pocock and others have described in the 18th century as important to republican politics even though they were not overtly or exclusively political. They featured conversational life in the 18th century as manifested in groups and salons. Note the groups and associations Berger also acknowledges with reference to Tocqueville. These various clubs and neighborhood groups are still important from a human capital perspective, even though they are not exclusively civic, and in fact for Berger they are "social" (non-citizens impacting political outcomes is another example of social connection). "Moral" engagement encompasses, for example, anonymous forms of giving or private work on one's character that is relevant to forging lasting bonds with others. Through "civil engagement", then, which Berger defines as a combination of social and moral engagement, he provides the starting point for our own a category that we will also embrace (ibid., pp. 344–45).

Except that we understand "civil" engagement in a slightly different, and arguably broader, way. If for Berger the term combines social and moral forms of activism, for us it is "all of the above"—civic, social, and moral. The idea is that all of these dimensions of engagement reinforce one another, and if we want our students to excel in any one of them, we will structure their exposure to all three. Civil engagement, if translated into a workable practical framework with the maximum generosity proviso applied, promises several benefits. It can include high amounts of "civic" (or narrowly political) knowledge. It can focus on "social" activities that include going out into the community and encountering neighbors in real situations of need, which undoubtedly takes learners out of their comfort zones. Moreover, it can emphasize individual moral growth, perhaps through the writing of an anonymous letter or the making of a donation, which in turn reinforces engagement efficacy in the other two areas.

The university–community exchanges, to emphasize, are the first pillar of our recommended best-practices civic engagement strategy. To combine the benefits of different engagement programs considered in Section 6 with the maximum generosity proviso, and to reinforce components of civil engagement, imagine the following university–community deliberation: a university in rural Texas invites students and community leaders who are especially interested in questions of police brutality and civil rights, to a campus dialogue on these issues. The discussion is attended by civil rights activists, police officers, and pastors. In this example, as in the others, the key is to ensure an actual spectrum of broad disagreement in the room. Those immersed in this dialogue, including students, find that they must process new ideas and will perhaps join the exchange. Students are assured that any and all feelings or questions are legitimate to share with the group. These might include, in no particular order: "To what extent are African Americans treated differently by the police?" "What about the claim that law enforcement is going where the crime is?" "What are the statistics for officer involved shootings showing that no discrimination whatsoever exists?" Instead of reading hundreds of pages, an article or two may suffice to provide the "high-information component—perhaps a combination of Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* (Alexander 2011) and of James Forman, Jr.'s response (Forman 2012). Consistent with a framework of maximum generosity that emphasizes listening and not demeaning any perspective in the room, religious and non-religious questions may come up and receive encouragement from event moderators.

Notice the components of civil engagement in this framework of maximum generosity: basic criminal justice readings, in combination with interactions with police officers, other public officials, and civil rights activists, provide *civic information*. Meeting various actors whom one does not usually encounter in the classroom and potentially hearing religious arguments for why certain policies are or are not justified (related to human dignity) provides social engagement in a context of dialogue across difference. Moreover, greater awareness of the issues and general needs and of where one could send resources anonymously contributes to moral engagement.

Or how about this deliberative scenario: a university in the urban Northeast considers homelessness policy in the context of economic development. The discussion/debate that students at this point have joined includes organizations and individuals who *really* disagree: the local Chamber of Commerce, an advocacy group for the poor or representatives from a homeless shelter in the area, municipal and/or state representatives on both or multiple sides when it comes to which policies work best, etc. In theory, those who favor Austin style de-stigmatization (potentially with the legalization of panhandling and sleeping in public places), democratic socialists, free market thinkers, and clergy who present different spiritual perspectives on these subjects, are all included. Once again, no question is off limits. Students as well as community leaders are encouraged to engage in an open and honest dialogue, in which religious and non-religious reasons are included, without fear of making themselves vulnerable and for the sake of real personal development. A *limited* reading, circulated a few weeks before the event, may consist of a few paragraphs from Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* on the poor (Smith [1776] 1993) contrasted with a few pages

from Marx's *Das Kapital* or *The Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels 2002) and combined with passages from the works of Marvin Olasky (1992, pp. 1–24, 211–32) and William Julius Wilson (Wilson 1990, pp. 3–19, 125–39) that offer radically different perspectives on homelessness. The goal is for these few pages of text to serve as a springboard for discussion that involves different academic and community voices.

The civic dimension consists of reading excerpts from information-rich texts while also gaining a sense of the relevant public officials, the Chamber of Commerce, and local economic development board, and how reaching out to them about government related matters might occur. Inviting a homeless person or an advocate for the homeless, such as someone who works at a rescue mission, accomplishes the student goal of encountering community members not usually represented on a college campus. Ultimate reasons *why* society should or should not prioritize homelessness through public policy will inevitably expose participants to dialogue across difference, potentially involving religious and non-religious reasons that are all affirmed. Again, the awareness of opportunities to give anonymously ("moral engagement") increases upon participation.

Imagine still another possibility: at a university in the agricultural Midwest, students take part in a heated environmental policy exchange. Which species should be protected, and what are tradeoffs as farmers wish to work and develop the land? Who is making decisions about levels of pollutants and other farming/deforestation practices that are and are not allowed? Again, the dialogue does not include only academics. The school has invited into the same room pundits, members of the Sierra Club, farmers and ranchers, and any other interested parties whose strong opinions are not in doubt. The readings here, very limited again for the sake of providing a springboard for further discussion, may include a few pages from Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (Carson 2002, pp. 53–62, 129–53) paired with brief sections from Terry Anderson and Donald Leal's *Free Market Environmentalism* (Anderson and Leal 2001). Sections from Genesis, combined with Teddy Roosevelt's (1908) remarks on *Conservation as a National Duty*, may also receive attention.

Civic engagement, flowing from this high-impact and intense community-academic exchange that students join, may involve meeting an official who works at an environmental protection agency and in combination with the readings, gaining a sense of which laws and regulations matter for environmental protection. Interacting with famers and others in the room, including indigenous people able to speak to their lived experience of environmental or conservation policy, makes for *social* engagement. Of course, the question of anonymous giving or even journaling comes up again, as a student reflects on all that has been discussed and processed in the exchanges so far. "Maximum generosity" is applied in all these deliberative settings as participating faculty and administrators, who are trained to respond to instances during which a religious argument appears (whether of the pantheistic or "human beings are stewards of the environment" variety) provide encouragement to all as needed.

This leaves an important question. Given the importance of trust, so important to the actual construction of shared values through public reason as discussed in the last section, how is a university to cultivate it among students ahead of these intense university-community exchanges or in another sphere of the model civic engagement framework? This brings us to the second pillar of our recommended university civic engagement framework, consisting of a number of considerations.

First, visible reliance on the principle of maximum generosity in the intense community–university policy exchanges itself increases trust. When a student, community activist, or academic *has* made an initial point in favor of criminal justice policy reform based on inalienable natural rights, or the imago dei in human beings, or a theological injunction to care for the oppressed, the guideline response from a facilitator is one of encouragement. When the moderator in the economic development/homelessness discussion group encounters initially offered arguments from a perspective of economic efficiency, social justice, or the dignity of human beings understood through a theological lens, the same affirmation is in

order. Moreover, this principle applies in the environmental policy community–university deliberation. This display of generosity towards all participants *itself* builds trust.

Secondly, in these university–community exchanges as well as in other parts of the model civic engagement framework, building on already existing communities of identity and interest is key. Fraternities and sororities, sports teams, and other campus organizations are already ones in which students are already embedded *and in which they already find themselves in relationships of trust.* While likely requiring administrative oversight above the classroom level, randomly drawing students from different pre-existing networks of trust to different events through extra credit or through the coordinated encouragement of coaches, professors, and administrators *increases the likelihood of dialogue across difference in the exchanges themselves* because it makes it more likely that exchange participants (students, faculty, and community voices) are starting with a reservoir of good faith and trust that does not require construction.

Significantly, this builds on the framework already in place at Tarleton State University—not yet with respect to intense community–university idea exchanges *but within some of our classes themselves.* Every year, several hundred Tarleton State University students participate in what is known as Town Hall. This is a civic engagement as opposed to a social activism event, as characterized by founder Professor Casey Thompson. The Town Hall model requires students in Texas or Federal Government to research a specific policy question for several months (in fiscal, abortion, animal and crop, or gun policy) and then make a practical recommendation. From the perspective of building trust that makes achieving both shared values and dialogue across difference more possible, what is special about Town Hall is that students move through the introductory federal or Texas government class *as one issue cohort.* They do so by attending lectures twice a week, often with 60 or more other students. In a given week of the term, whether the lecture subject is federalism, interest groups, or parties, they are required to attend a third meeting led by a lab leader, *meeting only with the smaller group of students in the class who are studying their specific policy area . . . fiscal policy, green energy, eminent domain or K-12 curriculum*, etc. It is possible for the smaller group of students to get to know each other and build trust in a way that they simply cannot in the larger lectures.

The culminating event at Tarleton State University in the Town Hall model, Town Hall itself, further builds on this dynamic of trust that contributes to shared values and dialogue across difference. Students stay in their focused policy area groups and in them share short presentations based on their research from the semester. They are further bonded together with their small policy group in this culminating policy experience by an outside issue expert who offers real time feedback on their points of view and presentations, including ideas on how to make them better and their delivery more effective. While this approach does not prioritize the spirited debate of community–university exchanges as earlier described, it *can* involve significant community figures and activists listening to and providing guidance on individual student presentations in these smaller cohorts organized according to policy. The outside experts are not all necessarily academics, and some policy cohorts have had more than one "issue expert", increasing the likelihood of *dialogue across difference between the invited outside speakers, who model principled disagreement for the students to see.* Thus, on the evening of the culminating Town Hall event this year, the Animal & Crop regulation small group featured Darren Turley, the executive director of the Texas Dairymen's association, as well as a Tarleton professor, Jean Lonie, who works at the Agriculture School. Our abortion policy group of students featured as outside experts a Tarleton government professor and Amy O'Donnell of the TX Alliance for Life, while our transgender policy cohort received guidance from Alison Boleware of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health and Jeff Dyke, the lead pastor at Rocky Point Baptist church. In both the proposed stand-alone community–university policy discussions and in the existing culminating Town Hall student cohort–policy discussions, the fact of openness to difference and disagreement in the groups (including the use of religious and non-religious reasons) is thoroughly consistent with our framework.

Thirdly, for the sake of building trust, decisions about which community voices and experts to include in these forums are all important. Depending on which outside experts are asked to participate in a group, a session on the same subject may go quite differently. It is important for administrators and university officials to recognize that the perception by students that gatekeeping authority was exercised illegitimately, in a way to exclude real lived experiences or questions asked in sincerity, can backfire. The maximum generosity principle, discussed above in Section 5, also applies.

Both existing civic engagement programming at Tarleton State and the proposed university-community dialogues parallel the approach that the Illinois State University Civic Engagement Center has adopted through its *Deliberative Dialogues* format. Although Illinois state does not list past examples of exchanges, the documents that it does make available speak to the fullness of the intended exchange. Thus, in the potential pre-reflection questions, somebody about to participate is asked about fears related to discussion of the subject and a personal story related to the topic. Afterwards, participants are questioned about whose voice was not represented in the idea exchange. Clearly, this is a model of inclusivity that does not seek to avoid discomfort at all costs but that aims for robust dialogue. The American Democracy project, supported by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), has now started to run training in the Deliberative Dialogue format.

This approach also builds on the one employed at Swarthmore College. Here, Debating for Democracy allows students to send their representatives a two-page letter in which they advocate for a particular policy approach on an issue or issues.[36] The students are indicating a well-researched need for a change to an existing policy. They are, in other words, engaging in an act of persuasion in reaching out to their representative.[37]

Both these programs seek to extend the momentum of Democracy and Debate at the University of Michigan, where what seems emphasized and especially important is including community members as affected parties in the exchanges. A recent example at the University of Michigan included a county clerk. The University of Michigan also profiles its Democracy Café series, which makes the important historical connection for students of dialogue to coffee. Of course, it was in 18th century coffee shops, as described by Jurgen Habermas in the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, that the beginnings of modern deliberative democracy and this specific kind of public sphere occur. The University of Michigan, through its Ginsburg center, more broadly offers a number of different supporting initiatives. Moreover, the Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts also presents important opportunities in this way.

Finally, to extend these analogies further, one additional model program that incorporates elements of Tarleton Town Hall and has synergies with its approach is the civic engagement framework at Wake Forest.[38] Here, although it is not part of the official service-learning community, *A Call to Conversation* prioritizes the value of working together across deep difference. Wake Forest is one of the schools that recognizes disagreement and complexity. Even more than is the case at Swarthmore, these dialogue participants are asked to recall, over dinner or in another leisurely setting, a time of collaborating with a colleague or co-worker with whom they had a relatively significant disagreement. As I spoke with Raven Scott, the Assistant Director of Programming for Leadership and Character in the College, I gained a sense of the importance in *A Call to Conversation* of bringing in one's lived experience, regardless of how at odds or inconsistent with cultures at institutions it may seem. Raven Scott also emphasized to me the critical importance of maintaining a significant part of *A Call to Conversation* that is rooted in the local community, rather than prioritizing national expansion (Personal Communication 3/10/22). *Call to Conversation* may not seek to encourage spirited exchanges of ideas in real time as the informal gathering takes place, but it may be seen as pointing in that direction. Participants are asked to *remember* a time at work when they did navigate disagreement and were able to see it as fruitful (Wake Forest n.d.).

10. Conclusions

As discussions related to January 6 move to the next stage and the troubling reality of our polarization continues to sink in, so does the realization that our civic crisis needs to be addressed. Democracy, as every student of political philosophy knows full well, is not guaranteed. No doubt, this explains the recent interest in discussions of civil religion. A looming sense of crisis seems shared, at this point, by a significant percentage of the American public, as well as by those in academia conducting rigorous and peer-reviewed research. As a yearning grows for ways in which to, substantively and meaningfully, address our current lack of and abiding need for community, students of Rousseau, Durkheim, and Bellah find a greater demand for their ideas, and specifically related to the possibility of civil religion.

The early theorists of civil religion were not religious nationalists, and they proposed the idea of a shared narrative in part to deal with their own generation's traumas, whether these involved the Vietnam war, civil rights struggles, or other challenges. There is no suggestion, in anything we have written, that the *intent* behind theorizing in this way is sinister or unproductive, because very clearly, the opposite is the case. Moreover, it remains true today among theorists of civil religion who include Phil Gorski, John Wilsey, and Jonathan Den Hartog, all of whom have recently presented civil religion as a way to bring about or restore civic unity. Yet, having discussed Gorski's book and noted inclusive aspects in its reliance on religion as a political tool, we nevertheless considered the risks involved. The prevalence of top down, as opposed to spontaneous, civil religion, throws these into stark relief. Against the intent of those who theorize it, civil religion opens the door to domination, manipulation, and a general loss of freedom that undermines democracy itself.

We considered Augustine's remarkable treatment and savage critique of civil religion in *City of God*, not just of the stories about divinity told by the Greeks and Romans, but of civil religion itself. We did so because, based on his understanding of human nature and idolatry, he gives us and has been recognized by contemporary political theorists as providing additional insights to grasp *why* the instrumentalization of religion in politics, which civil religion involves, is a bad idea. Human beings are worshipping creatures, and the possibility of mistakenly worshipping civil religion leads on Augustine's account to disordered souls, certainly, but also to the elevation of the power of the state at the expense of dissenting individuals, with all the realities of conquest and exploitation in which we know that civil religion historically has been implicated.

Strikingly, we saw that it is Augustine himself who offers for our reconstructed use an alternative model, as also noted by prominent Augustinian thinkers Paul Weithman and Ed Santurri, building on the insights of Robert Markus in *Saeculum.* Book 19 of *City of God* contains the rudiments of overlapping consensus, as Augustine did not heed voices who called for further Christianization of the empire but focused instead on non-religious spheres whose importance both pagans and Christians could affirm. To the extent that this reconstructed Augustinian possibility is a Rawlsian one, of special interest is the resonance with the *later* Rawls, who adds the famous "proviso" to his 1971 *Theory of Justice* according to which people can come into the public square making a religious argument, *provided that at some point* they translate it into neutral terms. This later turn towards religion in Rawls has been recognized by multiple Rawlsian scholars. Moreover, it shows a further correspondence with Augustine, as the Bishop of Hippo includes the rudiments of overlapping consensus in his work, but he could not imagine a politics without the presence of some religious reasons.

In our age of polarization and division and with this foundation in place, we propose to use universities to contribute to the task of constructing shared values. In a nutshell: the idea is to institutionalize a late Rawlsian understanding of constructing shared values on public university campuses. Moreover, to Rawls' famous "proviso", and with college campuses in mind, we have added a "maximum generosity" condition. The reason is that whereas the late Rawls is *open* to religious reasons as part of a public conversation, he does not provide any encouragement to religious people for the sake of their continued participation, or

to increase the likelihood that they translate the reasons they provide into neutral terms. We do. We characterize the resulting discourse environment as "in between civil religion and public justification" because the paradigm still maintains public justification as the standard, even as there are potentially more religious reasons in circulation, at any given moment, than in a civil religion framework.

How would it work, concretely, on campuses? As it turns out, universities are already uniquely positioned to institutionalize a late Rawlsian understanding of public reason going forward. This is a result of their history of connecting with the public and serving broader public purposes, as well as with reference to the more recent "civic engagement" movement on campus that arguably goes back to the 1980s and 1990s. There is nothing new about the idea of an "engaged" university. Contrary to some misconceptions, educational institutions have acted in both "engaged" and "disengaged" capacities from the beginning. Therefore, it would be possible to use existing civic engagement infrastructure on college campuses, even as we seek to improve upon and reform it.

Indeed, the ready existence of programs on campuses, and their continued expansion since the most recent effervescence of engagement priorities and programs in the 1980s, is what helps us with intriguing growth and reform possibilities. As discussed, public reason is not the only mode of shared values construction; civil religion attempts and sometimes successfully accomplishes the same thing. Moreover, in surveying the institutional University scene, what is evident is that some programs take a more public-reason oriented approach, whereas others (geared towards students even if they are not directly teaching them) leave an opening for kinds of civic reverence that we seek to avoid. Even as we continue to warn against civil-religious strategies of constructing shared values in the strongest possible terms, then, we ask: is it possible that, in terms of the goals of the civic engagement movement, civil religion frameworks get certain things right, and that public reason approaches lack in concrete ways? If so, is it conceivable that features of both these different approaches could be integrated in a way that still unambiguously upholds the standard of public reason?

Our answer is yes. Using our "in between" understanding of shared values construction and by institutionalizing our "maximum generosity" proviso to the later Rawlsian openness to religion in civic deliberations, we blend features of both approaches while still upholding public reason. Our two-pronged approach, building on guidance provided by the Carnegie Foundation, the American Democracy Project, and Jack Miller Center programs, combines intense university–community deliberations around highly relevant and at times controversial issues, with a model of taking government courses using smaller student cohorts that closely resembles the Town Hall framework at Tarleton State.

Our intense community–university deliberations combined with short readings covering criminal justice reform, homelessness in a context of economic development, and sustainable environmental policy, to name only a few possibilities, include students, community members, and faculty, and are designed to encourage maximum diversity of opinion. Application of the maximum generosity proviso here means that if any of the participants initially advance a religious reason to support any policy, trained moderators will not shame or stigmatize anyone, but simply provide encouragement to keep moving in the direction of public reason and shared values. Moreover, the short readings distributed before deliberation add a higher civic knowledge component to the framework.

Moving through government courses not only in large lectures (twice a week), but then in small student groups, all focused on different policies (fiscal, animal and crop regulation, K-12 curriculum, etc.), further advances our model program goals of providing high civic information content to students, exposing them to real dialogue across difference, and building trust in order to deepen that dialogue. Ensuring that students are studying specific policies in small groups increases civic knowledge; their staying in those small groups throughout the semester allows for trust to be built, which makes it easier to have tough conversations; their participating together in an end of semester event, at which they share their findings not only with each other, but with invited policy experts and public

officials presenting genuinely diverse opinions at the local, state, and national levels, only increases student trust (in each other, the university community, and the political process as a whole). Tarleton is considering additional ways to leverage trust for the sake of dialogue across difference, tapping into existing student leadership networks on campus so that positive civic emotions do not require construction from the ground up. The point is, both of these prongs combine high-civic information, practical, and dialogue-based features, drawing on public reason and civil religion embracing civic engagement frameworks. The result is a program that is truly "in between" even as a public reason standard of shared values is ultimately upheld.

As for not reaching, in this way, those who do not make it to college at all, and who may be especially prone to polarization and even radicalization, that is a fair point. There are undoubtedly additional ways in which private institutions of higher learning, state universities, and two-year colleges can positively impact their surrounding communities, raising awareness and increasing skills potentially even among those not enrolled. It may also be that addressing deep social divisions is not an issue that universities can handle all by themselves, but this does not preclude the value of using them where clear benefits exist. These are all pressing areas of future research.

For now, does our strategy involve expanding the usual definition of the term "civic engagement", in ways to which some who rely on that term will object? Yes. However, we maintain that in our day and in what feels like a dark time, expansion and inclusion are only to the good. We hold that this is true especially if it brings about a rethinking of essential concepts related to civic engagement, along with a location of that concept in yet broader contexts of community and human flourishing. Admittedly, any number of strategies to bring about unity may be pursued. Civil religion, with the semblance of cohesion it provides, is a siren song that beckons. However, we should not pursue it even if it feels like a quick fix or seems more glamorous. This is true especially in light of the flexibility of the public reason framework that we have uncovered, as it is supported by a reconstructed Augustine and the late Rawls. Relying on the university under "maximum generosity" conditions perhaps requires more work and asks us to engage in more challenging acts of empathy and imagination. In confidence and hope, we should pursue these for the sake of civility and pluralism in our democracy.

Notes

1   For some theorists, the very idea of "civic unity" is oppressive and hegemonic. See Tinsley and France (2004) and Corlett (1989).

2   The contrast goes back to Augustine. We will expand on it in the paper.

3   Related to it for Durkheim are different beliefs and practices, and since it is community that is truly fundamental, religious symbols and divisions reflect on a deep level what society does and does not value. (Durkheim [1915] 2012, Book I ("Preliminary Questions"), Chapter I ("Definition of Religious Phenomena and Of Religion", Section III, Par 5. See also ibid., Book II, "The Elementary Beliefs", Chapter VII, "Origins of these Beliefs—end—Origin of the Idea of the Totemic Principle or Mana, Section II).

4   The work of Timothy Fitzgerald on this subject is considered groundbreaking—see *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Fitzgerald 2000, especially pp. 3–32) and *Religion and Politics in International Relations: The Modern Myth*, pp. 1–17, 105–14). Those who have questioned the validity or usefulness of "religion" as a category also include (Asad 1993; Milbank 1991; and Luckmann 1967). Asad in post-colonial studies views it as perpetuating colonialism and imperialism. Milbank, as a theologian, considers that "religion detracts from true faith, and Luckmann holds that it imports imprecise thinking into what needs to remain the scientific analysis of human structures and organizations. Woodhead (2011) mentions these and others, acknowledging a diversity of conceptualizations of "religion", even as she emphasizes that an essentialist and exclusive definition is not needed (Woodhead—strikingly—also underscores that given the secular inclinations of academia, discarding "religion" completely could well result in significant confirmation bias). Her five understandings, which she is open to deploying selectively and based on context and sometimes in combination, are: religion as culture, identity, relationship, practice, and power. Before Woodhead, Frederick Ferre in his 1970 "The Definition of Religion" had also warned against the insistence on a precise definition, given that everyone knows religion on some level exists—his counsel, therefore, it to adopt one definition and use it consistently (Ferré 1970, pp. 5–8).

5   Coleman (1970, p. 69) offered a similar definition: a "special case of the religious symbol system, designed to perform a differentiated function which is the unique province of neither church nor state". On this account, "It is a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man as citizen and his society in world history to the ultimate conditions of his existence". Even as Cherry agreed that neither a denominational commitment nor piety really summed it up (Cherry 1971, "Introduction", pp. 1–24), Coleman also distinguished between church-sponsored and state-sponsored civil religions (Coleman 1970, pp. 70–72).

6   James Mathisen has suggested four different relevant periods of the study of civil religion: "Setting the Ground Rules for ACR Discourse" (1967–1973), "The Goden Age of ACR Discussion" (1974–1977), "A Plateau of Evaluation and Integration of ACR" (1978–1982), and "The Waning of ACR Discussion" (1983–1988) (Mathisen 1989, p. 130). According to Mathisen, these may not only present different views of the *meaning* of civil religion—they may connect the subject general subject back to broader themes in different ways. Thus, phase three, for Mathisen, linked ACR discourse to broader discussions, and in particular to that of secularization (most evident in Fenn 1972) and modernization (clear in Markoff and Regan 1981) (Mathisen 1989, pp. 134–35) While it is harder, according to Mathisen, to make thematic sense of phase 4, an important book here is Demerath and Williams (1985).

7   Yet other possibilities have been suggested since Bellah's pioneering work. Thus, Lüchau (2009) calls attention to the possibility that several different definitions of "civil religion" are connected, which according to him becomes especially apparent upon fusing the two major distinctions of religious pluralism vs. monoculture and civil religion as rhetoric vs. individual religiosity, followed by a sensitivity to context (especially pp. 376–84). Mount (1980) ties these discussions back to broader debates about realism, the normative vs. legitimating (or merely descriptive) aspects of civil religion, considerations of pluralism, and how civil religion intersects with and exemplifies virtue and character in our leaders (especially pp. 41–49). Novak (1974) parses five different *Protestant* kinds of civil religiosity, based on cultural history (pp. 131–47). And Williams (2013) points to the unavoidability not just of the universal emphasis, but of the particularistic component of ACR, which makes sense of the fact, specifically, in the US that race and tribal notions have been connected to a majority concern (pp. 245–47, 252–54). All told, it is clear that civil religion, since its rediscovery in the 1960's, has meant many things to many people.

8   Gorski insists on the phrase "civil religion" instead of "shared narrative" or "public philosophy" because, he argues, everyone is already involved in a form of worship (ibid., p. 15). Use of the phrase "religion" is further intended to make secular leaning individuals more understanding of religious citizens, and to increase awareness among the religiously inclined of the civic implications of their views. Although there is overlap, "civil religion"also needs to be distinguished from "political theology". Political theology brings to mind a German context—here the proximate scene is Bellah's America—and the latter involves more reference pointes of doctrine, as well as concepts like secularization, etc. (Stackhouse 2004, pp. 281–91).

9   As Gorski explains, it emphasizes the discourse of blood sacrifice in the political theology of the West, (ibid. 21) contrasting the ceremonial blotting out of life in the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures with portrayals in Revelation, where the focus is clearly vengeance. And it is fueled by apocalypticism, which draws on a "certain kind of American Protestantism that arose during the early twentieth century" (ibid., p. 22).

10   Interestingly, Gorski holds that radical secularism became especially prominent in the Gilded age period after the Civil War in a "small elite within the Republican Party" (ibid., p. 107). This was "the new class of knowledge workers: Lawyers, journalists, scientists, teachers" who represented the "seedbeds of secularism". Exemplified in the early twentieth century in the work of Robert Ingersoll and attaining a more public expression in the work of H. L. Mencken (ibid. 132), secularism has more recently been on display in the views of Christopher Hitchens (ibid., p. 30).

11   Of course, readers of Augustine with only a surface familiarity of the *Confessions* will not be surprised by this emphasis on non-instrumentality—throughout that shorter and deeply personal book, Augustine's God emerges consistently as a Being immune to categorization and manipulation of any kind, defying categories of culture, space, and time.

12   Other attempts to cast civil religion in a positive light are also worth mentioning–notably that of Jonathan Den Hartog (2017), recently writing in *Religions*. Focusing on the Federalists (George Washington, John Adams, and John Jay, but also individuals who included Timothy Dwight and Elias Boudinot), and drawing on categories of "open" and "closed" civil religion from the work of John Wilsey, Den Hartog makes the case that these early proponents of a stronger American federal Union had a version

of "open" civil religion. They relied on public religiosity to strengthen national attachments, while also not using this set of beliefs to actively promote the expansion of slavery or domination. Nevertheless, as is also true of John Wilsey's work, this reconstruction does not fully account for the extent and depth of the Augustinian critique of civil religion.

13   To be clear, this is not to suggest the impossibility of alternative strategies of bridging deep differences in times of heightened polarization. Various strategies might include the teaching of natural law principles (for which recent scholarship suggests there is some support in Augustine), or the articulation of what several thinkers and commentators have referred to as "public philosophy". But there are but a few considerations that mediate against either of these options. Because, if only given secularization trends (Hackett and Huynh 2015) and the *perception* that natural law involves a theological underpinning, coalescing the ideas may be difficult especially with the younger generations. Additionally, public philosophy in its overlap with natural law (Lippmann 1959, p. 133) has a definite content specified in advance, and not one with which there is unanimous agreement. Overlapping consensus also specifies (minimal) principles of justice in advance, but the underlying reasons and motivations for supporting them can be varied, and evolving, depending on the language conditions in which discussion participants find themselves.

14   See American Covenant: A History of Civil Religion from the Puritans to the Present (Gorski 2017). The premise of Phillip Gorski's book aims to answer whether the United States was founded as a Christian nation or a secular democracy.

15   See reference to and discussion of Seyla Benhabib's work on Rawls (1997), p. 775.

16   What Rawls refers to as the "background culture—contrary to other theorists)" (ibid., p. 784 fn 50) [for "background culture", see ibid., pp. 768 fn 12–15, 775 fn 28].

17   To emphasize, this alternative to civil religion, a public reason/overlapping consensus strategy informed by Augustinian insights, certainly applies where the principle of separation of church and state is upheld (as our discussion of civic engagement programs at American universities will show), but it is also relevant where the state controls the church. Thus, Wei Hua has described the history of politics and religion in the People's Republic of China, up to and including the contemporary official position as expressed in the Constitution of state atheism. According to the Chinese constitution, the rights of citizens to practice religion are respected, even as there is denial of the legitimacy of any religious activities which "disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the State" (Chinese Constitution 1982). As Hua has phrased it, in describing the difference between the Self-Same churches and the house churches that have grown up autonomously apart from them, the Chinese government's attitude towards the informal bodies of worship has vacillated between acquiescence and crackdown. The experience of Falun Gong would certainly seem to indicate the crackdown side of this equation (Chan and Junker 2021, pp. 772–74). Hua does not recommend continuation in the direction of state enforced secularism in China, but he also does not support unregulated license on the part of the house churches. A framework of mutual accountability or shared responsibility—indeed, of overlapping consensus—is best. And Hua deliberately invokes Augustine's Book 19 of *City of God* to this effect (Hua 2021, pp. 113–30).

18   https://courses.lumenlearning.com/sanjacinto-atdcoursereview-usgovernment-1/chapter/engagement-in-a-democracy/ (accessed on 1 April 2022). Linked to a college course, the website contains information that helps with conceptualization of these categories.

19   Depending on the researcher, what currently contributes the most to a formed young adult's value profile is variously understood to be family upbringing, geographical region, peer group, education background, and religious affiliation (Griffiths and Keirns 2015). But these considerations are secondar—even if a university is not the primary socializer for many, it can play a significant role in contributing to overlapping consensus in a time of dangerous polarization. Unlike families, institutions of higher learning combine extended community with the authority of learning. Unlike religious organizations, they can claim expertise in different spheres. And the intensity of the live-in experience only adds to the lasting nature, for so many students, of imparted lessons (Loss 2014, pp. 19–52) and Peters et al. (2010).

20   He made the case in *Leviathan*, but these and other arguments of his are also especially in evidence in *Behemoth*, where the English philosopher meditated specifically on the causes of social disintegration. Hobbes focused on these institutions in a way that even Spinoza did not (Kabala and Cook 2022). Their educational mission, he was clear, had to undergo focusing and reform, if stability and prosperity were to have a chance.

21   And although Newman, of course, wrote openly as a Catholic, the contours of his pedagogy remain relevant even for those with different views, provided they support a space of non-instrumentalized learning. Recent work has also challenged the view that Newman, because of his support for natural law and moral order, cannot also affirm modern pluralism (Mulcahy 2009, pp. 468–69, 484).

22   The authors also consider Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (ibid., pp. 91–100). Here, prominent is the reliance of an "office in charge of industry and community partnerships", which can centralize some of the decision making. The University is being very clear about the fact that *research* is a key component of engagement, as knowledge is generated in fields as diverse as "nanotechnology and advanced materials" and "biotechnology development". (ibid., p. 95).

23   Before *The Engaged University*, there was Judith Rodin's important *The University and Urban Revival* (Rodin 2007). Rodin describes the multiple ways in which the University of Philadelphia intervened to make the city a more livable place. "[Students and faculty] [r]esolved to engage in efforts that would encourage the residents of University City ultimately to act of their own accord to enforce the public peace, as Jane Jacobs advocated. Increased policing was warranted and used more effectively than before.

But we recognized that only by altering the physical and perceived environment would we begin to see lasting positive outcomes with respect to crime. It was up to Penn, as the largest stakeholder in the area, to step up as the agent of change. Working with the community, we would launch a campaign to repair broken windows, clean up graffiti and litter, light the streets, and, in [Malcolm] Gladwell's words, 'change the signals that invited crime in the first place'" (Rodin 2007, p. 60). Rodin describes Penn's many efforts in getting involved to make the surrounding neighborhood more pleasant; making investments in the local retail economy (Penn put up some of the initial investment funds: pp. 107–37); investing in public education in the city (pp. 138–66); and still other concrete forms of (civic) leadership (pp. 167–78).

24 Richard Adler and Judy Goggin, in the meantime, have pointed out that civic engagement encompasses everything from community service through political participation to a successful push for social change. They discuss expanding engagement opportunities for older folks, even as they point out that there is no one agreed upon definition in the literature (Adler and Goggin 2005, pp. 237–41). The literature here is simply vast, even as many have made connections to the foundational work of Robert Putnam (Putnam 1992; see Field 2003, p. 143; Kenworthy 1997, pp. 646–47).

25 More documentation is needed.

26 Also, neither Ostrander nor Putnam considers, in the discussion of *why* this disengagement took place, that part of the reason is *democracy itself* (ibid. 2000, pp. 336–49). Tocqueville is clear and direct in his magnum opus. Unlike the Aristotelian understanding of regime, his view of democracy entails the equalization of conditions. And by equalizing conditions, by increasingly throwing everybody back on their own resources, democracy makes individuals weaker. Therefore, the art of association becomes exceedingly important. It recreates the salutary effects of what used to be aristocratic bodies, both making it more difficult to impose tyranny (more easily done on an undifferentiated mass of disconnected individuals) and providing people training in going-out-of-themselves (which increases their appetite for self-government, making it harder to impose an administrative or nanny state despotism). To the extent that the University, as a site of civic engagement, is then able to serve as a master Tocquevillian associational body, it would be uniquely suited to pushing back against, and moderating, democratic excess.If this is true, it is certainly fortuitous that the civic engagement movement at universities takes off right as the Cold War ends. This is the era in which liberal democracy (understood as the combination of free markets and free elections) comes to be viewed as supreme, in some cases embodying political and economic institutions at the End of History. Given that none of the college civic engagement programs that we are about to consider openly bills itself as "countering democracy" (the rhetoric on the websites is, instead, robustly and at times extremely pro-democratic), it is unlikely that *countering* the negative effects of democracy was an intended effect. Nevertheless, especially to the extent that these civic engagement programs are encouraging *association*, across the whole spectrum of political beliefs, University civic engagement programs can theoretically play a vital role in protecting the democratic regime from its worst excesses of individualism and dissociation.

27 And it is not the case that some versions of civil religion, conceivably, could not support shared values (Cristi 2001, p. 61).

28 To emphasize, it is not that Universities could *not* also serve as platforms where natural law and "public philosophy" as Lippman understood it are promoted—to be clear, some universities (Catholic and evangelical) incorporate a natural approach in their teaching—and although hard data is not available, of course, several institutions of higher learning with specific missions also propagate specific public philosophies. For the reasons provided above, the "shared values through public reason with a maximum generosity proviso" approach seems most promising, and so we suggest using the university in this way.

29 Thus, in addition to hundreds of pages of assigned reading, speakers at the last Jack Miller Center summer seminar included Steven Smith, discussing responsible citizenship and education in the thought of Michael Oakeshott; Nicholas Buccola, exploring the political philosophy of Frederick Douglass, related to resistance and civic education; Ben Kleinerman, considering the Federalist Papers to uncover the education they can provide in reasonableness; Bill McClay, inquiring about civic education relative to the nationalist thought of Ernst Renan, for the sake of differentiating toxic from other kinds of nationalism; and Diana Schaub, addressing Lincoln's Lyceum address and its implications for statesmanship, as well as the potential to learn from enlightened leaders today.

30 To account for this diversity of civic engagement programs, some seemingly on the left and others on the right, one wonders whether it does not make sense to draw on different understandings of citizenship. An important article (Westheimer and Kahne 2004) points to three paradigms: personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented paradigms of citizenship. The justice-oriented clearly has parallels to a PART paradigm of civic engagement emphasizing embeddedness. Those programs emphasizing activism and community involvement, to various extents, are also generally associated with the Left, and might valorize participatory citizenship. And the different set of programs that tends to promote, through the Jack Miller center, civic knowledge, prioritizes engagement as well, and according to Westheimer and Kahne might make sense in a "personally responsible" model of civic relations. But, given the extent to which exchanges in the context of reading and civic knowledge are emphasized, it might make sense to speak of reflective, or knowledge-based citizenship. Alongside responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented categorizations . . . this is the *civically informed* citizen. Something like this view may also be supported by Bill Galston, who has written of the importance of knowledge based civic belonging (Galston 2001, 2003, 2007).

31 Ben Berger has called attention to some of these differences and points out that "Service Learning" goes back to the days of the Tennessee Authority (Berger 2010, p. 11).

32 Tennessee State University also integrates its service learning into Freshman Orientation—members of the incoming class are channeled into 4 h of work in their first semester. And the University has a ready-made list of virtual opportunities to engage—the

list of links includes websites representing The West Nashville Dream Center, Miriam's Promise, and the Cumberland River Compact. TSU further incentivizes service learning by designating a Community Service Scholar, who has completed additional hours of training and will be distinguished during graduation, with the hope of strategic positioning for contributions to public service after graduation. Clearly, this is not just community service—the engagement with the outside world is tied back directly to an academic context (Tennessee State University n.d.).

[33] And this focus on embeddedness seems especially evident at the Watts College, with its four schools of Social Work, Criminology and Criminal Justice, Public Affairs, and Community Resources and Development, all placing a high priority on social justice. Its webpage displays a Black Lives Matter logo; there is a focus on research integrated into community initiatives and solutions. These have included, "Community Assessments Throughout Rural Arizona", the "Phoenix Public Transit Report", "Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department", "Data Analysis for Arizona Department of Corrections", and "Engaging Children at the Watkins Emergency Overflow Shelter". These have included students contacting inmate populations as well as individuals residing in shelters. To emphasize, through the language of embeddedness, the focus is on making contributions to longer term and systemic change. To the extent that both the Morrison Institute for Public Policy, and the Congressman Ed Pastor Center for Politics and Public Service, either exist at the Watts College, or have provided research with long term change implications, taking on subjects from housing, to heat, to officer involved shootings, once again, this again seems consistent with PART (Arizona State University n.d.).

[34] Baylor also emphasizes that its service ventures are academic, or integrated into the curriculum, to an even greater extent than Tennessee State University or Arizona State University. In addition to supporting its OEL, Baylor makes service learning a component of the core curriculum. The school allows students to substitute experience related to civics for other (required) core courses. And the fact that some of these, but only some, are internships (state and national level), shows that the school is broadly open to different ways of understanding "service". Politics is one way to engage, but there are others, and no one form of giving back is necessarily more worthy of consideration than others (Baylor University n.d.).

[35] Based on this concern, a consortium of colleges was formed in the early nineties. Project Pericles, as it is known, was founded at that point in recognition of the importance, to the maintenance of more robust democracies, of civic engagement that still requires a respect for the abiding power of ideas. The rationale of Project Pericles was laid out by the President of Amherst, writing in *Daedalus* at the time. He made precisely some of the above points on integrating real involvement in the community with civic information and frameworks of purpose. The sample syllabi that the Project Pericles website features all point in this direction: yes, we do need to have students "roll up their sleeves" in working with community members. But this continues to require integration with actual knowledge gained in the classroom. Baylor, despite its emphasis on the need to constantly connect service learning back to the classroom, is not officially listed as part of Project Pericles.

[36] But it is Debating for Democracy on which we build. Interestingly, Debating for Democracy is a part of Project Pericles. As emphasized, the approach subscribed to by this consortium of schools values the importance of ideas, even as there is full acknowledgment that the significance of outside-the-classroom service cannot be discounted (Project Pericles n.d.).

[37] Swarthmore has other programs: The Newman Civic Fellowship launches students into a year activism and advocacy on behalf of communities that have not been empowered, based on a history of underrepresentation. It is open-ended, requiring only a reflection of some kind from the students at the end of the year, and emphasizing sustainably moving an institution or set of relationships in the direction of greater fairness and justice. The Lang Social Impact Fellowship builds on some of these same themes, rewarding post-graduate work on the part of students who want to make an overall impact on systems by shifting their parameters in the direction of greater justice and fairness.

[38] At Wake Forest, which also at first glance appears to prioritize involvement and grassroots activism, initiatives are generally divided into six broad categories. These are: social justice, service and leadership, civic engagement, focusing on equal outcomes in education, aiding with nutrition, and working towards providing those socio-economically disadvantaged with an economic boost. The social justice focus, the first category, features programs including Freedom School at Wake Forest University and Project Launch. Project Launch especially stands out for the way in which it allows for mentoring of 7th graders. When it comes to nutrition, to take another one of the categories, students at Wake Forest can target food insecurity at Campus Kitchen and increase the health and movement of participants in improvement. Finally, related to economic boosting, Dash Corps explores actual community development through partnerships with civic organizations and non-profits; and Religion and Public Engagement is an actual major that integrates these concerns into the curriculum.

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