

Kenneth L. Grasso

Liberalism, Civil Society, and the Promise of Compassionate Conservatism

Over the past few years “civil society” has become a subject of intense interest. However, the fact remains that civil society is more commonly invoked than it is carefully defined. Often the term is used in a broad sense to refer to the whole range of groups and institutions that stand between the individual and the state. Sometimes, however, “civil society” is employed in a narrower sense to designate intermediary institutions of a particular type, what Mary Ann Glendon describes as “communities of memory and mutual aid” or Jean Bethke Elshtain terms “non-utilitarian” forms of community. Understood in this more restricted sense, civil society consists of the matrix of groups and institutions that are small, possess a highly personal character, and operate according to a very different logic than that which informs the world of the market—groups whose ties are solidaristic rather than instrumental or contractarian. Such groups include the family and the neighborhood, as well as religious, cultural, social, and fraternal associations.

It is in this latter sense that I will use the term here, for the simple reason that it was fears about the disintegration of these sorts

of institutions that triggered today’s interest in civil society. There is growing agreement that the decline of such institutions has played a key role in precipitating many of the social pathologies and political dysfunctions that afflict us today. Indeed, the decline of civil society now threatens the vitality of our democratic institutions and raises the specter of a new “type of oppression” so powerfully portrayed by Alexis de Tocqueville in the closing chapters of *Democracy in America*.

My argument is essentially twofold. To begin with, I will contend that one of the primary causes of civil society’s decline is a particular vision of man and society that has established itself at the heart of our political culture. Secondly, while recognizing that a problem of this complexity admits of no simple solution, I will argue that a precondition for the revitalization of civil society is nothing less than the growth of a new public philosophy animated by a very different understanding of man’s nature, a

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public philosophy embodying an authentically pluralist vision of social life. Only against this backdrop, I will conclude, does it become possible to appreciate the true promise of “compassionate conservatism.”

Over the past several decades American culture has been transformed by an intellectual system that may be called Enlightenment or philosophical liberalism. By Enlightenment liberalism, I do not mean liberalism as opposed to conservatism as these terms are used in our popular political discourse. Nor do I mean the broad political tradition supportive of the idea of constitutional government, limited in scope, subject to the rule of law, and responsible to the governed. Rather, by Enlightenment liberalism I mean a model of man and society that originated in the seventeenth century and which has come to dominate both modern political theory and contemporary American public argument.

To appreciate why Enlightenment liberalism has played so important a role in the erosion of civil society, it is necessary to understand its nature, to grasp the core commitments that make it a distinctive intellectual tradition. Perhaps liberalism’s most striking feature is its individualism. It insists, as R. Bruce Douglas and Gerald Mara have observed, that “politics is justifiable only by appeal to the well-being, rights or claims of individuals.” But this individualism must be seen within the context of liberalism’s further nominalistic and rationalistic metaphysical commitments; liberalism in the end is, as Roberto Unger

has shown, not so much a theory of politics as “a metaphysical system.” And liberal metaphysics necessarily entails “the rejection of teleology,” the rejection of “the claim that there is a discoverable excellence or optimal condition...which characterizes human beings” as such—here, quoting Douglass and Mara again.

This vision of man has far-reaching implications for liberalism’s understanding of social and political life. To begin with, it causes liberalism to move inexorably in the direction of a progressively deeper, a progressively more radical, individualism. Liberalism, as Michael Walzer notes, is “a self-subverting doctrine” which “seems continually to undercut itself...and to produce in each generation renewed hopes for a more absolute freedom from history and society alike. Much of liberal political theory, from Locke to Rawls, is an effort

to fix and stabilize the doctrine in order to end the endlessness of liberal liberation.” Indeed, the history of liberal thought is largely the story of the triumph of the will—the triumph of the subjective will of the individual over those elements in the political theories of earlier generations of liberal thinkers that had acted to restrain it. What results is a “sovereign self” unencumbered by any ends not of its own choosing and thus unable “to entertain the notion of relations as natural.” For liberalism, as Francis Canavan writes, “relations are external, accidental and adventitious, not the consequences of the natures of things.” All relations are essentially external, voluntary, and contractual. In other words, as Carl Schneider argues, all relations are mar-



Jean Bethke Elshtain

ket relations and human communities are only collections of “individuals united temporarily for their mutual convenience and armed with rights against each other.”

Because communities are nothing more than, in Unger’s words, the “products of the will and interests of individuals,” they lack any determinate nature or natural structure. As the purely conventional product of the arbitrary preferences of individuals, such institutions are simply what individuals choose to make of them. Inasmuch, moreover, as “the interests of their members are unstable, groups themselves are precarious associations constantly destroyed and reborn in new forms.” From this perspective, for example, one must speak of “families” rather than “the family” because the institution of the family has no determinate structure as such; it is simply a creation of naturally free individuals who are at liberty to create whatever form of “family” they desire. In liberal theory, no one particular set of relations can be designated “the family” for the simple reason that the family, as such, has no *nature*.

As far as the scope of the state is concerned, liberal theory moves in two basic directions. The first is toward what is called “classical liberalism” or “libertarianism.” The proponents of this approach seek to radically circumscribe the role of the state in the overall economy of human social life. The second is toward what is generally termed “reform” or “egalitarian” liberalism. In sharp contrast to classical liberalism, the proponents of reform liberalism embrace a large interventionist state charged with the establishment of a more egalitarian social order. Whereas the proponents of the former liberalism embrace what is sometimes called the nightwatchmen state, the proponents of the latter liberalism embrace the welfare state.

But this disagreement about the proper scope of the state must not obscure the

underlying agreement between these two schools. As forms of liberalism, they both embrace the core commitments that mark liberalism as a distinctive intellectual tradition. At the political level, for example, both classical and egalitarian liberalism tend toward the view that the political community exists simply to provide a framework of order within which individuals can pursue their self-chosen ends. Both are also driven toward a similar view of the nature of social life. As a result of the radically voluntarist conception of social relations in which its metaphysics of the person issues, liberalism tends toward a vision of social life revolving around three poles: the sovereign individual, the sovereign state (understood as the guardian of the autonomy of the individual and the provider of the framework of order within which individuals can pursue their self-chosen activity), and the market (understood as a realm of free individual action in accordance with a utilitarian calculus of self-interest and the institutional embodiment of the sovereignty of the individual). As Glendon notes, liberalism forces us to work out our “vision of the kind of people we are and the kind of society we want to become” exclusively in terms of “the individual, the state, and the market.”

The implications of this model of man and social life for our understanding of civil society are immense. Liberalism’s nominalist metaphysics of the person renders it incapable of *doing justice* to the communities that compose civil society, incapable of fully appreciating their natures. In fact, liberalism’s metaphysical prior commitments compel it to understand such groups as no more than collections of individuals temporarily united for reasons of mutual convenience. Liberal presuppositions thus distort what Stanley Hauerwas calls “the moral reality” of the family and other communities of memory and mutual aid that lie

at the heart of civil society. By forcing us to conceptualize these institutions through the prism of market models, the liberal vision of man and society, as Elshtain remarks, “erodes solidarity at its roots.”

A culture informed by the liberal vision of man and society, therefore, will be profoundly inhospitable to the groups that constitute civil society. To begin with, as Elshtain observes, liberalism’s “absolutizing of choice and its celebration of radical autonomy cast suspicion on ties of reciprocal obligation or mutual interdependence and help to erode the traditional bases of personal identity and authority in families and civil society alike.” In fact, liberalism’s elevation of individual choice to the status of the highest human good will cause a liberal society to view these institutions with considerable suspicion as potential obstacles to the autonomy of the individual.

A state informed by the liberal vision of man and society will be no more supportive of the institutions of civil society than a culture animated by that vision. Glendon notes that the “individual-state-market grid” through which liberalism views social life acts to stifle “a well-developed discourse” about the institutions that compose civil society. As a result, “various networks of relationships, beginning with emotionally and economically interdependent households, and fanning outwards” are fundamentally misconceived. Liberalism precludes efforts on the part of the state to nurture and safeguard such networks, or to foster conditions conducive to their flourishing.

In the case of classical liberalism, the nightwatchman state simply leaves the institutions of civil society to fend for itself on the market. Market forces, in turn, take a profound toll on these institutions. “The market,” as Christopher Lasch writes,

notoriously tends to universalize itself. It does not easily coexist with institutions that operate

according to principles antithetical to itself: schools and universities, newspapers and magazines, charities, families. Sooner or later the market tends to absorb them all. It puts an almost irresistible pressure on every activity to justify itself in the only terms it recognizes: to become a business proposition, to pay its own way, to show black ink on the bottom line. It turns news into entertainment, scholarship into professional careerism, social work into the scientific management of poverty. Inexorably it remodels every institution in its own image.

The relentless pressures generated by the market act to reinforce the atomizing effects of liberal culture. Over time, unchecked market forces tend to erode the social ecology essential to the well-being of the institutions of civil society. At the same time, market forces tend to remake civil society in accordance with its own ethos. Thus, over time, a *market economy* will tend to create a *market society*, a society in which all social relations are ordered in light of market models. The result is a far-reaching weakening of the institutions of civil society.

The transition from the nightwatchman state of classical liberalism to the welfare state of modern reform liberalism is, in essence, the transition from a regime of libertarian individualism to one of statist individualism. Reform liberalism’s welfare state, in turn, imposes its own costs on the institutions of civil society. The liberal welfare state undermines these institutions in two ways. On the one hand, the internal dynamic of the liberal model of man and society drives it to attempt to remake these institutions in accordance with liberal values. “Liberalism’s highest commitment,” as Bruce Frohnen has remarked, “is not limited government per se; it is liberty,” or, more precisely, the maximization of individual autonomy.

Thus, as Philip Abbott notes, liberalism insists that “groups that threaten to close off full and complete individuality”—which threaten the autonomy of the individual

understood as a sovereign will—“must be regulated or banned.” The liberal welfare state therefore aggressively intervenes in the lives of the institutions of civil society so as to remake them in accordance with its own individualistic and egalitarian ethos, in accordance with its own elevation of choice to the status of *the* human good. The liberal welfare state thus weakens these institutions both by depriving them of their autonomy and refashioning them in accordance with its wholly voluntarist conception of social relations. As Hauerwas points out, the liberal state’s exaltation of individual autonomy turns out to be “no less destructive for intermediary institutions than the monistic state of Marxism.”

On the other hand, these institutions are weakened by the omniscient nanny state’s absorption of the responsibilities they had traditionally discharged. Even as they celebrate the liberation of individuals from the social ties that historically bound them, the proponents of liberalism cannot but notice the social costs involved. The progressive disabling of these institutions under the impact of the market and liberal culture leaves them incapable of discharging their traditional functions, and by doing so unleashes a whole array of social pathologies.

It thus becomes painfully obvious that society cannot be organized in a satisfactory fashion by the market alone. At the same time, inasmuch as its thinking is imprisoned in the horizon of the individual-state-market grid, liberalism is forced to turn to the state as the only possible counterweight to the very forces that it has itself unleashed. The state thus ends up being empowered both to restrain the market and to undertake the functions that had traditionally been performed by intermediary groups. By undertaking the functions that had traditionally belonged to these institutions, however, the liberal state only

succeeds in weakening them further, thus forcing the state to assume further responsibilities. Indeed, as Robert Nisbet points out, “far from proving a check upon the growth of the omniscient State,” the economic posture of the nightwatchman state “actually accelerated” its “growth.” If with classical liberalism, these groups are left unprotected against the corrosive acids of market forces, with reform liberalism, they face suffocation at the hands of the nanny state. Under the liberal dispensation, the institutions of civil society are, in Glendon’s words, “caught in a pincer between individual rights on the one hand, and reasons of state on the other.” Civil society becomes trapped between the sovereign individual and sovereign state.

Given the impoverished character of liberalism’s theory of community, the reinvigoration of civil society presupposes nothing less than the articulation of a new public philosophy rooted in a richer vision of man and society. The new public philosophy we need would steadfastly reject the nominalism that animates liberalism in favor of metaphysical and moral realism. Starting from the idea of a knowable human nature with natural needs and inclinations, such a new public philosophy would affirm the existence of an order of human and social ends that obligates us prior to, and independently of, our free consent. Simultaneously, it would insist that man in his innermost nature is a social being from whose dynamic orientation toward the realization of his own nature flows a whole array of social relations.

Such a public philosophy would thus embody an authentically pluralist vision of society. It would begin with what we actually see in the world, which as J.N. Figgis notes, “is not on the one hand the State, and on the other, a mass of unrelated individuals; but a vast complex of gathered unions,”

of communities of person, such as “families, clubs, trade unions, colleges, professions, and so forth.” It would recognize, in Nisbet’s words, that

man does not live merely as one of a vast aggregate of arithmetically equal, socially undifferentiated, individuals. He does not live his life merely in terms of the procedures and techniques of the administrative State.... As a concrete *person* he is inseparable from the plurality of social allegiances and memberships which characterize his social organization.

While affirming man’s character as an inherently relational being, therefore, an authentically pluralist vision of society would insist that man’s social nature is not exhausted by state, but instead gives rise to what Heinrich Rommen described as “a plurality of social forms and...co-operative spheres that...serve independent ends in the order of the common good.” The state does not create these social forms.

They either grow directly out of the “social nature of man, or they are produced by the initiative of free persons for the more perfect realization of their ends and purposes.” These social institutions are not merely administrative limits exercising functions delegated to them by the state, but “original entities and original social organizations” in their own right, issuing from human nature’s dynamic orientation towards its own perfection.

Thus, according to Rommen, it is “in” and “through” not merely the state but the “family, home, neighborhood, town, homeland,” as well as a wide array of “vocational, profession, educational and religious institutions” that “man lives for his final transcendent destiny.” And, however adapt-

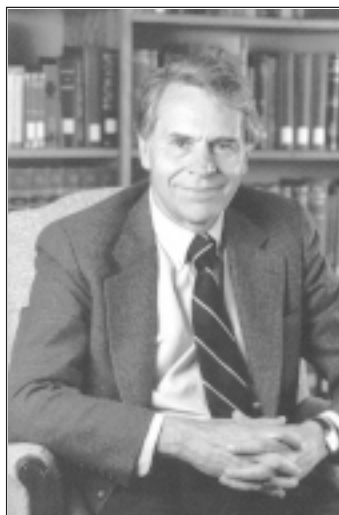
able their specific forms may be in “different stages of historical development and national culture,” the fact remains that “with regard to their specific ends,” these social forms are “irreplaceable.”

They are irreplaceable, to begin with, because they are uniquely equipped to discharge functions essential to human flourishing. Likewise, they are irreplaceable by virtue of their status as the principal sites wherein human beings fulfill their vocations as persons.

The matrix of social groups which compose civil society constitutes the location where we enter into and live out what another social philosopher, Pope John Paul II, describes as those relationships of “solidarity and communion” with others for which God created us and through which “one truly finds oneself.”

An authentically pluralist ontology of social life thus differs dramatically from that which emerges under the auspices of En-

lightenment liberalism. As Nisbet points out, inasmuch as from the pluralist perspective the state is “but *one* of the associations” to which man’s nature as a social being gives rise, it must share the stage of social life with a wide array of other institutions and groups with their own distinctive functions and responsibilities. Society, as Johannes Messner writes, must be understood not as a collection of individuals but as “a community of communities,” as “a unity composed of member communities relatively independent, or autonomous, since they have their own social ends, their own common good, and consequently their own functions.” A pluralist vision of society thus enables us to escape the individual-



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Christopher Lasch

state-market grid in which liberalism has imprisoned our social imagination.

The recognition that society is a community of communities, in turn, has profound implications for our understanding of the nature of the state and its role in the overall economy of social life. For in a truly pluralist understanding of man's nature, justice demands that the state recognize and respect the natural structures of the groups and institutions that compose civil society. If the state supplies intermediary institutions with their "legal hulk," as Rommen observes, the fact remains that these groups, the ends they serve, and the rights and duties which flow from these ends issue from human nature itself, and not from positive law or contract among naturally autonomous individuals. The natures of these institutions thus "control the legal forms, not vice versa." Although "the state may provide the family with its family law" for example, "the essence and the ends of the family form the critical norm for legal forms." Respecting the natural structures of these institutions, furthermore, means respecting their right to a large measure of autonomy and self-governance.

Pluralism's ontology of social life thus results in a commitment to what Canavan describes as the "self-organization of society." What this means is that in a rightly ordered society, the "energies of society" flow "from below upwards, not from the top down" as persons freely organize themselves to pursue a variety of common goals in a multiplicity of interconnected social groups. Pluralism thus is committed to the method of freedom; it issues in "a steady bias toward decentralization, freedom and initiative."

Finally, pluralism entails a commitment to genuinely limited government. Inasmuch as the pluralist vision insists that a rightly ordered society is, in Canavan's words, "organized in different ways for different

purposes," it affirms that the responsibility for the common good does not rest with the state alone, but is shared by the whole range of social institutions that issue from human nature. Pluralism affirms, this is to say, that only certain limited aspects of the common good have been entrusted to the care of the state. The remainder have been entrusted to the care of other institutions, institutions which are "original entities and original social organizations" in their own right, not mere creatures of the state. The state is limited by the limited character of its functions relative to the overall economy of human social life, and by the responsibilities and distinctive functions of those other institutions with which it shares the stage of social life.

These institutions have a right not only to exist, but also to discharge their distinctive functions, to pursue their proper ends, to make their distinctive contributions to human flourishing. They also enjoy a right to a large measure of internal autonomy and self-governance. It follows that for the state to absorb these groups, to usurp their functions, or to impinge upon rightful autonomy would be a grave injustice. The state does not exist to supplant these groups or absorb their functions, but to assist them in the realization of their distinctive ends, in the pursuit of their particular common goods through the creation of what Rommen terms "an order of tranquillity, justice and peace." Or, as Jonathan Chaplin puts it, the state exists to create a framework of order that will "enable these...groups to be themselves."

A state inspired by an authentically pluralist conception of social life thus would differ fundamentally from one informed by the liberal model of man and society. For example, a pluralist state's deference to other social institutions, its respect for their legitimate independence and autonomy, would not be rooted in any sort of agnosti-

cism about the human good or in a desire to avoid judgments of moral value. Rather, as J. Budziszewski has observed, it would be rooted in its judgment that the “jobs” of these institutions “are not its own.” This judgment, in turn, would be the product of its own “particular moral and religious understandings,” its own conception of the nature of man, the human good, and the structure of social relations required for human flourishing. The pluralist state would be limited, but this limitation would result from a judgment concerning the truth about man, not from philosophical skepticism.

The pluralist state would not confine itself to suppressing violence in the manner of the nightwatchman state of classical liberalism. But neither would it attempt to absorb the functions of these or to refashion them in accordance with its own vision of man and society in the manner of the omniscient, nanny state of egalitarian liberalism. Rather, the pluralist state would seek to simultaneously safeguard and assist the intermediary groups in which man’s social nature finds expression.

On the one hand, while embracing the desirability, indeed, the moral necessity, of economic freedom, a state rooted in the pluralist vision would refuse simply to entrust the well-being of these institutions to the impersonal workings of the market. On the contrary, it would recognize the limits of the market, in particular its atomizing effects and propensity to erode the social ecology necessary to the flourishing of civil society. Rather than leaving these groups to fend for themselves in the face of market forces, the pluralist state would actively seek, in Nisbet’s words, “to create conditions within which [the institutions of civil society] can prosper.” Through the framework of law and public policy it establishes, the pluralist state would strive to foster a social environment in which the institutions of civil society have convenient access

to the resources they need and in which the social ecology on which their flourishing depends is secure.

On the other hand, in sharp contrast with the liberal welfare state, the pluralist state would respect the nature of these groups and their legitimate autonomy—in particular, their right to discharge the functions proper to them. Thus, a state animated by the pluralist vision of man and society, as Nisbet observes, would steadfastly reject “the political absorption of the institutional functions” of these groups. While not spurning “the demands of human security,” a pluralist state would “seek means by which such demands can be met” through intermediary groups “rather than through [the] bureaucratic rigidities of formal law and administration.” And, as far as its own functions are concerned, such a state would seek “to diversify and decentralize its...administrative operations and to relate these as closely as possible to the forms of spontaneous association which are the outgrowth of human needs and desires and which have relevance to the economic, educational and religious ends of a culture.”

By carving out a space between the state and the market within which the institutions and groups of civil society can prosper, such a state would be laying the groundwork for the revitalization of civil society. And, by doing so, it would be securing the social ecology required for human flourishing.

The disastrous consequences of civil society’s disintegration received classic expression in Tocqueville’s forebodings. The decay of civil society, he feared, would create a world of atomized individuals indifferent to the fate of each other or to society as a whole and immersed in “the frenzied pursuit of the petty and banal pleasures” around which their lives revolve. Far from

setting individuals free, civil society's disintegration leaves them isolated, vulnerable, and impotent, thereby creating a social and psychological vacuum into which the state necessarily moves. As the state expands, Tocqueville feared, it will gradually cover "the whole of social life with a network of petty and complicated rules that are both minute and regular, through which even men of the greatest originality and the most vigorous temperament cannot force their heads above the crowd." The end result is the soft and gentle despotism of the top-heavy bureaucratic state which, by robbing citizens of "the proper use of their faculties," gradually "hinders, restrains, enervates, stifles and stultifies" citizens until they are reduced to "no more than a flock of timid and hardworking animals with the government as [their] shepherd."

Today these forebodings seem remarkably prescient. The decay of civil society has led to the very disorders Tocqueville predicted: the transformation of society into an anonymous and impersonal mass of isolated, estranged, and alienated individuals; a dramatic decline in public-spiritedness, the loss of what Daniel Bell terms *civitas*, the "spontaneous willingness to obey the law, to respect the rights of others, to forgo enrichment at the expense of the public weal"; the ensnarement of individuals in the "web" of what John Paul II describes as the "false and superficial gratifications" of a consumerist culture; the emergence of a mass society under the impact of the pressures toward homogeneity generated by the social and cultural environment; a dramatic increase in social pathologies resulting from the inability of other institutions to perform effectively, if at all, the functions hitherto discharged by the groups and institutions of civil society; the transformation of an ever-increasing number of social institutions and relations into, as Nisbet puts it, "the handmaiden of

legislature, law office, regulatory agency and the courtroom"; and the emergence of the phenomenon William Ernest Hocking terms the impotence of the state, namely, the gradual loss by the state of its capacity to function effectively as a result of the erosion of the cultural and social conditions on which its vitality depends and its overburdening with new responsibilities.

At its deepest level, civil society's disintegration issues in what John Paul II terms the suffocation of individuals "between the two poles represented by the State and the marketplace," in the creation of a social universe in which individuals seem to exist "only" as objects of "state administration" or producers and consumers of material "goods." It thus issues in a social environment in which individuals are prevented from experiencing "their personhood in an authentic and concrete way."

Seen against this backdrop, it becomes clear that mere celebrations of the value of freedom and self-reliance, and arguments regarding deleterious consequences of particular state interventions, will not suffice to check the growth of the state. It is no accident that the nightwatchman state of classical liberalism was succeeded by the welfare state of modern egalitarian individualism. As Tocqueville suggests and subsequent events have confirmed, individualism and statism are mutually reinforcing.

To halt the growth of the omniscient state—and to address the broader array of social disorders, and the deeper process of social decline of which it is a part—it will be necessary to repair the fabric of civil society. This, in turn, presupposes our escape from the constricted intellectual horizon in which Enlightenment liberalism has imprisoned our thinking. Both by installing an impoverished vision of social life at the heart of our political culture, and restricting our basic policy options to a choice

between a libertarian and a statist individualism, the liberal model of man and society has been one of the major causes of the contemporary decline of civil society.

The revitalization of civil society will require the rejection of the corrosive individualism that informs both classical and egalitarian liberalism, and the truncated ontology of social life to which it leads, in favor of a richer vision of man and society. It will require the rejection of the false alternatives of libertarianism and statism in favor of a better understanding of the state's role in the overall economy of social life and of its proper relation to the vast array of other social institutions which issue from man's nature as a social being.

It thus requires the articulation of the type of authentically pluralist public philosophy sketched in broad outline here—a public philosophy that would enable our political thinking to escape the individual-state-market grid in which liberalism has imprisoned it. By helping to foster both a cultural environment more conducive to the flourishing of these groups and public policies designed to safeguard and nurture them, such a public philosophy would lay essential groundwork for the revitalization of the institutions and groups of civil society. Against this backdrop, it becomes possible to appreciate the promise of compassionate conservatism.

For at the heart of compassionate conservatism is an appreciation for the indispensable contribution of the institutions of civil society to human flourishing and of the ways in which the well-being of society as a whole depends upon their ongoing vitality. This appreciation has been accompanied by the recognition that the roots of

many of our contemporary problems are found in the unraveling of the fabric of civil society over the course of the past several decades. Seeking to forge an alternative to both the nightwatchman state of classical liberalism and the welfare state of egalitarian liberalism, compassionate conservatism has sought to articulate an understanding of the state's role which neither ignores or absorbs the institutions of civil society, but instead looks with favor on them, respects their structure and rightful autonomy, and assists them in the fulfillment of their responsibilities. The promise of compassionate conservatism, in short, consists in its capacity to move our thinking beyond the narrow world of the individual-state-market grid, to project on to the American public scene the insights and concerns of the pluralist tradition. By doing so, it can help lay the groundwork for the type of authentically pluralist public philosophy we so badly need.

It is true, of course, that the mere articulation of such a pluralist vision of society is no guarantee that this vision will be embraced by the American people. Our yearning for the community we have lost to the contrary notwithstanding, Americans may well be too enamored of the radically individualistic model of man and society that permeates our culture today to reject it in favor of the very different vision of man and society outlined here and the very different type of social order toward which it points. By making available to us an alternative to the intellectual universe of the individual-state-market grid, however, the articulation of such a philosophy would at least place our fate in our own hands.