INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.
American conservatives and the search for a postmodern prudence

Bracci, Sharon Lynne, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1994
AMERICAN CONSERVATIVES AND
THE SEARCH FOR A POSTMODERN PRUDENCE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Sharon Lynne Bracci, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1994

Dissertation Committee:
Josina M. Makau
Mary M. Garrett
Richard Shiels

Approved by

Adviser

Department of Communication
To my parents and children
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express my deep gratitude to Dr. Josina M. Makau for her guiding counsel and enthusiastic support throughout this research. My sincere appreciation and thanks are also extended to the other members of my advisory committee, Drs. Mary M. Garrett and Richard Shiels for their kind support and thoughtful suggestions. To my children, Creighton and Katherine, I express my thanks for their willingness to assume additional burdens over the course of this research.
VITA

July 15, 1943. ................................................. Born - Detroit, Michigan

1968 ................................................................. B.A., Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan

1968-1977 ......................................................... Commercial Loan Officer, National Bank of Detroit, Detroit, Michigan

1988 ................................................................. M.A., Rhetoric, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1992-Present ..................................................... Lecturer, PhD Candidate, Department of Communication, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

PUBLICATIONS


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Communication

Other: Rhetorical theory and criticism
          Public moral argumentation
          Italian language study, Ohio State University
          Italian language program, Rome, Italy center of Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois,
          Summer, 1990
# Table of Contents

## Acknowledgments

iii

## Vita

iv

## Chapter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology.</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. FOUNDATIONS OF PRUDENCE.</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aristotelian Phronesis.</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciceronian Prudentia.</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting the contemporary stage for conservative deliberations.</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. PRUDENCE AND HUMAN NATURE.</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative response to the post WWII context.</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human nature.</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human plasticity.</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innate sociability and cultivated civility.</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human capacity for good and evil.</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian insights into human nature.</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE PRUDENTIAL LESSONS OF HISTORY.</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical wisdom.</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affinities between the historical method and the prudential method.</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The normative meaning of history.</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The idea of progress.</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History as common moral sense.</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical ironies in good intentions and unintended consequences.</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational documents - pragmatism and ideals.</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical models of heroism</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Institutional wisdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religious institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The family as seat of practical intelligence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conservative commonplaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>COMMON MORAL VOCABULARY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Stuart Mill and the language of classical liberalism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rehearsing historic ambivalences toward the power of <em>logos</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shame, guilt, and coercion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceptions of imprudent value-neutral and therapeutic language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberal tolerance as vice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imprudent compassion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding a language of hope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The virtue of patriotism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The virtues of particular loyalties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The virtue of compromise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic virtues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Models of virtuous power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic capitalism as embodiment of practical intelligence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The vices of late capitalism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>THE CONTOURS OF CONSERVATIVE DELIBERATIONS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonrational aspects of conservative deliberations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Truth needs a champion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family wisdom as a model for public deliberations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic deliberations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historical lessons in elitism and populism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conservative ideals and the pragmatic needs of public discourse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prudential deliberations as deferential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prudential deference to the cultural canon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choosing wisely to compromise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prudence as cooption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prudence as caution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deliberating cautiously over tragic choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deliberating over the idea of progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toward a conservative rhetoric of assent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>CONCLUSIONS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overview of findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intellect and inner dispositions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complicating the historical consciousness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rational model of civic discourse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Processual dynamics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expertise and prudence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In his 1993 SCA Presidential Address to review the state of the field, David Zarefsky articulated twin challenges for communication studies and the public sphere. In his consideration of the interrelationships between public communication and public space, he speculated about the value of the public forum as a standard or norm, a place where citizens could come together to deliberate, enabling them "to search together for phronesis, practical wisdom." Zarefsky was concerned to reaffirm the ideal of the forum as being of crucial interest to communication scholars because of their regard for public communication as the "social glue that holds a public and its common goals together." Without this public articulation, the forum and eventually the public itself dissipates. He concluded by noting that it was not enough for scholars to keep the cultural conversation going; it was equally important that we empower others to join in, secure in their knowledge of deliberative reasoning skills. The study of communication was thereby justified as being vital to democratic processes, of central importance for its capacity to enable others "to perform more effectively as citizens, so that the community might achieve phronesis--practical wisdom in human affairs." Zarefsky's address rested on the belief that, despite radically altered contexts from the Greek or Roman forum to our own more postmodern space, the ancient art of deliberating well, that is, prudential reasoning, was the practical wisdom we could and should seek for our collective selves.
Others who have speculated on the relationship between prudence and civic life have left the possibility of appropriating classical understandings of it to current contexts an open question. In a recent text entitled, *Machiavelli and the History of Prudence*, for example, Eugene Garver justified his translation of *phronesis* as "prudence" over a more modern rendering as "practical wisdom" on the ground that he wanted to preserve the connotation of a moral virtue that classical writers attached to the word. Modern usage, Garver noted, in translating *phronesis* as "practical wisdom" or "practical reasoning," has emptied the term of its moral component and isolated its intellectual dimension. In modern terms, he pointed out, skillful practical reasoning is perceived primarily as an intellectual virtue, a pragmatic skill for deliberation which is detached from the deliberator's character. Garver's rendering of *phronesis* as prudence stipulates more than a translator's semantic predilection or fancy; it is meant to underscore the historical movement between the two meanings that prevents a stable understanding of it on either basis.²

Jerrold Seigel has noted a similar long standing ambivalence built into understandings of virtue as a generic term. Historically, he noted, western culture has attributed both moral and nonmoral senses to the idea of virtue. On the one hand, we have identified certain ethical standards and predispositions as making up one's moral character, thereby regarding virtuousness in some overweening ethical sense as it relates to right living. On the other, we have defined certain abilities and potentials as virtues because they will lead to efficacious action in particular circumstances, especially in the public sphere. Virtue, then, is both a standard for an ethical life and a potency which enables us to act in situations of perceived urgency. Prudence, as a specific instantiation of virtuousness, exhibits similar ambivalences. Just as virtue encompasses both a standard for ethical human conduct and the power to act when action is called for, prudence also connotes both a moral disposition to choose rightly and a capacity to deliberate well in particular cases. In short, conceptions of virtue in general and prudence in particular oscillate between a moral
will and an intellectual power to choose appropriately and to act in particular ways, according to circumstances.³

The question of what it means to deliberate well over public goods organizes the central focus of this study. It addresses the question through an examination of the discourse of selected American conservatives and looks to classical modes of prudential or practical reasoning to evaluate it. Practical reasoning, as the deliberative process traditionally associated with the contingent realm of public affairs, provides a potentially fruitful framework for examining public discourse because it supplies the means to speculate about prudence, the discourse itself, and the interaction between prudence and the discourse in public talk today. More particularly, the study looks to the writings of representative American conservatives in an effort to contribute to our understanding of the rhetorical and ethical dimensions of contemporary practical reasoning.⁴ Conservatives often explicitly and self-consciously express an interest in reviving traditional conceptions of prudential reasoning and their efforts provide an opportunity to examine public deliberations on a range of essentially contested, value laden issues. How conservatives, as willing heirs to prudential reasoning, revive the tradition in their attempt to appropriate it for res publica, offers the potential for valuable insights into the nature of contemporary practical reasoning and its close allies, rhetoric and practical ethics. In this study, I show that conservative efforts to rehabilitate prudence are neither straightforward nor simple. Conservatives, deliberating within a context of lost faith in a suspect rationality, philosophical scepticism, and the plural nature of citizen-deliberators, have revived a prudence that is changed by its circumstances. These changes complicate the prudential relations between character and experience, destabilize the wisdom of collective and personal narratives, and point to some slippage in the deductive force of practical reasoning derived from probable first premises. Changes that force a rhetorical renegotiation in each of these elements suggest that prudence, as intensely sensitive to its context, leads
conservative deliberators to a process that is more like the process described by others of widely divergent intellectual and political standpoints than it is to strict Aristotelian and Ciceronian formulations.

The framework for understanding contemporary prudence and a contemporary interest in its perceived applicability to public moral discourse begins with its Aristotelian roots and Ciceronian emendations. Taken together, this classical model lays out a form of reasoning that has been of interest to rhetoricians and moral philosophers since Aristotle contrasted prudential wisdom to *episteme* in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Since that time, *phronesis* frequently has been associated more with rhetorical processes of communication and informal logical reasoning than contemplative philosophical speculation, formal logic, or the hypothetico-deductive forms of scientific reasoning. It has emerged historically as a viable alternative to philosophical or scientific reasoning and speculation, a practical mode for deliberating over contingent matters with a view toward judgment and action, especially in public life. As such, it frequently has been associated with politics, the "master craft" of pursuing a community's well-being, as Aristotle viewed it, the process of deliberating well over the conduct of the public business. Moreover, since politics is concerned with deliberating over norms for human conduct in laws to regulate and restrict that conduct, prudential politics is thought inevitably to deliberate over inexact goods such as justice and loyalty, on which citizens hold differing opinions. Today, since we still have need to judge, to choose, and to act in the face of a multiplicity of opinions held on public goods, students of public discourse continue to be concerned with how we go about deliberating well in particular circumstances over matters which are capable of being otherwise. Context is a key qualifier in understanding the analogous ambivalences in generic and specific virtues and the intimate connection between virtue and prudential reasoning in the classical tradition. Within an Aristotelian framework, virtues are conceived as good habits, a kind of conditioning that enables us to choose the mean of our natural dispositions and
consistently avoid the excesses that constitute vice. Within this frame, however, it is prudence that enables us to discern the mean, a necessary process because the mean shifts, according to circumstances. There would be no need of prudent choices, within this scheme, if the mean were stable or easily recognized across circumstances. Finally, although prudence enables us to locate the virtuous mean across changed contexts, it is not itself a virtue of moderation. We do not characterize the extremely prudent person as "imprudent" in the same way that we might characterize the extremely loyal citizen as chauvinistic or xenophobic.

If we recall a recent cultural circumstance or two which encouraged a view that an excessive display of a particular virtue had made it into a vice, we can grasp the Aristotelian intimacy between virtue and prudence easily enough. In recent periods of extreme economic sluggishness, for example, one might reason, as John Maynard Keynes did, that there is no virtue, (as either a moral or intellectual force) in habitual delayed gratification, that is, putting aside for the future. In situations of economic urgency, Keynes argued, the prudent choice that serves the public good is to spend as if there were no tomorrow.

Similarly, in certain periods of extreme political upheaval or anxiety, such as government scandal or war, national loyalties in tension with personal loyalties place competing displays of patriotism and friendship as appropriate virtuous acts under severe pressure. During the Watergate investigations, for example, personal loyalties to the commander-in-chief came to be seen by many as an extreme display, that is, a vice. Earlier, during the cold war McCarthy hearings, the perception emerged among some that personal loyalty to friends and colleagues was the virtuous public display that ultimately undid a vicious patriotism. As Seigel pointed out, "attitudes toward virtue have continued to be shaped by changing circumstances, and especially by the pressures on conduct and action which derive from the political situation in the widest sense." Thus, during Watergate, personal loyalty was seen as a vicious excess of friendship whereas in an
earlier, different context, it was perceived as a virtue. The prudent patriot had to deliberate how much loyalty counted as a virtuous mean in both cases and be willing to act publicly on it. Prudential reasoning, in both of these cases, began by granting presumptive weight to the public virtue of loyalty to the republic, especially in times of crisis. But skill in locating this *prima facie* good was inadequate to decide what constituted xenophobia or treason in either case, precisely because situational exigencies had shifted the mean.

Returning to Garver's observations on prudence, and keeping in mind the historical instability and ambivalence over the meaning of virtue, we might ask how conservative perceptions of prudence explain its function in the public sphere, in contexts similar to those just briefly sketched. In doing so, we can also make inquiries into the usefulness and limitations of classical understandings in contemporary public discourse.

II

This study, since it focuses on reasoning patterns generally associated with informal argumentation processes, participates in a larger cultural conversation about the quality of public deliberations and patterns of reasoning that might make positive contributions to them. In doing so, it joins an interdisciplinary dialogue among scholars who express a growing concern that the heritage of Cartesian thinking in intellectual life has left us with an impoverished legacy for addressing matters of contingency, matters which are nevertheless in urgent need of our collective attention. In rebelling against this legacy, many scholars have turned to more informal forms of argumentation to confront political and ethical issues. Prudential reasoning represents the historical way that many moral philosophers and rhetoricians, among others, have understood thinking about contingent matters. Given the continuing need to confront vexed issues, it is not unexpected that there is growing interest in recovering an understanding of the process traditionally associated with that domain.
An examination of conservative understandings of prudential reasoning patterns intersects current interdisciplinary interests in public deliberations on several bases. Across the disciplines in both the humanities and the social sciences, there is renewed interest in how we justify our reasons and actions, especially in political and ethical contexts. Within moral philosophy, for example, Bernard Williams joined those philosophers who are reexamining the role that rational models can take in exploring the question of human well-being. He noted that the "resources of most modern moral philosophy are not well adjusted to the modern world," and considers ways in which the Aristotelian framework of practical reason may contribute to an understanding of that well-being. In doing so he probed the classical notion of inner dispositions to act well for its relevance to prudent actions today. Sissela Bok made similar observations about the failure of moral philosophers to bridge the gap between their "theoretical apparatus and applied concern" on the question of justification for lying in public and private life. She argued that if we want to deliberate well over when it is acceptable to lie, for example, we should return to the practical reasoning of "the classical period and the Middle Ages for a more direct grasp of . . . what actual choices we should make . . . and why." Others who look for a philosophical basis for adjudicating public goods note that, since a plurality of value systems prevents us from locating a supreme arbiter that would enable us to decide competing claims regarding the public interest, moral reasoning should proceed more interpretively. In this vein, Michael Walzer located the appropriate stance of moral philosophy in casuistic interpretation, arriving at judgments and justifications in particular cases from a cultural moral frame that has emerged in its foundational texts, ceremonies and rituals. Casuistic reasoning, that is, case morality, Albert Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin pointed out, has its roots in Aristotelian phronesis and its early growth in Ciceronian prudentia. Like Walzer, Jonsen and Toulmin attempted to rehabilitate practical moral argumentation as a guide to decision-making over public goods in particular cases;
like Williams they rejected the Cartesian heritage of strict rationality and timeless, universal truths to suggest that contemporary moral discourse would benefit from a recovery of the pre-Enlightenment practical methods and its emphasis on contextual, contingent reasoning. The preoccupation with deductive certitude and demonstration that has characterized moral philosophy since the Enlightenment, they concluded, "had encouraged philosophers to abandon a concrete appreciation of particular circumstances in favor of an abstract understanding of general theories, and in so doing had enthroned episteme where phronesis ought to be."\textsuperscript{10}

Toulmin, in particular, has contributed to the growing literature that addresses the tensions between technological advances in biomedicine and the perceived lag in public moral discourse to address the consequences and dilemmas of these advances, especially in life-sustaining technology. He has consistently argued that modern clinical medicine signals a necessary \textit{rapprochement} between scientific and practical reasoning, because clinical practice represents deliberation over patient well-being in particular cases in which cultural values and aims often clash.\textsuperscript{11} Others who study the cognitive and moral foundations of medicine agree and note that modern medicine is both "science and persuasion," "a complex human interaction" over values in particular cases that "determine the nature of the judgments made."\textsuperscript{12} In a broader context, Hans Jonas critiqued what he regards as a seemingly relentless technological imperative across the physical and social sciences. In his critique, he made a similar plea to recover older forms of reasoning. He reasoned that because of the "inevitably 'utopian' scale of modern technology, the salutary gap between everyday and ultimate issues, between occasions for common prudence and occasions for illuminated wisdom is steadily closing" and concluded that "[W]e need wisdom most when we believe in it least."\textsuperscript{13} Among social scientists, Robert Bellah also sought to recover a language of practical reasoning that might speak to the language of technology and provide some common moral vocabulary with which we can deliberate over
our collective well-being. All of the social sciences should be engaged in prudential reasoning, he argued, which takes it beyond mere reflection on the human condition or advancement of the status quo to a higher level of technological efficiency and into the realm of phronesis, "the ethical and political reflection that helps the citizens of a free society practice the ethically good life."14

The nature of public deliberations is of particular interest to communication scholars and other students of public discourse in at least three other related contexts, which Zarefsky has pointed to both explicitly and implicitly: in issues addressing the concept of community and its relation to a vital public forum; in addressing the role of communication in reasoned deliberation, and in addressing the ethical dimensions and dilemmas of pedagogy. In several fields social critics probe the long standing tensions between individualism and communitarianism in our culture to consider ways in which members of late capitalistic societies are willing or able to pursue the public interest while advancing their more private concerns. This tension between public and private goods leads many communitarians to advance pessimistic claims about a moribund public sphere. Because many value individual over communal interests, they argue, we do not frame a public dialogue in which citizens and lawmakers uncover shared cultural hopes and aspirations; yet, they believe, this common ground is necessary to undergird fruitful deliberations. Because we do not articulate some shared ground, communitarians conclude, we are unable to address and resolve the more contested ground of several social and political issues.

Perceptions about an erosion of vibrant public talk couched in communitarian language lead to an examination of the capacity of civil virtue to recover or uncover a common fund of cultural values and goals to be identified and the concomitant capacity to deliberate over virtue in specific contexts. Thus, the search for common moral ground, an energized public forum capable of resolving current issues, identifiable civic virtue, and forms of fruitful deliberations are often of a piece. Pursuing these connections, for
example, Bellah and his colleagues have sought to ground common aspirations in a perceived link between a Judeo-Christian heritage and the intent of American foundational documents. Others who are concerned to offset the perceived drag of individualism on public talk have attempted to revive classical pagan conceptions of virtue as a social good. Alasdair MacIntyre, among others, suggested that a revival of the Aristotelian framework for virtue as excellence in private and public pursuits would bridge the gap between competing views of greater goods.

An increased interest in the language of civic humanism, especially as it relates to classical republican public-spiritedness suggests an alternative framework to the competing interests of individualism in the public sphere. Among historians, J. G. A. Pocock, Bernard Bailyn, Gordon Wood, and Isaac Kramnick have examined the history of the idea of civil virtue in such terms. Alternatively, in other fields, Richard Sennett and Charles Taylor have looked inward to sources of the modern, private self in order to illuminate the unfavorable public consequences of modernity for the "virtues" of our public selves.

Some who argue that civil discourse over broad social and political issues is weak claim that a revitalized public discourse depends on a more nuanced politics of moderation that will allow issues to be deliberated and resolved reasonably. E. J. Dionne, Jr., for example, has claimed that a large reservoir of civic virtue and deliberative capacity remains latent in the public sphere. It is kept dormant, he argued, by an attenuated public dialogue dominated by competing and entrenched ideological interests which are a residue of the cultural upheaval of the 1960's. In Dionne's view, voters exhibit an incipient willingness to judge and to act on a number of issues, a capacity to resolve them in the name of the public good. They will do so, he concluded, if we find the collective will to move away from the polarities of both the left and the right. Other observers of the political forum, such as Benjamin Barber in sociology and Mary Ann Glendon in law, seek to improve the public's deliberative powers by crafting a language of responsibility as part of the
vocabulary of prudential reasoning. This language is a needed addition to the American political vocabulary, they argue, because the dominant language of rights has drowned out attention to responsibilities that are implicit in any theory of rights.20

Attention to collective and individual will, the volition to judge well, is at the center of many pedagogical concerns that intersect with prudence. The pedagogical implications of public concerns derive from similar concerns over what virtues should be taught, given a growing belief that even public education is inescapably value-laden. How students are prepared for their public role in both change and conservation leads to choices at some point along opposing poles that regard "education as a function of society" or "society as a function of education," as Kenneth Burke put it.21 The "normalizing" virtues of the former view are often vices from the standpoint of educators who advocate the latter. For the former, education has a legitimate interest in prescriptive education to normalize citizens into the culture. "Teaching is not only developing; it is recruiting and initiating as well," Joseph Tussman has claimed. "The teaching power's task is not so much to transmit culture as to continue it."22 For those, including Frank Lentricchia and Terry Eagleton, who oppose education as a largely socializing function, prudential reasoning over civic virtues often should lead to a willingness to act for radical change; from this perspective, education becomes the training ground to nurture agents committed to change. "Education," Lentricchia claimed, "should be one of the places when we can get involved in the process of changing culture."23 Eagleton added that education ought not merely reconstitute a public forum whose pursuit of the public good is driven by shared cultural assumptions; rather, pedagogy is concerned to constitute a vibrant adversary culture, a "counterpublic, to revitalize the public sphere.24

These interdisciplinary efforts to address shared concerns over the interrelationships among pedagogy, citizenship, reasoned public deliberations, and a vibrant public forum provide the larger intellectual context for this study. In addition to these interdisciplinary
connections, however, this study addresses several interrelated concerns within communication studies. Many students of public moral argumentation join those social and political critics in moral philosophy, history, sociology, and law who explore our collective efforts to engage in and sustain a vibrant public dialogue over controversial issues. With respect to conceptions of virtue, rhetoricians, including Walter Fisher, Thomas Frentz, Thomas Farrell, and Celeste Condit frequently examine public discourse in order to join in the debate over the forum's ability to generate reasoned deliberations on controversial issues, looking for visible signs of collective moral evolution or of historical decay. A growing number of scholars who attend to the ethical dimensions of communication join those who explore the processes of moral deliberation and justifiable standards for public as well as private moral discourse. As instructors in courses designed to enhance students' capacity and willingness to engage in critical thinking, writing and speaking, several scholars including Josina Makau, James Jaksa, Michael Pritchard, Richard Johannesen, Seyla Benhabib, Ralph Eubanks, and Vernon Jenson speculate about the ethical dimensions of teaching, including the social and political uses to which effective communication should be directed, given their perceptions on the vitality of the public forum and the level of ethical sensitivity among students.

Finally, an examination of conservative notions of prudential reasoning addresses many communication ethicists' interest in probing the theoretical relationships among rhetoric, ethics, and prudence in the public realm. The public realm of politics, Garver noted, "is necessarily argumentative and rhetorical; the subject of politics and practice is the essentially contested," at least in democratic, republican forms. Interest in the connections among prudence, ethics, and rhetoric is found primarily in this "essentially contested" realm, in the contingent nature of political deliberations, their collective emphasis on judgment and their shared goal of willed human action. The key alliance in both Aristotelian and Ciceronian terms between prudence and rhetoric, Victoria Kahn
noted, is "the fact that both involve deliberation about action," and thus both the orator and the prudential reasoner are concerned with practical ends. In these classical terms, Lois Self argued, we can think of the wise deliberator, that is, Aristotle's *phronimos*, as the ideal practitioner of rhetoric. Both *phronimos* and rhetor must rely on their reasoned capacities and those of audiences; both appeal judiciously to reason and emotion, that is the "whole of human nature" in balancing thought and desire; and, both have social, not merely speculative, utility. On a broad scale, then, an examination of prudential reasoning interests students of rhetoric because, among other things, prudence is thought to share related concerns of how to choose well among the available means of persuasion for social purposes.

Understanding prudential choices in a community of plural values and beliefs brings it into the realm of rhetoric on a second basis, since both prudence and rhetoric involve not only choice but also particularity. Both are contingent responses to circumstances in which it is believed the ultimately true cannot be grasped. For these reasons, an inquiry into prudential reasoning seems particularly concerned with rhetoric, suggesting that prudence is in many ways a rhetorical process. If rhetoric is, as Aristotle conceived of it, the "ability, in each case, to see the available means of persuasion," then one needs also to know how to go about choosing particular means in particular cases. The emphasis on "each case," George Kennedy noted in his translation, reminds us that for Aristotle, "rhetoric deals with specific circumstances (particular individuals and their actions)." Choosing the right grounds for persuasion in context, Christopher Johnstone added, is a function of the practical intelligence. "The exercise of rhetorical expertise is central to the activity of the practical intellect, and thus is implicated in the application of practical wisdom to the determination of conduct." In broad terms then, as the characterization of prudence in conservative discourse suggests some continuities and
departures from classical models, we might also expect to suggest some altered connections between the rhetorical and prudential processes.

III

While a full exploration of the form prudence may take in contemporary public moral discourse would include a wide range of voices, this study restricts its scope to several representative contemporary conservative writers. This is not to claim that conservative discourse exemplifies prudential reasoning in an exclusive or particularly unique manner, nor is it to claim that an analysis of, say, liberal, radical, or feminist discourse would reveal little or anything about how prudence might function in contemporary public life. We can speculate that each of these discourse communities is likely to exhibit affinities and antinomies vis-à-vis conservative reasoning and suggest that another study to synthesize reasoning patterns among all of these major strands can offer a fuller grasp of contemporary efforts to deliberate over contingencies. This study is undertaken as a potential contribution to that synthesis. At the same time, however, it suggests that a study of conservative discourse may, of itself, contribute to our understanding of prudential reasoning inasmuch as it suggests ways in which this reasoning is contextually driven.

Conservative discourse provides a useful case study of prudential reasoning on several bases. Foremost among these is the proliferation and accessibility of texts for examination. Conservativism, as a mainstream voice in American politics, has both a forum and an audience and each voice selected has provided a large corpus of written texts for audiences in both popular and scholarly forums. To the extent that prudential reasoning may need a public voice in order to deliberate well over public goods, it is reasonable to make a preliminary search for it in the mainstream of cultural conversations, wherein strong voices offer certain virtues as legitimate bases for deliberation.
This strand of discourse invites exploration on a second basis, which is related to its own interest in defining the specifics of public virtue. Contemporary conservative discourse proclaims a proprietary interest in the idea of virtue and justifies its preoccupation with the concept on several grounds. This preoccupation is a potential locus of prudential reasoning, as the willingness to identify and appropriate certain conceptions of virtue leads to public deliberation over their appropriate display. In addition to a voice, prudence also needs a context, which is to say that one observes it in a set of virtues extolled and negotiated, according to circumstance. The range of conservative texts, then, offers a multitude of public virtues over which to deliberate in particular contexts, and thus a capability to address the study's central interest in what it means to deliberate well over public goods.

The sensitivity to context suggests a third basis on which we might expect to find some understanding of prudential reasoning in conservative discourse. If we understand conservatism broadly as an interest in preserving or conserving certain intellectual and cultural traditions against whimsical change, tempering them when necessary to exigent circumstances, then the agon between continuity and change will be particularly acute in this discourse during periods of agitation. Similarly, prudence, as a considered response to a range of circumstances, adapts to its context. As Garver noted, prudence asks when it is wise to change and when it is wise to be constant; it is the virtue of knowing when and how to change. But the wisdom to know when to change implies some prima facie value in continuity, a conservative bias.

The oppositional forces of continuity and change serve to emphasize another set of competing impulses in conservative discourse which, I hope to show, provide additional insight into prudential reasoning. There is a considerable tension in conservative thought between the expression of Platonic ideals with respect to citizenship, loyalty, and kinship, for example, as well as a well-defined Ciceronian understanding of the social nature of
humans and concomitant will to act for the social good. Since the impulse toward static, ahistorical ideals in these areas frequently is incompatible with judging the social value of particular actions in particular cases, conservative deliberations often take the form of negotiation and accommodation. A recurring locus for prudential reasoning resides in these pragmatic accommodations to several conservative ideals.

Since conservatism takes many forms, this study does no more than stipulate broad understandings of it as an interest in preserving and championing traditionally held cultural beliefs, values, and norms against whimsical change. How conservatives specify those beliefs, values, and norms rests in large part on their perception of what liberal and radical voices advocate. More specific definitions of conservatism, then, tend to shift as the left shifts, as do conservative notions of prudence. The texts chosen for study have been selected in large part because they reflect this dynamism vis-à-vis the broader political and cultural spectrum. They include the major publications of William F. Buckley, Jr., Gertrude Himmelfarb, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Irving Kristol, Christopher Lasch, Robert Nisbet, Michael Novak, George Will, and Garry Wills. All but Christopher Lasch are self-proclaimed conservatives, although none claims to be "conservative" in the many senses of the term, that is, none regards himself or herself as equally conservative on religious, political, economic, social, and cultural grounds. These voices provide a mix of "traditional" and neoconservative standpoints, religious and social differences, and popular and academic contributions to provide diverse perspectives of conservatism as it functions today.

William F. Buckley, Jr., founder of the National Review, represents an eclectic conservatism, as reflected in that magazine's editorial stance. Buckley rejected most efforts to promulgate a univocal conservatism, insisting that conservatism was not a defined program but a perspective that was required to stay at some level of conceptual abstraction. "Conservatives," he pointed out, "are obliged to deal in generalities, mostly of the
nongratifying kind." When pressed for a definition he deferred to Richard Weaver's conception as useful. "Conservatism," Weaver claimed, is "a paradigm of essences towards which the phenomenology of the world is in continuing approximation." This Platonic impulse in Buckley's thought emerges as a polemical stance in public deliberations, a standpoint that rests on two key premises: one, that humankind has already "arrived at certain great conclusions" of truth and, two, that those truths need a passionate champion if they are to prevail in the marketplace of ideas. In addition to this stance, however, Buckley exhibited strong Ciceronian impulses in his communitarian claims that filial love to the country was intimately connected to citizens' regard for one another. "No fatherhood, no brotherhood," he quoted Nelson Rockefeller to make the point succinctly. The particular cases in which Buckley articulated an accommodation between the conservative goal to infuse public virtue with a sense of patrimony as a cohesive force and competing goals to enhance the political freedoms of various citizens' offers potential prudential deliberations on a range of public issues.

Gertrude Himmelfarb, an intellectual historian, contributes a view of history that offers several terms to the conservative vocabulary for public deliberation. She appropriated the Hegelian interest in heroic, "world-historical individuals" as significant agents in history. Himmelfarb maintained that we can still benefit from an examination of the public virtues these agents, ideas and events embody despite efforts by revisionist social historians to give up telling the story of the hero. Conversely, she was concerned to recover the more pedestrian virtues of Victorian life, the common virtues that all citizens were capable of attaining, as guides for deliberating over appropriate contemporary social reform. Her scholarship on J. S. Mill led to her to invoke his views as compatible with contemporary conservatism and is important for grasping a level of dynamism in conservative patterns of reasoning, vis à vis the perception that liberalism had drifted far from its original moorings. Himmelfarb's Victorian scholarship contributes to an
examination of public deliberations over the appropriate display of virtue since she consistently addresses the issue of value-free versus value-laden social science. The overarching thesis in all of her work is that we can benefit from the Victorian "moral imagination" that accepted social problems as moral problems and thus opens up for negotiation how we justify economic and moral support in resolving social problems.

Jeanne Kirkpatrick, a professor of political science and former U.S. ambassador to the U. N., observed that conservatives share a "preoccupation with the nation's waning self-confidence; concern over the decline of such traditional values as discipline, restraint, consensus; rejection of guilt-ridden liberalism, of judicial decision-making, of social engineering, and of burgeoning bureaucracy; commitment to patriotism and a strong national defense." She exemplified the neoconservative's disenchantment with the New Left in her articulation of U. S. foreign policy and her adversarial stance toward a "new class" of advisors who dominated Democratic party politics. This new class, she argued, sought utopian goals through an overly rationalistic approach to social life that was incompatible with human nature and human possibility. The tension between her articulation of American democratic ideals as a moral force in the world and her dedication to pragmatic realpolitik decisions offers an opportunity to uncover conservative perceptions of prudential action on both national and international issues.

Conservatives, Irving Kristol noted, work to protect political stability in order that justice might grow, not the other way around. They do not expect justice to be a precondition of a stable state. As such they draw on a western philosophical tradition from the Greeks to the American founders who did not demand that "justice now" was a prerequisite to political legitimacy. Within that frame, Kristol's discourse offers insights into negotiating the often competing demands of distributing justice in particular contexts against an overarching concern with continued stability. Kristol, like Kirkpatrick, has identified neoconservatism as a response to perceived excesses of the new left, which made
it antiutopian and unromantic; disillusioned by liberalism; uneasy but not always hostile to business; attached to bourgeois virtues and a market economy as necessary but not sufficient to develop other freedoms; and supportive of some welfare as social insurance. Neoconservatives also enter a dialogue over virtue in view of their belief that the state has some responsibility to help shape citizens' preferences in a free market, in order to "elevate" them.40

Christopher Lasch's scholarship is included in a study of conservative discourse for its strong articulation of a cultural conservatism that, with neoconservativism, attempts to give voice and political power to a historical strand of American populist thought. The populist language of cultural conservatism, John Nuechterlein noted, resonates with the American public and will get a hearing. It is easy to appropriate because, on the one hand the left has abandoned any straightforward defense of the political, economic, and cultural benefits of the status quo, and on the other, cultural conservatism is already deep in the American psyche.41 "Culture is an essentially conservative force," Kay Hymowitz added. "It binds people to a past laden with powerful traditions and beliefs and often obligates them to strict, customary discipline."42 To the extent that Lasch speaks to this force, he has a potentially large conservative audience. Although Lasch regards himself as a populist and critiques both left and right with considerable vigor, reviewers have called him a "reluctant conservative" and his book, The Culture of Narcissism "a profoundly conservative tract."43 More recently, reviewers of his latest work of cultural criticism have noted that he "seems to agree with arguments that neoconservatives have been making for decades."44 Less favorable reviewers went further to remark that he had forgotten his roots in the left and become "frankly reactionary."45

Lasch's early critique of a dehumanizing technology and a capitalistic system that thwarted the "joy in work, stable connections, family life, a sense of place, and a sense of historical continuity" had their roots in Jacques Ellul and Raymond Williams but resonated
with others as crucial conservative concerns. He also echoed a conservative lament over a breakdown of authority in and outside the family, and the perception that value-neutral approaches to social issues took a heavy toll on family life. His major disagreement with traditional conservatism rested on the traditionalists' high regard for progressive capitalism, for which he has expressed unrelenting contempt. Finally, he critiqued both right and left for their general unwillingness to give up a faith in the idea of progress and the melioristic hopes of socialism and liberalism. As a cultural historian, Lasch looked to the recovery of a particular historical strand of American 19th century populism that will guide us toward the future. The intersections Lasch saw among a living past, moribund present, and tempered hopes for the future provide additional space to locate prudential wisdom of a particular kind.

Robert Nisbet defined conservatism as "a coherent body of moral, economic, social and cultural ideas that has a solid and well known reference to politics and political power." It is ideological insofar as it harnesses ideas for power to promulgate those ideas; it is pragmatic insofar as it is unwilling to sacrifice political success for a principle. "No conservative, Nisbet asserted, would say with Robespierre, "perish the colonies rather than the principle." Nisbet traced his political conservatism to Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France, (1790) in which Burke outlined the rights of historically formed institutions such as the family, neighborhood, guild, and church as legitimate buffers against intrusive state power. He saw the intellectual roots of his libertarianism in J. S. Mill's On Liberty, whose core principle is autonomy of thought and action. Since Nisbet champions both the political conservative's defense of institutional authority and the libertarian's regard for autonomy, we can look to the ways in which he negotiates between them as occasions for prudential reasoning. With other political conservatives, Nisbet shared a concern that politics is no longer viewed by many as a civilized, noble pursuit, as Cicero and Burke regarded it. The "whole fabric of rights, liberties, participations, and
protections," he contended, constitutes a "cherished form of community" which is more than an instrument of power. The modern political community is the secular successor to the church as a locus of collective hopes and aspirations. Analogically then, the state ought to inspire patriotism as the church inspired piety. Since he perceived an erosion in patriotic sentiments and energetic civic participation, he viewed the political community and its fabric of rights and protections as vulnerable as well. These concerns give rise to communitarian arguments, often couched in the language of patriotism and civility, thereby contributing several terms to a vocabulary of public virtue over which to deliberate.

Michael Novak offers a view of political prudence as one which incorporates a sense of the tragic. His intellectual roots in both the Catholic tradition of Thomistic thinking and the Protestant theologian, Rienhold Niebuhr undergird a view that there is no necessary connection between good people, good intentions, and good consequences. Niebuhr, he believed, "liberated" many neoconservatives, formerly Marxists, liberals, and social democrats, from their "sentimental, idealistic, and rational liberalism." He taught them to how to be future-oriented conservatives who were "alert to the factors of power and interest" even as they incorporated a sense of the tragic nature of politics, given human capacity for limited good and for evil. He argued that since the left moved into a dominant position in the universities during the 1960's, the right has assumed a prophetic position culturally, enabling neoconservatives, largely Jews and Catholics, to invoke Niebuhr's "biblical vision" of human nature; to reject abstract humanity; promote the primacy of political over economic rights; and speak to the primacy of spiritual over material human needs in public deliberations over the common good.

Novak also championed ethnics' efforts to resist the assimilation of WASP cultural values and defended ethnics' right to be culturally conservative. If the bulk of Americans chose to be culturally conservative and deepen their religious roots in particular, they could not look to the left to support them. Part of the conservative political task, he concluded.
was to tap the energies of the lower middle class, especially those ethnic virtues that have resisted homogenization and assimilation, celebrate their difference and open up public deliberations on a model that is more complex than the rational, WASP model.

George Will exemplifies a conservative temperament that is, as Nuechterlein put it, nationalistic, fatalistic and anti-modernist. As a cultural conservative, Will speaks the language of virtue, discipline, and restraint; of concern for values, the pursuit of excellence, and the cultivation of community. When Will warns of cultural decadence, he cautions against a release of passion and desire that breaks down self restraint; licentious individualism that weakens communal norms and community itself; and, a materialism that is aggressively selfish. As a cultural conservative, he also occasionally conflicts with political conservatives on the clash between modern benefits and costs to personal freedom. Will pointed to the tension in cultural conservatism that tries to deal with the social decadence arising out of the dynamism and aggressive nature of capitalism in responding to desires of the marketplace. The task for cultural conservatives, he noted, was to try to rein in economic freedom that panders to the short run, in order to protect political freedom that, in the long run, will be undone by licentious activity.

The public good Will claimed, derives from individual good, which the law has a limited role in cultivating. If we are a society dedicated to the pursuit of happiness, Will concluded, then the republic "had better dedicate itself, including the government, to the pursuit of the virtues indispensable to ordered liberty." Secondly, the pursuit of happiness is a "sobering thought" because it is dependent on a stable government that relies on a virtuous citizenry for its sustenance. Governments are necessarily involved with the inner life of citizens for justifiable reasons of self-preservation. So the first question of government is the classical political inquiry into how we ought to live together. Another way of saying that, Will argued, is what kind of citizens do we want our people to be? Citizens, as "ladies and gentlemen" not mere biological facts of men and women are social
artifacts who carry the culture sustained by wise laws and traditions of civility. Since we judge a nation by the kind of ladies and gentlemen we produce, and the government produces them in part by the kinds of laws it implements and in larger measure by the manners and morals it nourishes, government is inevitably concerned with the inner life, character, or "soul" of citizens, the "sentiments, manners, and moral opinions," as Burke termed it. Government is necessarily soulcraft, which is a sobering thought then on at least two accounts: laws are insufficient civilizers and nourishing the soul is not frivolous business. As a "chronicler of manners" Will wanted to call attention to the mores that sustain the decorous and civil components of virtue and so offered as terms in a vocabulary of prudent deliberation, the qualities of piety, family, community, continuity, industriousness, and discipline.56

Garry Wills, as a political conservative, looks to change through the system, change which preserves the larger continuity and sense of social identity even as it changes the system. Wills wanted to distinguish his conservatism from others, "to escape the sterile definition of conservatism as somehow opposed to change. . . . To deny change is akin to a denial of gravity. Change is inevitable. The question is how one changes" to incorporate the new into a stable order. He observed that, while conservative change in religious institutions developed through and by means of the community of believers and church leaders, in the political community conservative change began in the electorate, not the elected body, whose power functions as "a symbol of the community's own sense of itself as a corporate body." So the followers lead and the leaders follow, which is as it should be in a conservative scheme of change.57 We can expect to find some opportunity for prudential reasoning in the way in which Wills accommodates those boundaries for leaders and followers of change, within an overarching continuity of shared aspirations.

The expressed accommodation to the broader cultural context in which conservatives deliberate and advocate actions for change or continuity also suggests ways
that conservatives adapt arguments based on understandings of their audience as a part of that larger context. From a rhetorical perspective, it is crucial to attend closely to the relationship among discourse, context, and audience as a way of illuminating those virtues, in the form of beliefs and values extolled, that form the basis of conservative reasoning. An exploration of conservative discourse that seeks some specific insight into prudence will, of necessity, keep this relationship in mind.

IV

Apart from the need to scrutinize conservative discourse in relation to the circumstances that influence its formation, this examination confronts the more general contemporary intellectual problem of how to approach a text, a problem that is concerned with issues of authorial intentionality and textual meaning. Post WWII literary theory has been especially focused on the possibility of multiple textual meanings and interpretations of texts; more recently, it has addressed an elusiveness of texts that follows from an author's inability to control what words mean. Among those approaches that stress multiplicity of meaning, formalism and New Criticism concentrate their efforts on the structure of the text. This preoccupation with a text's formal characteristics dwarfs its residual interest in the contextual constraints of discourse, and, more particularly, its political or social meaning. Ambiguous, ironic language is nevertheless in service of the text's organic unity from this perspective and multiplicity is not a bar to the text's accessibility; indeed formalism celebrates that multiplicity. Post-structuralist approaches, especially deconstructive moves, also recognize the multiplicity of meaning inherent in language, but reject the view of an autonomous text to say that all language, and therefore all texts, are contextually-driven and uncontrollable with respect to meaning. Language, as chronically misrepresented, continually undercuts authorial efforts to control it. Meaning cannot be controlled because it is not immediately present in its signification, but "dispersed
along the whole chain of signifiers: it cannot be easily nailed down." Meaning is "always somehow suspended, something deferred or still to come." For Derridian deconstructionists, this elusiveness betrays the hypocrisy of language, its illusions and distortions, its inability to move beyond appearance to any coherent reality. It eludes authors' efforts to make words mean and undermines their efforts to communicate an intentional meaning.60

This emphasis on the elision between appearance and reality that both structuralist and post-structuralist approaches assume in a text distinguishes them from rhetorical approaches to a text that seek to preserve intentionality by means of a self-conscious focus on a text's apparent meaning. The rhetorical approach to the text, which is the perspective adopted in this examination, stands at a point somewhere between formalism and deconstruction insofar as it accepts the multiplicity of meanings inherent in discourse and texts even as it seeks to preserve the intentionality of authorial voices evident in the very appearance of a text. In addition to the multiplicity of meanings embedded in language, a rhetorical approach also recognizes the contextual constraints on texts and uses those constraints to say something about authorial intentionality and the larger context in which a particular discourse takes part.

In this examination, since I am trying to understand conservative discourse within a broader intellectual context of prudence, I am approaching the texts as part of a larger intellectual tradition, and regard them as participating in a larger text about practical reasoning and its relationship to public moral discourse. This textual perspective reveals itself as rhetorical insofar as it takes serious account of context and because it views writers as purposeful agents with intentions. As a text-oriented approach it preserves an interest in the intended meaning of written discourse, with the understanding that those intentions have real effects in material circumstances. In short, its rhetorical interest is in these texts
as public discourse offered to wide audiences and in the face value intentionality of authorial voices to influence readers.

The attention to the apparent meaning and intentionality of a text distinguishes the rhetorical perspective from deconstructive moves that seek to undermine both meaning and intentionality, and from the formalist move to describe a decontextualized, self-contained text. It is also set apart from, say, a psychological study that seeks to draw out hidden motivations or key insights into the personality of authors. Neither does this approach seek critical understandings of an author's intellectual formation through a biographical portrait.

If we situate this understanding of the authorial voice as intending to influence within the orbit of the prudential method, which is also concerned with the character of deliberators, we have the tools to uncover the rhetorical or outer dispositions of authorial voices in this discourse. This allows the exploration to set aside what we have little or no access to; namely, the inner dispositions of real authors undercut by modern and postmodern insights. By focusing on the rhetorical, which is to say the outer or linguistic display of certain dispositions in public deliberations, we can speculate about the outer or public character of prudence in a body of discourse with more clarity. Similarly, by distinguishing between real and implied audiences, we can focus on the values, beliefs, and premises that a body of discourse seeks assent to, in order to be part of that implied audience.

The methodological approach for this study, then, is a hybrid, incorporating a rhetorical orientation toward a text with certain aspects of historical and literary pursuits useful for fulfilling its goals. The historical component in meeting this task reflects a pronounced interest in the historical dimension of conservative discourse, that is, the American conservative tradition, its deeper roots in western political philosophy, and its potential connection to a classical model of informal reasoning that flourished prior to the various Enlightenment movements. In addition, as a study in public argument, and a
subset of public address, an examination of conservative writers necessarily draws upon
the broader context of which these texts are a part. Finally, since the study centers on a
specific body of discourse, it seeks an interpretive understanding of it. Put simply, as an
integral body of discourse, it is susceptible to examination on its own merits; inasmuch as it
occurs in some context, it is, as Zarefsky noted, "susceptible to historical study." An
interpretive understanding of the conservative "case," from the historical perspective,
reflects a "judicious" interplay of text and context that resists, on the one hand, formulaic
recounting of the discourse and the conditions in which it occurred and, on the other hand,
a formalist analysis that is impervious to context.61

The literary component of this rhetorical perspective is rooted in a tradition that
addresses the fictive construction of authors and audiences in relation to a text. It
approaches written discourse as a communicative relationship between an authorial voice
residing in the text and the implied reader this voice invokes. Importantly, it is through this
communication between author and audience that a set of values may be uncovered, a vital
component of a study that seeks to trace out implications for prudence.

The notion of an implied author as a "second self," one who is separate from the
"real" person who creates a text, is key to this study's method of exploration. This notion
has been treated variously in literary theory as the "narrative voice," "author's persona," or
"author's mask." In fiction, these terms have most often been employed to discuss the
synthetic and mimetic components of plot progression and character development,
representing an apprehension of a "completed artistic whole, the chief value to which this
implied author is committed." In short, implied authors are "the core of norms and
choices" offered in a text; we know them through the sum of their own choices.62

Similarly, the authorial voice residing in a text can be apprehended by the way
authors order values, asking readers to praise or blame based upon an explicitly stated or
implied hierarchy. While it is frequently noted that a competent author is one who does
justice to the moral complexities of the human condition, authors nevertheless prioritize a set of values in a given text, and invite readers to order them similarly. Through the author's use of language, particularly metaphors, patterns, myths, symbols, he or she implicitly evaluates the themes in a text.

the author cannot choose to avoid rhetoric; he can choose only the kind of rhetoric he will employ. He cannot choose whether or not to affect his readers' evaluations by his choice of narrative manner; he can only choose whether to do it well or poorly.63

Disparities between the author's own views and those inferred from the text remain outside this study's interest and purview. There is, Black observed, "an important sense in which . . . rhetors are exactly as they appear. . . the subject of rhetorical criticism is appearance, mere appearance. We study nothing else except as dilettantes." From a rhetorical perspective then, the text does not, cannot, lie; its "statements and misstatements are all material to the truths that rhetorical criticism seeks."64

V

In order to examine the appearance of these texts, their lines of reasoning and key assumptions as they relate to conceptions of prudence, this study traces three prominent components in the discourse related to conservative beliefs about human nature; attitudes toward history and the historical method; and, explicit efforts to fashion a common moral vocabulary for public deliberations. The following chapter lays out the classical frame for an approach to conservative reasoning and the role of human nature, history, and moral language in fashioning a conservative conception of prudence. A brief sketch of Aristotelian phronesis and Ciceronian prudentia provides the broad contours for evaluating how and why conservative understandings of prudence parallel or diverge from classical models. Chapter Three explores conservative understandings of human nature, especially as they influence public deliberations over public goods. Specifically, this discussion
emphasizes those pagan insights and Christian contributions that influence the nature of contemporary public talk. In Chapter Four, I examine the close relationships between a prominent conservative approach to history and conservative understandings of prudential deliberations, noting ways in which, to a large extent, the historical and prudential method are aligned in conservative thinking. With a range of conservative perceptions about human nature and history in place as common ground to begin deliberations, Chapter Five attends to the moral language of conservative discourse, its specific linguistic choices and the self conscious rejection of liberal language as inadequate for practical reasoning over res publica. Chapter Six integrates conservative' use of cultural wisdom and normative language to describe the elements and process of deliberations, pointing to affinities with and discontinuities from classical patterns. A concluding chapter speculates on some theoretical and pedagogical implications of conservative reasoning arising out of its sensitivity to contextual constraints. Although conservatives' preoccupation with the force of historical consciousness in deliberations leads them to attempt to realign the balance between character and experience in prudential reasoning, I suggest that conservatives have located "new" dialogical virtues called for by postmodern circumstances.


Throughout the document, references to "conservatives" or "some conservatives" are restricted to the writers under examination in this study. The expressed opinions and shared concerns are not intended to apply more broadly to American conservatism in general, or even to other conservative writers not included in the study. Moreover, the conservatives included in this examination were chosen, in part, for the range of views articulated with respect to social, cultural, political, economic, or religious conservatism.


Seigel, "Virtu" 483.


27Garver, 62.


30Garver, 5-21, 126.


33I am using the term in its broad sense of normative deliberations addressed to wide audiences on a range of political, social, and cultural issues.
I understand religious conservatism to be a predisposition to regard foundational texts as authoritative and binding; political conservatism as a general resistance to major structural interventions into the status quo; social conservatism as a predisposition to resist efforts surrounding policies such as enforced busing, feminism, abortion, and gay and lesbian rights; cultural conservatism as a predisposition to valorize canonical norms, hierarchy, and a deference to excellence; and, economic conservatism as broad support for a free market, capitalistic economy.


53 Nuechterlein, 39.


57 Garry Wills, Confessions of a Conservative (New York: Doubleday, 1979) 64.


59 Black, "Rhetoric As Critique," 2-4.


63 Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, 149.

64 Edwin Black, "Rhetoric as Critique," 7-8.
CHAPTER II
FOUNDATIONS OF PRUDENCE

A brief sketch of classical views toward prudential reasoning provides a framework for an examination of contemporary conservative deliberations. Since conservatives join those who reject strict rationality in deciding contingent matters and call for more informal modes that take account of context and communal beliefs, it seems appropriate to place this discourse within the broader framework of Aristotelian and Ciceronian conceptions of prudence which have emerged historically as the counterpart to more formal modes of reasoning. This chapter lays out the classical Greek and Roman roots of this mode of reasoning and, in addition, sketches a brief overview of some intellectual, political, and social shifts in order to provide the larger context in which prudential reasoning confronts today. The classical conceptions, along with these historical shifts, create a tension in current civil space that influence how public deliberations proceed. The framework also provides the means for uncovering similarities and differences between classical models and contemporary conservative perceptions, and suggests particular features of classical prudence that may not be easily appropriated, given a changed cultural context.

**Aristotelian phronesis**

Classical Greek and Roman views of prudence developed within a larger epistemological perspective toward speculative and material truth. Ancient Greek views emphasized the power of logos, even in moral theory. This view influenced a less explicit emphasis on the ethical dimension of discourse evident in the Aristotelian model of
reasoning than appeared later in the Ciceronian mode. In the Aristotelian scheme, rhetorical
discourse is a value-neutral potency, one that can be used for both good and evil ends.
This is not to say that Aristotle was indifferent to the ethical dimensions of discourse, for
even a cursory reading of the *Nicomachean Ethics* would do much to undercut such a
claim. It is only to suggest that Aristotle formulated his views of the power of the word
within a larger epistemological perspective that made the establishment of more explicit
connections between ethics and eloquence less urgent. Aristotle held the belief that both
truth and the more probable are more easily argued and have stronger cultural force than
either falsehood or mere cleverness. Humans were essentially rational animals, he
believed, and consequently would respond to the rational force of truth claims. This being
so, truth and the more probable have a natural advantage in a public forum and will be more
likely to emerge in deliberations, so long as their claims have an unfettered and uncorrupted
voice.

Aristotle developed his theory of civic discourse against some very different views,
especially those of the skeptics, the sophists, and his teacher, Plato. Among the Greek
skeptics, Pyrrho and Sextus argued that the truth value of universal, timeless propositions
could not be borne out by human experience. They neither affirmed nor denied these
propositions; it was simply the case that "they saw no sufficient basis in experience, either
for asserting, or for denying them." Since the skeptics believed that we cannot defend
monism empirically, they advocated a disputation which brings out all sides of an argument
as a useful end in itself. Pyrrhonist skepticism manifested itself as a permanent
"suspension of belief," a stance of "quietude" and "quiescence" in the absence of
certitude. Yet, the skeptics did not engage in the kind of rigorous doubt that Descartes
would perfect centuries later. Whereas Descartes took the rigorous doubt of the Pyrrhonists
and transformed it into claims for certainty, this was an intellectual move that did not seem
to interest the pagan skeptics. Toulmin has argued that Greek skepticism should not be
viewed as radical relativism; rather, it should be regarded as "intellectual modesty," an early humanistic perspective that prevents philosophy from overreaching its defensible claims. Strict rationality, from the skeptical perspective, is prideful self-deception because it is unwilling to accept the limits that human experience places on truth claims. A variation on the theme of Pyrrhonist skepticism recurs later, in Ciceronian conceptions of prudence, in the form of New Academic skepticism. For purposes of this study, both Greek and Roman manifestations serve to highlight long-standing western cultural ambivalences over the legitimate claims of rationality and of prudential reasoning as an alternative mode for public deliberations.

In addition to the skeptics who made argumentation its own end, Aristotle was reacting to another group of skeptics, the sophists, when he laid out his theory of *phronesis* and his handbook on rhetoric. The sophists, itinerant teachers of oratory, also provided handbooks on persuasion, which were characterized derisively by Plato as guides to making "the worse case appear the better." Among the leading sophists, Protagoras and Gorgias celebrated an amoral power of the word and offered model orations to willing students who wanted to sway listeners with their eloquence in the law courts. The sophists shared the skeptic's rejection of objective truth and relied on opinion (*doxa*) to warrant claims. It was the extreme of sophistry that Aristotle was concerned to denigrate: the cynical manipulation of data in the face of contingent truths and the unabashed effort to persuade an audience by charming them with pleasing words alone.

Beyond these epistemological issues and the resulting interest in adding rigor to contingent deliberations, the reliance on personal and communal experience has relevance for Aristotelian attitudes toward prudence as well. In the Greek city-state, ethical concerns of conduct and character were part of the public domain of all citizens, in this case free adult males, and both deliberative rhetoric and prudential reasoning identified the "problem" of the expert in public discussions. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle distinguished between those
strategies of arguments or lines of reasoning (topoi) which were suitable for dialectic or rhetoric and those which were more suited to specific fields of inquiry. The arguments of deliberative rhetoric operate in "civil space" as Kennedy put it, and not within the realm of expertise in, say, mathematics or biology. Aristotle pointed out that if deliberators were to hit upon "first principles (archai), the knowledge will no longer be dialectic or rhetoric but the science of which [the speaker] grasps the first principles." In other words, the more technical or expert the discourse, the more it falls outside the range of general audiences and public deliberations--and, therefore, outside the range of rhetoric. Similarly, prudential reasoning negotiates a position outside the boundaries of expertise, since it occurs in that space between the generalities of first principles and the specifics of the particular case. Within that space prudence draws on "traditional standards, received maxims, and customary patterns of life" to decide appropriate action. Since Athenians did not draw sharp distinctions among the law, politics, and ethics, a position reflected by Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics and the Rhetoric, they viewed ethical questions about how to live well together in collectivities as an inescapable problem of political life. While their deliberations often drew on received wisdom and custom, students of Greek history note that the Athenians were travelers and traders, a situation which exposed them to the Persian and Egyptian cultures. This exposure encouraged them to refine their speculations about the natural order of things, and broaden their standards and cultural wisdom to encompass views which extended beyond their own shores.

The themes in Greek drama reflect a range of these cultural beliefs and values that were dramatized for purposes of praise or blame. Sophocles, especially, is a resource for those Greek virtues which belong to the practical world of Aristotle's ethics, since he placed many of these dispositions into conflict and created a tension that may well have added to the plays' popularity with audiences. The virtues celebrated and challenged in Greek tragedy and comedy also suggest deep cultural roots of several western values that
continue to play out in public deliberations over legitimate collective aspirations today. Among these include the tensions between personal and public loyalties, the legitimate strength of kinship ties, and appropriate moral education of the young into "good" citizenship.

Many classical scholars view Greek drama as a clash between an old mythic order and emerging civil arrangements, which captures the Greek audience's distrust of democracy in an extreme form. Audiences were frequently asked to judge a moral dilemma arising out of the new civil order, as in the case of Antigone, who invoked one set of loyalties to challenge another. In this dramatization of emerging democratic forms, Antigone chose to honor the "sacred law of the family" to bury its dead and reject Athenian civil law which denied burial honors to traitors. Antigone can be interpreted as an unruly and chaotic challenge to civic order in her insistence that she be allowed to bury her traitorous brother. From this standpoint, she is unreasonably intransigent in her claim that she must honor her "holy domestic ties." Against Antigone's disruptive behavior, Creon may be seen as a spokesperson for the polis when he argued that it was the city that preserved families, and its claims must override personal loyalties. For Creon "the family is a sort of training ground for the exercise of public virtue," and the family, as a microcosm of the polis, ought to provide the state with children who are disciplined and obedient to a patriarch. Antigone challenged the claims of the polis to say "my brother right or wrong" and Creon responded with a variation of "my country, right or wrong," setting out the polarities of loyalty debates that echo today.

Conversely, we can praise Antigone as a defense of emerging democratic forms and defame Creon as a despot who will not trust that the sacred beliefs of the family can be made to work within the polis. Since Greek citizens supported Antigone's claim that she should bury her brother, Creon should have listened to the democratic will; but, he did not, and sought aristocratic counsel instead. It is Creon's arrogance and not Antigone's
intransigence that is the political vice in this interpretation. On this reading, a political act that is not consistent with more general notions of virtue cannot be called a political virtue but "a political crime." It is Antigone who exhibits political virtue by wedding it to her kinship ties. Each of these interpretations address the tension between public and private loyalties, however, and in doing so articulate competing claims that continue to reverberate today.

In addition to the competing claims of public and private loyalties, Sophoclean figures also raise questions about other appropriate public virtues that continue to drive contemporary deliberations. All of Sophocles' heroes, Bernard Knox maintained, displayed Antigone's iron will and her resistance toward attempts to persuade her. Oedipus, Ajax, and Electra were equally firm in their resolve against appeals to reason. To others they seemed savage, ill tempered, and rash because they "have no sense of proportion, no capacity for moderation" and they will not be "taught by time." But Sophoclean heroes are loyal to their conception of themselves, especially their character. They have a profound sense of their own rightness and this exacerbates the anger they feel at the world's denial of respect. Since they set their own conditions for living, and will die rather than live another way, they raise questions about the fitness of an intemperate nature for political life. Aristotle judged that it was not fit when he noted in the Politics that one "who is incapable of working in common or who in his self-sufficiency has no need of others, is no part of the community, like an animal or a god." Very early in western political history, then, a conservative suspicion arises that certain human propensities may not be compatible with communal life and that prudent moderations must occur if we are to keep the peace.

Brian Vickers identified several related themes in Greek tragedy that both affirmed and challenged Greek values whose vibrancy continues in current public discourse. Among these was a belief that war was acceptable, but that certain war crimes should be
challenged as atrocities. Trust was valorized and betrayal, treachery, and disloyalty were condemned as violations of trust. Within the family, the most prominent theme was the belief that kinship ties demanded preservation, which produced a strong prohibition against actions that threatened to weaken, pollute, or destroy them. Since the Greeks were concerned to preserve and continue family traditions, they looked to marriage as a valuable institution for accomplishing this task. Family and kinship ties prescribed by marriage defined a person's social and political status and identified his or her attendant rights and responsibilities. Husbands, who held full citizens' rights attached to an exclusively male franchise, also held exclusive rights as heads of their households. These rights commanded obedience and respect from wives, children and slaves. A son, Aristotle argued, remained in his father's debt for his entire life; he could never balance the scales against the one who gave him life, especially social and political viability. Children's worth was generally a potential one, inextricably tied to their future role in the polity as virtuous citizens. A chaste wife, on the other hand, served to keep the family genealogy pure. This was her most important kinship role, one that accorded her a level of social stature. As a consequence of these kinship values, themes of disrespect to the father, adultery, patricide, and fratricide in Greek drama called for harsh retributive justice, a "paying back double" to prevent further erosion of family integrity. These values were explored in comedy as well as tragedy, particularly in Aristophanes.

In *The Clouds*, the ordinary citizen/father is alienated and becomes a comic hero. Aristophanes asked his audience to consider whether human nature could thrive under laws and customs that appear contrary to the heightened Greek interest in argumentation, the sophistic questioning of old customs, and the necessity of following the law. Aristophanes made a conservative accusation, claiming that Socrates corrupted Greek youth by giving them the intellectual means to challenge custom and rationalize a break with filial loyalty. Aristophanes also parodied Greek intellectual forays as pretentious, exaggerating them in
order to critique their attempts to substitute reason and law for custom. From this perspective, Socrates embodied the intellectual's threat to an ordinary person's religious and cultural beliefs. In replacing older beliefs with natural philosophy, Socrates also denied audiences the pleasures of food and sex which were attached to religious festivals, pleasures that dull academic reasoning could not easily replace for many. He was perhaps more subversive when he taught sons to challenge the traditions passed on to them by their fathers. When we replace tradition and religion with impersonal rational forces, Aristophanes seemed to conclude, then the clever and ambitious will lose their fear, and anything becomes possible or believable. As in the tragedies, the comedy of *The Clouds* addressed several public themes that remain today: the potential incompatibilities of intellectual and religious tenets, the struggle among adults for control of young minds, and the place of custom versus rationality in the practical deliberations of the polis.

When Aristotle formulated his theory of rhetoric and prudence to engage in deliberations over the clash of values dramatized as public spectacles, he was reacting, not only to skeptics and sophists, but to Plato as well. While Aristotle shared Plato's recoil from extreme epistemological skepticism and the perceived excesses of clever sophism, he differed with his former teacher on at least two major points in his formulation of practical reasoning in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. For one, he noted that practical wisdom was not scientific knowledge, nor should we expect it to be. Ethics in politics was a practical study, and the contemplation or knowledge of an ideal good was of little use in a practical realm. "Practical wisdom is not scientific understanding," he insisted. Aristotle also broke with Plato on a second key point, related to the first. If, pragmatically, we cannot look to an ideal good or standard to determine right actions in particular cases, he reasoned that we must look for this wisdom elsewhere, in its practice by those people who embody it. This is contrary to Plato's understanding of virtue, which he viewed as a kind of self-knowledge, gained through the exercise of reason and the control of passion. In the *Meno*,
when Socrates is asked if virtue can be taught, Plato has him demur, yet suggest that it
cannot, at least directly and certainly not by sophists. Virtue can, however, be recalled
under a proper tutelage which encourages students to engage in the task of remembering
those universal and timeless forms of moral truth that are within them. Unlike Aristotle's
insistence that we look for the timely and opportune application of right thinking in
particular cases, Plato strove to build a "geometrical" model of moral knowledge, one
which would provide definitive and certain answers to moral questions in any particular
case.  

Against Aristotle, Plato held that we did not learn virtue by example, and he was
against the view that we know something by observing the practice of it. More pointedly,
Plato rigorously denied that the sophists, from their standpoint of cultural and ethical
relativism, could possibly teach what their skepticism prevented them from even knowing.
Later, in the Republic, Plato elaborated his view to say that virtue is a temperate soul in
balance, a soul in accord with its function. We can teach particulars to help a young mind
glean some knowledge of virtue by reflection but we will not grasp it solely by empirical
methods. 

Aristotle disagreed to say that we can

arrive at a definition of Prudence by considering who are the persons who
we call prudent. Now it is the mark of a prudent man to be able to
deliberate well about what is good and advantageous for himself, not in
some one department...but what is advantageous as a means to the good
life in general.

However, he continued, it is also true that "no one deliberates about things that cannot
vary" and so prudence cannot demonstrate anything of necessity; it is not the same as
science. It is, nevertheless, a "rational quality, concerned with actions in relation to things
that are good and bad for human beings." Prudent people deliberate about means to
some end we can reach through action. They are, therefore, skilled at arriving "by
calculation at the best of the goods attainable" by humans.28

Like Plato, however, Aristotle was concerned with the virtue of Greek citizens and
noted that a principle concern of politics was "to produce a certain kind of character in the
citizens, namely to make them virtuous, and capable of performing noble actions," in
keeping with human functioning.29

Knowledge of the supreme good happiness provides a guide to the practical conduct of life
and politics should be regarded as the master, "architectonic" practical science because it
concerns the good of the state "a nobler and more divine achievement" than the securing of
the good of an individual.30 Even so, in the Aristotelian scheme, there is a higher life of
happiness for people than public life, for, even though the securing of collective good is the
business of politics, it is not an end in itself, but a means of securing the peace so that
individuals can attain the leisure to pursue the life of the mind in contemplation. This is the
highest end in life, one that parallels the highest function of human nature, which is
contemplative rather than active.31

There are two senses, then, in which the Aristotelian view of right action in the
practical realm can be deduced from human nature: the intellectual and the moral. If we
accept the premises that human function is "the active exercise of the soul's functions" and
that the function of a good person is to perform these functions well "in accordance with its
own proper excellence," then "it follows that the Good of man is the active exercise of his
soul's faculties in conformity with excellence or virtue."32 The notion of virtue as
functional or intellectual potency is explicit here. Excellence in a musician, for example, is
marked by one who plays well and an eye is excellent by virtue of its capacity to see
well.33 This notion of excellence as healthy balance parallels Plato's view of virtue as a
temperate mean, a state of equilibrium that enables the soul to achieve happiness.
Importantly, virtues embody those human dispositions that are capable of achieving
happiness or human well-being. It is the supreme good precisely because it is the activity of the soul in harmony with its natural function. This supreme good is also the end of a politics to study modes of ethical living that lead to collective well-being. The principle concern of politics is to produce virtuous citizens who achieve happiness through "complete goodness" of the activity of the soul. The soul, in turn, has both its rational and nonrational parts, both of which contribute to its functioning. "The seat of the appetites and of desire in general, does in a sense participate in principle, as being amenable and obedient to it." Thus *pathos* and *logos* participate in the soul's rationality. Aristotle noted that it is "correct to speak of the appetitive part of the soul also as rational . . . it is the rational part which, as well as the whole soul is divided into two, the one division having rational principle in the proper sense and in itself, the other obedient to it as a child to its father." Similarly, virtues are divided as the soul is, into intellectual and moral categories. Prudence (*phronesis*) is primarily an intellectual virtue and Liberality, temperance are moral virtues. Thus, when describing moral character, we do not speak of wisdom, rather we speak of a gentle or temperate character. But the interaction between intellectual and moral dispositions in prudential reasoning is more complicated. Aristotle maintained that "a wise man also is praised for his disposition, and praiseworthy dispositions we term virtues." Dispositions in this case are related to the function of *phronesis* to make right choices in particular cases. It is in the prudential movement from rule to case in context that we can grasp the Aristotelian understanding of the intimate connections between intellectual and moral dispositions among people of practical wisdom.

Prudence, it will be recalled, takes account of general rules as well as particular facts and actions. However, whereas the "locus of certitude" in science lies in a grasp of theoretical principles (*archai*), certitude in particular facts comes from a knowledge of particulars. And *phronesis* requires "knowledge of particular facts even more than knowledge of general principles." As such it is not a virtue of the young who lack...
practical knowledge based on accumulated experience, which is "the fruit of years." The "practiced eye" of prudence is not the perception of the special senses, but the sort of intuition whereby we arrive at something good. It is "correct deliberation" insofar as it rightly chooses a good.

It is a correctness of deliberation as regards what is advantageous, arriving at the right conclusion on the right grounds at the right time.

It follows then that prudence is more than luck or cleverness in reaching the end, a conclusion which suggests its connection to the moral virtues. Aristotle was arguing that prudence was not a matter of hitting upon the right end through chance or, indirectly, unintentionally, by evil means. In other words, we cannot judge prudential reasoning purely by its consequences. The prudent person characteristically chooses rightly, for the right reasons, toward the right end. Aristotle distinguished between ends and means to say that "Virtue ensures the rightness of the end we aim at, Prudence ensures that the rightness of the means we adopt to attain that end." The "practiced eye" he added "cannot acquire the quality of Prudence without possessing Virtue" because "the Supreme Good only appears good to the good" and so "it is clear we cannot be prudent without being good." This suggests a reciprocal relation with virtue, one which enables Aristotle to insist that "true Virtue cannot exist without Prudence." This is so because virtues as dispositions "regulated by Prudence. . . a disposition determined the right principle and the right principle is the principle determined by Prudence."

These right principles (ortho logoi) act, not as universals, Martha Nussbaum pointed out, but as "rules of thumb" or guidelines that are "useful for purposes of economy and aids in identifying the salient features of the particular case." They add "normative force" to past decisions made by people of practical wisdom, without conceding their automatic application to the case at hand. The person of practical wisdom perceives the contingent features of the case at hand that prevent a strict application of rule to case.
Particulars occasionally override the rule, adapt it, when its salient features cannot be
encompassed by the general rule. In this sense prudential reasoning is distinguished
from deontological ethical systems which apply universal rules to particular cases and from
a strict consequentialism that disregards wise deliberations of past cases. Neither is
prudential in the sense that neither seriously accommodates rule and case as each shifts,
according to circumstance.

While Aristotle rejected Platonic efforts to arrive at ethical certainty, he did not say
that general moral principles had no role in prudent deliberations; instead, he stipulated that
there was a movement between rule and case in particular cases. Knowledge of the general
rules for conduct could not, of itself, guide us through the "kaleidoscopic variety of actual
situations." One implication of this difference is that prudential reasoning, unlike ethical
systems that are either means- or ends-centered, contains no elaborate or systematic account
of its procedures, but remains flexible, in "outline" form. Indeed, the fragile connections
between rule and case that characterize prudence would collapse under the weight of a
detailed set of principles on any basis. Prudence, if it is to remain prudence, must be a
sketch, to be filled in with character and practice.

The notions of character and practice have implications for free will as well. We are
free to form our character, Aristotle thought, early on, as we develop our dispositions and
habits. Once formed, however, we cannot but act on them. In this sense, Aristotle
regarded immorality as a kind of mental blindness, not a failure of will. This parallels the
Socratic belief that doing wrong is ignorance; no one, Plato had Socrates say, knowingly
chooses evil. But Aristotle concluded that we are nevertheless responsible for this
ignorance during the period in which we form our character. He maintained, further, that
humans have the potential, an "innate disposition" to develop those virtuous habits that
prudence required for its functioning. In particular deliberations over prudential means,
phronomoi nevertheless rely on an "intellectual intuition of the absolute standard of conduct
which is the good life."47 The prudent person is "informed by an intuition of the good," which, when combined with well developed moral dispositions and practice, leads to "good deliberation, a correction that attains what is good." A good deliberation attains a probable truth, which he defined as "what all believe to be true" with respect to the right conclusion, the right grounds, and the right time.48 As in rhetoric, prudence begins from the probable and the common cultural sense, a shared view of human affairs as imperfect, that is, not capable of logical demonstration, but is nevertheless capable of correct resolution.

We can draw several key features of the Aristotelian conception of prudence which are relevant to contemporary perceptions of prudent deliberations. These include the absence of certitude in human deliberation; the necessity to make timely choices as the occasion warrants; and, the attention to the facts of particular cases. Aristotelian prudence also connotes a reciprocal relationship between the intellectual and moral senses of virtue, which enable right choices and borrows from the sense of virtue more generally as a habituated inner disposition, formed by long practice. In addition, prudence draws on several assumptions about human nature and experience. These include the human capacity for good and evil, the possibility of error, the natural desire to form stable political ties among themselves, and the argumentative force of collective experience to warrant claims in contingent matters.

Ciceronian prudentia

The Ciceronian model of prudential argumentation shares many Aristotelian features, although they differ in a few important ways. For one, Roman models of rhetoric and prudence place more emphasis on the ethical dimensions of discourse because there is more cultural skepticism about the human capacity to know and sustain either
philosophical or material truth. Prudential reasoning, as developed by Cicero and revived later by Quintilian, was grounded in the view, similar to the Greek, that the power of language can be used for good or for ill in the public sphere. But the Roman model is more explicitly concerned to produce the vir bonus, a good person who will speak eloquently and become a force for social good when speaking to largely malleable audiences. Rhetoric's potential for eloquent expression becomes a virtue (in the sense of power) within this framework when that potential is realized in the vir bonus. This view rests on the assumption that only a person of social goodwill chooses to bend rhetoric's potential toward good rather than evil ends. But the bonus of the vir bonus, as Thomas Conley reminds us, "does not refer to some interior state of grace, but to an exterior sort of virtue," that flows from the Roman sense of vir as virility or strength, as captured in the meaning of similar terms such as "hombre" or "Mensch."49

In terms of public deliberations in law and politics, Cicero arrived at his definition of the "good man skilled in speaking" (vir bonus dicendi peritus) by way of his position on New Academic skepticism and oratorical eloquence. The ability to argue eloquently on opposite sides of an issue (in utramque partem) became a crucial characteristic of Ciceronian prudential reasoning because, in the absence of certainty, this skill provided the best chance for the most probable truth to emerge from deliberations. This "many-sided method of discussion"50 on contingent matters, when joined to the art of rhetorical invention, assumed a more substantial role in Roman than Greek deliberations because it enabled deliberators to create rather than merely uncover moral truths. In the Roman scheme, the loci, or seats of argument, which constitute the common cultural sense, enable us to "discover new interpretations of facts or statements" that can lead to "greater" or "lesser" truths in the public sphere.51 The New Academic skepticism, which Cicero defended, differed from its earlier Greek counterpart in that disputation did not become its own end in the face of epistemological uncertainty. Since Cicero rejected the quietism this
type of skepticism produced in favor of the active life, he advocated a skepticism that allowed for a dialogue to air all sides of a question in order to judge and act on the most probable truth. Cicero termed this outcome of prudential deliberations _verisimile_, a "like truth" or "truth-seeming" result that provides the basis for action instead of a retreat from public affairs.  

Many of Cicero's views on the intimacy between rhetoric and prudence derived from his view of human nature, which reflect the Aristotelian view of humans as social and political animals. In _De Oratore_, Cicero noted that speech, which was the defining human characteristic that separated us from other animals, imposed a duty on us to use it well. He added that it was speech, not reason, that took humans out of the wilderness and made us into communities. The power of speech is a weapon to be used for good or evil, yet nothing works as well to protect civil rights. If speech is a civilizing force and we strive by nature to live together, ideally in civility, then we have a moral obligation to use speech for this purpose, to protect the civil arrangements speech enabled us to attain. Ernesto Grassi identified Cicero's insights into the metaphorical or imaginative use of speech as his major contribution to prudential ways of knowing. In the Ciceronian scheme, speech functions to transform reality through _ingeniium_, the ability to "catch sight of relationships." This imaginative ability has no deductive character and differs from demonstrative proofs, which lack the inventive character necessary to do the more important work of speech. Cicero insisted that the art of demonstrative proof, "if indeed it be an art, contains no directions for discovering truth, by only for testing it." The crucial task of speech, on the other hand, is to transform reality by our own ingenious ability to see and to make comparisons in order that we may create the truths that concern us in the immediacy of communal life. This social truth is not eternally valid, because it emerges in communal life in particular circumstances; rather, it seems to be true (_verisimile_), "true only within the confines of the 'here' and 'now'."
Speech, however, cannot achieve its goals to move an audience to near truth without a practical and theoretical knowledge of human nature and habits. Whereas Plato claimed that a person speaking the truth was eloquent enough, Cicero called upon oratory to make the truth eloquent, and looked especially to the opinions and dispositions of an audience who judge truths on their "common scales." Cicero also shared Aristotle's view that a standard of judgment guides prudential deliberations but held a more substantive view of virtuous dispositions as an inner certainty of appropriate ethical conduct. Nature, Cicero believed, bestows on humans the "faint glimmerings of insight" which become corrupted and squelched in the world. But, before that corruption, he maintained that

the seeds of virtue are inborn in our dispositions and, if they were allowed to ripen, nature's own hand would lead us on to happiness of life; as things are, however, as soon as we come into the light of day and have been acknowledged, we at once find ourselves in a world of iniquity amid a medley of wrong beliefs. . . .

The task in the political realm, then, is to recover those seeds of virtue and make language work for the common good. We cannot look to philosophy, which made an artificial split between the contemplative study of virtue and ethical public life to do this important social work of speech. Instead, we must develop eloquence as a public virtue, a force for social good in the world. Both wisdom and eloquence are required for productive public deliberations, Cicero concluded, for it is bad to speak eloquently but in ignorance; it is better to speak knowledably without eloquence; and it serves the commonweal best to speak both knowledably and eloquently.

Cicero outlined the particular duties of public deliberators in *De Officiis*, in which he contrasted theoretical wisdom (*sapientia*) to practical wisdom (*prudentia*). He reiterated the view expressed in *De Oratore* that virtue is in accord with nature and that public duties flow from humanity's social nature, a "social instinct, which is the deepest feeling in our nature." We are "united by the bonds of society" and exercise our skills best together
rather than in private contemplation. But even if this were not so, Cicero argued, we would, by nature, prefer to be in communal life. Each of us would seek to escape from his loneliness and find someone to share his studies; he would wish to teach, as well as to learn; to hear, as well as to speak. Every duty, therefore, that tends effectively to maintain and safeguard human society should be given the preference over that duty which arises from speculation and science alone.59

In light of this, the foremost of virtues is the practical wisdom needed to address the problems of social life which our natural gregariousness create:

And then, the foremost of all virtues is wisdom—what the Greeks call *sophia*; for by prudence, which they call *phronesis*, we understand something else, namely, the practical knowledge of things to be sought for and of things to be avoided. Again, that wisdom which I have given the foremost place is the knowledge of things human and divine, which is concerned also with the bonds of union between gods and men and the relations of man to man. If wisdom is the most important of the virtues, as it certainly is, it necessarily follows that that duty which is connected with the social obligation is the most important duty. And service is better than mere theoretical knowledge, for the study and knowledge of the universe would somehow be lame and defective, were no practical results to follow.60

Importantly, Cicero concluded, "it is not enough to possess virtue, as if it were an art of some sort, unless you make use of it."61

When the *vir bonus* follows nature, however, the morally right and the socially advantageous will be compatible with one another. This view of innate sensibilities reflects the Stoic influence on Cicero in *De Officiis*, since it follows the Stoic belief that the supreme good in living accords with nature. The Ciceronian implication is that if we consider our social nature when we deliberate vexed issues, we will act virtuously if we acknowledge the common good that is consistent with our private interests. What is morally right and what is advantageous will coincide when we understand that pursuit of private interests over common interests produces no real advantage, because it produces a greater social loss that hurts all citizens in the end. As an example, lying to protect a private interest or seek a personal advantage fails in the end because the individual lies of citizens
taken together result in an erosion of public trust in many realms. This loss of collective
faith in social intercourse is not in citizens' legitimate interests and eventually diminishes private transactions that rely on truthfulness.

Prudence, which reasons from these innate social sensibilities that know the common good, is thereby protected from lapsing into either cleverness or craftiness, two qualities that only pass for wisdom in this scheme. Cicero shared the Aristotelian belief that true prudence, "will discriminate between good and evil" whereas cleverness is indifferent to this distinction and craftiness may choose evil directly. Cicero's prudent orators address the contingencies of the particular case and their persuasive efforts are morally grounded in the natural order of things that seeks to preserve the commonweal. To the notion of Aristotelian phronesis, then, Cicero added substantive weight to prudence by saying that the seeds of virtue are innate in humans who, if not corrupted, will have a correct ethical intuition into correct behavior. He made the connections between rhetoric and prudence more explicit by arguing that public deliberations call for the eloquence of the good person speaking well; indeed, to have these skills is to act as a force for good in one's social world, which is a higher goal than the contemplative life Aristotle favored in his philosophical system. Whereas Aristotle continued to uphold the life of the mind in active contemplation of human happiness, Cicero favored practical over speculative wisdom as more worthy, given natural human tendencies toward sociability. For Cicero, the art of living united wisdom and prudence, with the latter defined as an imitation of nature and human reason. This is wisdom that differs from speculative knowledge. The prudent person is one who knows and loves the good, and displays those virtues publicly. Wisdom is best that has active power and seeks public display as a model for others.

Finally, the Ciceronian heritage includes more pronounced ties among rhetoric, prudence, and skepticism than are inherited from Aristotle. While Aristotle clearly acknowledged that both rhetoric and prudence deal with contingency, public goods which
are capable of being otherwise, his writings suggest considerable confidence in the natural force of truth to prevail in unhampered deliberations among rational people. Cicero also appealed to a dialogic standard of unfettered discussion that allowed all participants to explore the many sides of questions, but he did so in order that verisimilitude might emerge. In larger epistemological terms, he employed the various *loci* of rhetorical invention to deliberate and create social truths in contrast to Aristotle's use of invention to deliberate the means to discover them.

Remnants of the ideals of this classical legacy and of the assumptions that undergird this heritage persist in contemporary conservative deliberations over a number of cultural issues. An exploration of these deliberations with this legacy of prudential reasoning in mind provides some insight into which components of classical prudence are able to operate in current civil space and what adaptations are necessitated by shifts in those ideals and/or assumptions that derive from a changed cultural context. Specifically, changed understandings with respect to the inner dispositions of human character, the complexity of human nature, the normative force of personal and communal historical narratives, the perceived benevolence of the state as protector, and a continued intellectual skepticism in the wake of the Enlightenment project inhabit public space alongside vestiges of the classical heritage. In addition, some audience specific beliefs and norms with respect to expertise, religion, custom, kinship ties, and the larger liberal democratic tradition also serve to influence the nature of prudential reasoning.

*Setting the contemporary stage for conservative deliberations*

Just as Greek and Roman constructions of prudence can be seen as a pragmatic reaction to perceived extremes in Platonist and skeptical perspectives, contemporary views toward several virtues, including prudence, might also be understood as part of the larger current intellectual landscape. The effort to contextualize notions of virtue, to suggest their
force as a response to perceived exigent needs, permits a closer look at conservative prudence, since the proprietary interest in virtue that many conservatives voice derives in large measure from their understanding of that larger context.

Viewing prudence within its broader frame also suggests how prudence, which must adapt to the situation if it is to remain prudence, has adjusted to the cultural landscape. This adaptation raises specific questions about two salient features that characterize prudence, the practiced eye of experience and virtuous inner dispositions, since these identify its oscillating functions as an intellectual and a moral quality. If classical prudence was a sketch to be filled in with practice and character, a parallel picture of contemporary prudential reasoning should examine any shift in the moral force currently given to experience in guiding that practice, and the insights available by contemporary audiences to the inner dispositions of deliberators. Before addressing these specific components, however, it will be useful to point out several intellectual changes that influence contemporary approaches to public discourse.

The classical view of public deliberation was supported by a view of rhetoric as instrumental, a tool to empower speakers in their efforts to persuade audiences to choose one course of action over another. Citizens in this model were assumed to be rational and capable of freely choosing a particular action. The Enlightenment movements, in their various British, Scottish, French, and American manifestations, added theoretical and practical weight to these classical views of rationality. Earlier classical models, which were revived and extended by Renaissance civic humanism, attempted to infuse dialogue with criteria for a "civil" exchange of views, a willingness to hear alternative perspectives, and a respect for dissent.64 The Enlightenment project, however, attempted to add rigor to earlier hopes for a peaceful community through the power of rationality and the scientific method. Its early Cartesian expression proposed that the intellectual and moral progress of nations could be accomplished by applying the scientific method to the problems of society as well
as to the problems of nature. Harmony of the social and natural orders, a utopian "cosmopolis" as Toulmin characterized it, would result from the move to universal, general, and timeless propositions, away from received prejudices and the particulars of time and space.65

These European hopes for an ahistorical clean slate influenced American foundational thought as well. The connection contributed to a recent argument Gordon Wood advanced about the nature of the American revolution. Wood's position is that the American revolution was not a relatively mild and "conservative" revolt, as many characterize it, but a radical revolution on two bases: one, it destroyed old monarchical ties of patronage and kinship that characterized American colonial life and two, it changed the nature of authority in public life. Early on, Wood argued, American republican hopes expressed "nothing less than a utopian hope for a new moral and social order led by enlightened and virtuous men."66 Paine echoed the anti-historical Cartesian notion of the blank slate, which by this time had been extended by Lockean empiricism, when he predicted that America could be as "happy as she pleases" because "she hath a blank sheet to write upon." She had only to sever her ties from a Britain made decadent from its corrupt historical baggage in order to start on this progressive path.

But the virtuous citizenry the founders envisioned reflected classical conceptions of political virtue based on human sociability. Early American republican virtue was Ciceronian, a virile interest in the commonweal and a willingness to serve this interest in public life. Ciceronian public virtue, rendered most often as "disinterestedness" by the American founders, was viewed as more fragile in republics because it relied on citizens' willingness to rise above private interests without the threat of ecclesiastical or monarchical force.

This disinterest was thought to bloom most frequently among men of leisure because they were independent, in the sense of being detached from the particular interests
of business or finance. Women, precisely because they were not independent, were regarded as generally incapable of disinterest and therefore of meeting an important requirement of public life. Independent men, however, had an obligation to public service. Benjamin Franklin issued a Ciceronian caution to the leisured classes, warning them that when "love of philosophical amusements have more than its due weight" the republic suffered. Even Newton, he insisted, would have had to abandon his discoveries if the republic needed him to serve other public goals. "Public service was far more important than science," the inventor/statesman concluded. Disinterest as public virtue was also the basis of the Jeffersonian hope that ordinary farmers would become a font of public-spritedness by virtue of their independence. This self-sufficiency, as part of the constellation of temperate agrarian virtues, freed them from those demands of the marketplace that merchants and others who toiled in commerce faced. Later, the Federalists would make similar claims for lawyers and other professionals; namely, that somehow their distance from commerce enabled them to rise above it.

With respect to the general citizenry, there was something radical in the egalitarian and anti-intellectual belief that ordinary people were naturally disposed to participate in public issues that touched on the moral sphere. This disposition, rooted in a view of humans as innately social and political, translated into a belief that the common social nature of humans linked them together into a common moral sense. Human sociability contributed a sympathetic instinct "that made possible natural compassion and affection and that bound everyone together in a common humanity." This "moral gyroscope," a heritage of Scottish commonsense thinking, made the moral society and the resolution of public moral issues possible. Jefferson expressed confidence that if we "[s]tate a moral case to a ploughman and a professor, the former will decide it as well, and often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray by artificial rules." When the law intersected morality, the matter was just as resolvable since "[a]ny person of common abilities can
easily distinguish between right and wrong especially when the parties are admitted to give a plain story, without any puzzle from lawyers.”

The attempt to distinguish between the authority of expertise and the ordinary person's sensibilities extended to American religious experience as well. Nathan Hatch pointed to the "deep sensitivity to audience" in religious discourse that substituted audience values for clerical authority when shaping religious messages. This move paralleled the anti-Federalists' effort to establish a new republican equality in the political realm. The new order of the ages seemed to "declare a decisive expatriation from the past" in both religion and politics.70

Although the revolution legitimated the radical view that ordinary people belonged in the decision making affairs of religious and public life, both as rulers and voters, the debate between the Federalists and the anti-Federalists suggested another major shift in notions of American public virtue. While the Federalists envisioned a republican government capable of rising above the many factions of private interest, the anti-Federalists insisted that, among humans, the "engrossing motive was self-interest." The anti-Federalists lost the constitutional debate, but they left a legacy of legitimized self-interest in their view that "the promotion of private interests was in fact what American politics ought to be about." This legacy, Wood noted, set the terms of a debate over legitimate common interest that remain in deliberations today.71 Anti-Federalist views replaced the Founders' earlier ideals of a virtuous citizenry with new democratic goals that called for new public virtues. Instead of the elitist search for a few "great souled" leaders, as in antiquity, it would build a free society "belonging to obscure people with their workaday concerns and their pecuniary pursuits of happiness--common people with their common interests in making money and getting ahead."72

Hatch agreed that the shift away from classical republicanism was a genuine revolution because it democratized politics, religion, and many social relations. "Rhetoric
that had once unified people across the political spectrum now drove a powerful wedge between rich and poor, elite and commoner, privileged classes and the people. Federalists, as the elite professionals of the law and clergy, "heard the wisdom of the ages ridiculed as mere connivances of the powerful to maintain the status quo. They heard challenges to any authority that did not spring from volitional allegiance." This allegiance, Hatch concluded, would be won, not by the authority of custom, but by a "democratic art of persuasion" that took account of more populist than elitist impulses in audiences.

These republican challenges to received wisdom and communal beliefs suggest another important intellectual shift that bears on prudential deliberations in the rise of individual consciousness from its inchoate state in pagan formulations of rhetorical and prudential theories to a more clearly defined role today. Glimmerings of this consciousness emerged in Aristotle's *Ethics, Rhetoric, and Politics*, in which he addressed the social nature of humans and deliberative strategies which appealed to widely held cultural presuppositions. Even so, according to Black, the extant literature, reveals "a close knit society compared to our own" and a "more attenuated range of relationships" between individuals and their society. There seems little evidence that their factionalisms amounted to deep ideological conflict, which points to "the more nearly tribal character of the consciousness: to the constricted areas in which individual or subcultural variations could occur and to the silent reservoir of consensus which rhetorical transactions assumed." There was less challenge to these rhetorical commonplaces, Black argued, because there was less individual ego from which to challenge, less experience that audiences had of themselves as individual entities.

Gary Femgren traced a very different perception of individual consciousness in the Judeo/Christian heritage, in which individual consciousness was given spiritual meaning through the concept of the *Imago Dei*. Whereas the Greco-Roman view held that the value
of life was socially acquired through participation in a virtuous citizenry, a contrasting Judeo-Christian view argued that its value was inherently gained through the grace of God. This sanctity of life view, bound up with the notion of the *Imago Dei*, granted an essential value to human life which was ontologically different from classical thought. The belief that humankind was made in the image of God had the additional effect of bolstering a sense of individual consciousness, despite the long-standing hegemonic claim Christianity made for universal truths.\textsuperscript{76}

When the Christian consensus unravelled during the Reformation, many argue that individual consciousness intensified; with the rise of modernity "the Absolute State faced the Absolute Individual," as Maitland put it. In some sense, then, the notion of individuality which was sanctified by Christian theology seemed to strengthen during the period when the secular authority of sovereign states displaced ecclesiastical power. Black located two rhetorical implications for the nature of deliberations among audiences who saw themselves as more autonomous than tribal in consciousness: one, the stakes were raised for making up one's own mind outside a tribal mentality and; two, audiences faced incommensurable ideologies vying for their allegiance.\textsuperscript{77} The range of cultural beliefs and values available in deliberations as first premises or final moral arbiters was thereby diminished.

Machiavelli is generally set out as the prototype of a new politics that attempts to grapple with the problem of how to deliberate well in the face of diminishing consensus by divorcing political from ethical concerns. To many readers, this new politics seemed to mark a clear break with the Aristotelian conception of politics as the pursuit of the communal good life. The rhetorical crisis that Machiavelli articulated was the struggle to preserve a republic's continuity and stability in the face of change and corruption, a crisis he met by adapting pagan *virtu*. J. G. A. Pocock identified this rhetorical crisis as a "Machiavellian moment," one which would recur over the next several hundred years and
more recently in the American Federalist debates, when pagan civil virtue confronted commerce, and disinterest met private interest. While Machiavelli has invoked a wide range of positive and negative responses since publishing *The Prince*, many of which are reflected by the conservatives in this study, Isaiah Berlin has isolated Machiavelli's grasp of plural ends as his key contribution to the nature of public deliberations. Machiavelli's "originality" in the political realm, according to Berlin, was in his implicit affirmation that there can be no final solution for how to live well together. "After Machiavelli," Berlin contended, "doubt is liable to infect all monist constructions. The sense of certainty that there is somewhere a hidden treasure-the final solution to our ills . . . has been severely shaken." More positively, he added, we can draw the inference from Machiavelli that persuasion, pluralism, compromise, and toleration are the only viable deliberative alternatives for a politics that pursues incommensurate ends. The problem of incommensurability, Garver added, raised the stakes for prudence as well. Machiavelli signalled the inescapability of prudential reasoning in political deliberations over public goods by emphasizing the unstable relationships between rule and case and the "necessarily incomplete nature of prudential methods" that are part of the new politics for more autonomous modern audiences.

The pluralistic accommodation of prudence to incommensurability which Pocock, Berlin, and Garver isolate in the crisis of the "Machiavellian moment" was further exacerbated in nineteenth century thinking about human consciousness, when Freud and Marx identified concepts of a submerged and false consciousness. The notion of best interest was now a problem in itself, insofar as it was thought to be inaccessible or mystified by the power-driven interests of others. Since Freud and Marx identified realms of hidden or deluded consciousness, we express less confidence in knowing the modern inner or "private" self in public talk.
In addition to Enlightenment hopes for cosmopolitan progress through universal modes of rational thought; an American experience that seemed to celebrate a more egalitarian, individualist play of timebound and mundane private interests that "democratized" public virtue; and nineteenth century social and psychological theories that made interest a problem of inaccessibility or mystification, there have been more recent political, technological, and social shifts that influence current conservative deliberations. Politically, the climate for deliberations in established nation-states is somewhat different from its counterpart in fragile city-states of antiquity. Today, the concept of the ship of state has a different cohesive power than when Pericles defended it as the safeguard allowing Athenians to live "exactly as we please." For one, the state is not perceived to be as vulnerable to imminent collapse as a newly formed arrangement; for another, it is not seen by all citizens as completely benevolent. Leviathan forms of totalitarian regimes and impersonal bureaucratic structures have tempered the common cultural sense that a well-established state is what preserves and protects us.

Perceptions of liberty have altered as well in response to the tempered view of a beneficent state. To the classical view of positive liberty, understood as the right to participate in public life, an expanded liberal democratic perspective has added a concept of negative liberty, understood more generally as the freedom to be left alone. The problem of suicide, perhaps the ultimate challenge from a citizen for the right to be left alone, highlights this shift from pagan thought, since taking one's own life is no longer condemned categorically, in the same way that Aristotle condemned it, as doing harm to the city. And from Creon's role in Sophoclean tragedy to defend a view that citizens should desert a brother before deserting the state, we have more recently, in 1939, heard E. M. Forster extend Antigone's part to say that, if the choice must be made, "I hope I should have the guts to betray my country."
If progressive political hopes for modern nation-states have not been fully realized, the promise of the scientific method to provide unlimited technological gains has similarly been questioned, especially in the twentieth century. Objective scientific inquiry, the argument previously ran, was valued for its own sake. Since its pursuit was thought to be legitimately insulated from any moral concern arising out of its use, it was left to others, generally theologians and moral philosophers, to speculate on the ethical application of advances in scientific knowledge. WWII gains in the physical sciences and medicine, however, undercut Enlightenment hopes for technology already undermined by the century's geopolitics. The Manhattan Project is perhaps a paradigmatic case of a growing cultural discomfort with a faith in the dichotomous relationship between facts and values. Robert Oppenheimer, director of the WWII Manhattan Project to develop the atomic bomb, liked to separate his efforts from the dirty hands of politics and politicians, whom he referred to as "those sons of bitches." After Hiroshima, however, Oppenheimer was heard to remark, "we're all sons of bitches now."

After the war, advances in biology and medicine raised more questions, this time about ethical protocols for human subject research and the use of knowledge gained from Nazi medical experimentation conducted in concentration camps. Later, the same fruit of WWII experimentation that enabled biomedicine to extend and alter human life, also generated a new field of bioethics to speculate on the morality of the extensions and alterations. Paradoxically, it seemed, the technological and scientific advances spawned by rational inquiry served, not to end deliberations over how to live well together, but to make the need to address the moral uncertainties that attended those gains more urgent.

The effects of breaking faith with rationality as it operated in political philosophy and technology infected social arrangements as well, when various social movements in the late 1960's and 1970's made a similar move against authoritative reason. The split between facts and values that was part of the modern dogma of rational faith was, as
Wayne Booth saw it, countered with the view that all rationality is suspect, with obvious negative effects on the possibility of productive public moral discourse. The various social and political movements countered with the view that groups liberated from traditional institutional forms of oppression would be able to engage in a genuine participatory democratic dialogue and change the world for the better.

Bringing forward these interrelated doubts about the power of rationality and technology to solve human problems; the general flight from authority and authoritative reason, as evidenced in university campus revolts and liberation movements by women and minorities; and the leftist critique that efforts to know our best interests are continually sabotaged by those who want to maintain current power relations, we can make a final intersection with postmodern arguments that operate in the same civil space that conservative deliberations occupy.

Postmodernist reactions to the assumptions of modern rationality introduced deep skepticism regarding the public sphere as a locus of prudential reasoning, at least in its classical formulation. In a summary of the postmodern critique, Martha Cooper has isolated several challenges to western assumptions about the viability of public deliberations. She maintained that the public sphere cannot operate, either from classical republican or modern liberal democratic traditions for several reasons related to the postmodern condition. The crucial bar Cooper identified centered on the belief that the instrumental value of rhetorical skills to empower speakers is inequitably distributed among citizens. Since not all citizens participate equally in public talk, some are voiceless and therefore powerless. In addition, the free flow of information that is vital to prudent decisionmaking that takes account of the facts of the case is also not equally accessible because information is frequently mediated in ways that curtail open deliberations. Moreover, the complexity of issues and perceived corruption among public figures has created a level of public apathy that discourages the participation of citizens on a number of issues and defers their resolution to experts. This
bureaucratization and professionalization of issues that moves deliberations out of the public sphere and into private venues makes the problem of the expert a significant barrier to prudential reasoning among citizens. Finally, Cooper argued, the force of social movements, while making legitimate gains, has deleterious effects on public deliberations by dominating the public sphere with single issue, ideological factions that dehumanize opponents, a strategy which undercuts attempts at free and open discussion among equals.  

Postmodern critiques share the pagan skeptic's view that the effort to search for a foundation of knowledge is doomed, and that the attempt to supply apodeictic truth is merely hubris. Postmodernists reject these efforts in favor of a relativism that reflects perspectivism, plurality, fragmentation, and contingency. The orderly world of reason becomes alternately cheerful, playful, and eclectic; ironic, cynical and nihilistic; or some combination of the two. None of these responses, however, trusts that science or reason is necessarily beneficent or humane. In sum, it is a condition that is looking for new values to guide what is viewed as a new cultural context and a new age.

It is at this point that we meet up with contemporary conservative voices, who are among those cultural observers who advance many of the same critiques that postmodernists offer, especially regarding community, personal experience, and the seeming dehumanization that attends rational progressivism. They too are looking for values to guide a new age. These broader "negative discourses," postmodernists note, "prepare the way for the neo-conservative attacks on contemporary culture in the 1980's." They also serve to situate both left and right critiques within a larger context of the collapse of Enlightenment/modern efforts to fashion a rational peaceful world. Those conservatives and liberals who continue to speak the language of the liberal democratic tradition continue to hold out some hope for that tradition's ideals while the radical left
rejects liberal/humanist assumptions, particularly as they affect public deliberations. Each perspective laments the ability of public moral discourse to address issues productively and blames, in turn, the extremes of arid rationality, emotional irrationality, or the nihilism of inwardly turned, hedonistic citizens who occupy a cheerfully robotic or deeply pessimistic state.

The search for prudential reasoning in this discourse takes account of a cultural context which bears some surface similarities to pagan skepticism but reflects several deeper differences. It is particularly concerned with alterations in the two key components of classical prudence: the practiced eye of experience and inner dispositions. This scrutiny forces a deeper look at what conservative prudence can look like when personal and communal experience is itself contested, and the inner dispositions of deliberators yield to an outer, rhetorical voice.

---

1 This is George Kennedy's characterization of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*


3 Toulmin, *Cosmopolis* 28-29.


6 Jonsen and Toulmin 51.

7 Jonsen and Toulmin 50-52.


10 Bowra 73, 83.

11 Knox 84-85, 89.


13 Knox 23-25.

14 Knox 28-36.


18 Vickers 243.


24 Jonsen and Toulmin 62.


27 Aristotle, *Ethics* VI.v.3-4.


34 Aristotle, *Ethics* I.xiii.18.


38 Aristotle, *Ethics* VI.viii.5.


41 Aristotle, *Ethics* VI.xiii.3-5.

42 Nussbaum, 299-300.

43 Garver, 3-19. For the concepts of deontology and consequentialism, Garver substitutes "algorithms" and "heuristics" to note two extreme approaches to ethical issues that differ from prudential reasoning.

44 Jonsen and Toulmin 67.

45 Nussbaum 312-13.


47 Kahn 32-33.


49 Conley 48.

50 Cicero is referring to the Socratic form of dialogue in this quote, praising his method for bring philosophy "down from the heavens" into the cities to "ask questions about life and morality and things good and evil." *Tusculan Disputations*, J. E. King, trans., Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann and New York: Putnams' Sons, 1927), V.iv.10-11. Later, Quintilian will make similar claims that a true orator can only be a good person because the dignity of the subjects of public deliberations demands a good and just person who knows and will speak to what is virtuous and honorable. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, H. E. Butler, trans., Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), XII.1.4-8.

51 Conley 36-37.

52 Jardine 260-63. The "New Academic" skeptics viewed themselves as heirs to Plato's Academy and the multi-voiced discussions of the Socratic dialogues for which it was known.


54 Cicero, *De Oratore*, II.xxxvii.157.

56 Cicero, *De Oratore* I.xiv.63; I.xxiii.108-09; II.38.157-59.

57 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* III.1.2-3.

58 Cicero, *De Oratore* III.35.142-43.


60 Cicero, *De Officiis*. I.43.153


62 Cicero, *De Officiis* III.xvii.71.


64 Scholarship addressing the Renaissance revival of classical themes is very extensive in the humanities literature. For a discussion of this renewal from the perspective of rhetoric and and its intersecting foci in prudence, see for example, Kahn, Seigel, Grassi, Garver, and Self.

65 Toulmin, *Cosmopolis* 67-69.

66 Wood 189-90, 231.

67 Wood 104-05, 109.

68 Wood 109.

69 As quoted in Wood 240.


71 Wood 257.

72 Wood 369.

73 Hatch 23.
Hatch 214.


Black 76-79.

Pocock vii-x, 513-52.

It is not so much that the notion of incompatible or incommensurate ends were unknown in antiquity, according to Berlin. It is more the case that the pagans regarded these problems are relatively uncommon, whereas Machiavelli suggested that they are part of everyday life, and that disparate goals operate, routinely, within most of us. Isaiah Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli," *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, Henry Hardy, ed., (New York: Viking Press, 1980), 74, 78-79.

Garver 110-12.


Knox 85-88.


88 Best and Kellner 15.
Conservative response to the post WWII context

Conservatives addressed the numerous issues arising out of a changed cultural context from a self-acknowledged position of intellectual weakness in the early part of this century, a position reinforced in 1949 by Lionel Trilling's observation that liberalism was "not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition" in American culture. Even so, Trilling added, there was a conservative impulse in American life that was "very strong, perhaps even stronger than most of us know."\(^1\) Conservatives took note of liberalism's intellectual prominence in the academic "adversary culture," and sought to add intellectual weight to the underdeveloped conservative sentiment he had identified.\(^2\)

During the 1950's, a series of conservative publications articulated the tenets of this impulse, in both direct and indirect responses to Trilling's observations. Some of these included Friedrich von Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*, Richard Weaver's *Ideas Have Consequences*, Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*, and Eric Voeglin's *The New Science of Politics*. During the same period conservative journals such as *National Review*, *Modern Age*, and *The Intercollegiate Review* were initiated to formulate a conservative response to social and political issues. Conservative research centers such as the Hoover Institution, the American Enterprise Institute, and several foundations were organized to offer grants and fellowship support to conservative interests.

In addition to this formalized response to Trilling's remark about the liberal state of the American academy, some conservatives sought to rehabilitate the views of middle class
conservative Americans whom, they believed, had been disproportionately pilloried since the Scopes trial in 1925. After H. L. Mencken coined the term "booboisie" to parody those religious and cultural conservatives who opposed a progressive liberalism, religious conservatives first retreated then reorganized to address Mencken's dichotomy between backwater "rubes" and enlightened city dwellers, Luddites and progressives.³

The social movements of the 1960's and 1970's represent a watershed period in shaping the nature of conservative deliberations. Wills' hyperbolic observation that the "'60's play the same role in modern conservative thought that the Fall of Man does in Christian theology" reflects the depth of the split between left and right at the time. Wills also alluded to a subsequent nostalgic turn that conservatives attempt to redress today. "Prelapsarian America was an idyllic time before the Present Ugliness," he pointed out, and, as a result, the 60's continue to polarize.⁴ To the extent that the protestors believed that needed reforms were only partially achieved, an air of restiveness occupies civil space, a sense that, as Tom Hayden recently put it, "the '60's are not over."⁵

It was during this period of the late '60's and early '70's that some liberal academics rejected the goals and methods of the new left and found themselves, by default, aligned with conservatives on political and social issues related to legitimate authority; free speech; standards of reasonableness and civility in public debate; and academic freedom.⁶ In decrying perceptions of uncivility and irrationality, they echoed numerous issues raised by Booth who, from his perspective on campus unrest at the University of Chicago, attempted to work out ethical standards for discourse through a rhetoric of assent.⁷ These disaffected liberals, now called neoconservatives, also sought intellectual parity with the new left through a variety of publications such as Commentary and The Public Interest as well as a number of books included in this study. These texts articulate several major conservative assumptions that bear on their deliberations since they hint at those virtues
which should, from their perspective, form the basis of prudential reasoning in the public sphere, given a changed cultural context.

The first of these assumptions links conservative interest in a virtuous citizenry with a faith in the moral legitimacy of the status quo. The line of reasoning to establish this link begins with the relationship that many conservatives make between private and public virtue. Several express an interest in how and where citizens learn the private virtues associated with self-regulation, such as inner discipline, moderation, and other-regardedness, because they believe that the personal virtues of self-government serve them as citizens in a republic that requires virtuous citizens more than it needs virtuous political forms. They care about sustaining the republic because they believe it is a morally legitimate arrangement, especially vis-à-vis alternate forms that have been available historically. In short, virtue matters because the republic matters, and so it is of crucial important that these virtues form the basis for prudential reasoning. They also form the basis of outer or rhetorical dispositions, in light of modern skepticism about the ability to know the inner self in public.

A second assumption holds that the left has rejected many of the ideals that form the basis of a morally legitimate republic. This rejection, conservatives believe, forms a cognitive screen through which the merits of capitalism have difficulty penetrating. This screen includes a sweeping condemnation of America's national character and easy praise of others', as Kirkpatrick put it. The left's disdain for capitalism is viewed by conservatives as a rejection of American values and assumptions about the good life; it also explains why empirical data to support America's relative merits do not speak to the left. Since they reject the values that undergird the country's success, they reject the mythos of the American Dream, Horatio Alger, homely virtues, and the promise of reward for hard work. In rejecting these core values, the left is perceived as assuming the persona of the adversary in the culture. As Trilling noted, the desire to play the adversarial role is what
defines the left today. Since part of what defines the adversarial class is an explicit rejection of bourgeois and patriotic virtues, the left cannot simultaneously speak the language of middle class virtues in public talk and continue to position themselves in opposition to those core cultural values and beliefs that undergird public moral discourse. In light of a disaffected left, conservatives believe that it remains for them to speak of virtue.

A third major assumption, arising out of the perception that the left has rejected democratic ideals, claims that liberals have abandoned public talk about crucial virtues in favor of the value-neutral language of the social and behavioral sciences. This abandonment has produced a vacuum that conservatives see a serious need to fill, given their assumptions about the republic's dependency on the habituation of certain virtues. As guardians of a morally defensible republic, they assume a similar caretaking interest in those virtues understood to sustain it. Since conservatives believe that they are the voices of public virtue by default; they also view that they are the legitimate heirs of classical prudential reasoning insofar as prudence is thought to concern itself with moral reasoning about public goods.

A final assumption links conservative conceptions of liberal language as value-neutral to views of an impoverished public sphere. Like several communitarians on the left, many conservatives share a view of public discourse and public spiritedness as being in a state of decline and disarray. Unlike the left, however, conservatives attribute this decline in large part to the absence of public deliberations over those public and private virtues that can form a legitimate basis for common cultural aspirations specified in policies and laws. Conservatives claim that when liberals abandoned moral language as a frame for the discussion of value-laden issues, they substituted a less useful, incomplete language of toleration and expertise, especially therapeutic expertise. In doing so, liberals have disrupted a workable equilibrium in public talk, seen as a relatively stable atmosphere in
which citizens could debate differences more or less as equals. Therapeutic language and expertise demeaned many middle class and conservative citizens, thereby undermining their relative equal footing in the debates over many issues. Conservatives, in lauding certain virtues associated with conservatism and the middle class, seek to restore citizens to a respected place in public dialogue. In giving them a voice, they hope to restore a vibrant public sphere in which citizens will want to take part. Since a goal of classical prudential reasoning is to choose what is right at the right time for the right reasons, therapeutic reasoning, which tends toward nonjudgmental modes, is perceived to be at variance with prudence. Conservative prudential reasoning, in speaking to the problem of the expert, addresses a tension that pervades prudence in its classical form.

These assumptions and claims about virtue uncover conservative values and beliefs in the realms of human nature, history, and an appropriate lexicon of public moral language. These three, in turn, help shape a view of the elements and process of conservative deliberations. In clustering the discussion of prudence around these key concepts of human nature, history, and moral language, we can identify the normative force of various conservative virtues and thereby trace the contours of conservative prudence, noting its intellectual and moral properties and the relationship between and among prudence, cultural change, and continuity. While conservative approaches to human nature, history, and language contribute to several major assumptions that undergird conservative discourse on virtue, these views are neither discreet nor isolated, but reciprocal and dense. With respect to human nature, if we know conservative beliefs about how humans are innately, we can note the logical consistency of social and political arguments derived from such a view. But we can also note the larger historical connections, since many conservatives derive their view of human nature from their understanding of history. Many value a "sense of history" precisely because they believe the past reveals human nature to us. We know human nature by experience, and history is
the empirical teacher on this matter. In a very real sense, conservative historiography is a description of human nature, in models, events, patterns, and intellectual strands. Without an assumption about a settled or stable base of human tendencies, there would be far less conservative valorization of a history seen as the common fund of human experience about that nature.

With respect to the language of prudential deliberations, history is the teacher as well. History, as the totality of human experience, offers patterned responses, institutional forms that emerge in response to human tendencies and needs. If history is a stage on which humanity is displayed, then the prudential process will be concrete, passionate, and context-bound; we cannot arrive at the wisdom it offers through purely rationalistic, intuitive, or imaginative reasoning. The historical stage counsels a cautious pragmatism, looking to experience, not abstract reasoning, to judge the consequences of our ideas. The conservative emphasis on experience encourages a comparison with classical views of prudence that also relied heavily on the normative force of collective experience in maxims, customs, and laws. Cicero, in noting that prudence had to have a memory of the past, an understanding of the present, and foresight of the future, made similar emphases. But the virtue displayed by prudence is, as Pocock noted, "the ability to make such use of one's own experience, and that of others, that good results may be expected to follow." Thus, prudence is "Janus-faced" in its use of experience as it attempts to innovate in the face of contingency, bridging "the gap between innovation and memory, statute and custom, present, future and past." We can look for conservative understandings of prudence in these gaps, as they reason from the past to the present with an eye toward future consequences.
Human Nature

Conservative interest in virtue derives in some measure from a particular view of human nature that contrasts sharply with some humanistic and behavioral science understandings. The relationship between theories of human nature and virtue in turn has several implications for conservative approaches to social policies and civil life. Put another way, theories about innate human tendencies help shape a conservative ideology, understood both descriptively and prescriptively as a worldview that generates a call for specific collective action. The metaphysical issues surrounding concepts of human nature, such as spiritual immortality, free will, moral responsibility, determinism, and the nature of good and evil, lead to conservative prescriptions about the good society and virtuous citizenship. These assumptions in turn determine the language conservatives use to discuss political, social, cultural, and even economic issues. Conservative assumptions about human nature demand a normative language because they focus on ways we ought to deliberate and act, given our natural tendencies.

Conservatives often embrace a view of human nature that draws heavily on Aristotelian and Ciceronian notions of human nature as innately social and political. They rely also on Judeo-Christian insights into human imperfection, the capacity for both good and evil, and the drive to understand oneself in relation to others and to God. In combination, these pagan and Christian notions of human frailty and possibility contribute to a conservative regard of humans as inherently social, flawed, and self-regarding, although capable of enlightened self-interest in the name of the public good. Together, these characteristics suggest a human nature that is more fixed than plastic, more aggressive than cooperative, more autonomous than environmentally dependent, and more ethically accountable than exempt from the consequences of behavior. If we position this view of naturally social but competitive and self-interested individuals within the realm of political and social issues, we can easily conclude, as many conservatives conclude, that much of
our difficulty lies internally, within our imperfect natures, and not externally, in inherently flawed or oppressive institutional arrangements. The focus on the internal brings conservatives naturally to a discussion of virtue, both private and public, because it is the inner lives of humans that need close attention and not, say, family structures or the dynamics of the democratic process. It is the inner disposition of citizens, which we know by its public articulation, that forms the basis of conservative understandings of prudence.

The crucial conservative issue arising out of this view of human nature is how to regulate the inner life so that we may regulate the collective life, which, being social animals, we want and need to sustain. It is, they agree, a very different question from one that might emerge out of a Rousseau-like view of human nature as infinitely malleable, perfectable, cooperative, and naturally good. It differs as well from a Hobbesian or Lockean view that pulls aggressive humans together in "chilly associations," out of need. While, individually, conservatives differ in their emphasis on certain human characteristics, most state their position in opposition to perceived leftist ideas about human nature, which they regard as misguided on one basis or another.

**Human plasticity**

For most conservatives, leftist political and social theories misunderstand human nature as more plastic than static. The notion that we are totally malleable by nature, a Lockean *tabula rasa* at birth, suggests an environmental determinism to George Will, with significant detrimental consequences. If it is the case that nurture virtually overwhelms nature, Will argued, then society and not ourselves is the cause of our troubles. But, he reasoned, if it is true that we cannot be anything we are shaped by society to be, then what we are, innately, is the cause of at least some of our troubles. For Will, inner responsibility is the outcome of a fixed nature, a view closer to Aristotle than Cicero. It also suggests a Puritan influence, which emphasizes an inherent duality of good and evil
within, versus the Ciceronian optimism that innate human virtue would flourish if not contaminated by some aspects of social life.

Will invoked Bruno Bettelheim for support to say that nothing dies harder than the belief that society is the source of human imperfection and anxiety. Quoting Bettelheim, he noted that there "is a widespread disinclination to let children know that the source of much that goes wrong in life is due to our own natures--the propensity of all men to act aggressively, asocially, selfishly, out of anger and anxiety. Instead, we want our children to believe that all men are inherently good." Children know better, Will asserted, and so should adults. We should know that children are not undergoing an unending process of becoming; rather, they possess certain universal imprints of human nature that society ought to guide toward a conception of a moral life.10 Too many children are raised on The Little Engine That Could and The Power of Positive Thinking, which, Will concluded, raises expectations beyond social practicality. "No wonder there are so many democrats," he mused.11

Jeane Kirkpatrick shared Bettelheim's claims for innate human aggressiveness. She cited Marx's plan for a "new, noncompetitive, unconflicted, unaggressive" humanity that will emerge once economic exploitation has been eliminated as evidence of a serious flaw in all utopian schemes. Kirkpatrick looked to Soviet dissidents as attesting to the relatively fixed nature of humanity, as evidenced in their resistance to an ideology that subverts innate human self interest, for example, in advancement, in the need for transcendental beliefs, and in the striving for personal freedom.12 The notion of innate human competitiveness that Kirkpatrick alluded to arises often in this body of discourse and partially explains some conservatives' rejection of cooperative schemes in many spheres of social life as vaguely leftist and therefore suspect.
Innate sociability and cultivated civility

Although Kirkpatrick agreed that we are social animals, she contended that we are not born knowing how to form ourselves politically; we are neither civilized nor organized at birth. Citizenship is socially constructed; unlike bees and herding animals, we are not born knowing how to arrange ourselves into communities. Public talk about socialization and citizenship is therefore unquestionably appropriate and inevitably normative.

Will agreed that civilized behavior must be cultivated, partly with reticence and decorousness to guard against too much self-expression. The language of psychology tends to break down civility in the name of honesty and justifies genuinely obnoxious, asocial behavior, from his perspective. Citizens should be gentlemen and gentlewomen, Will proposed, which is why we ought to be more attentive to those mores a social observer like Miss Manners addresses. She concerns herself with those habits that are the true regulators of society, that allow civility and civil discourse to flourish. Will noted that Miss Manners wisely speaks against the noble savage theme. She knows that children are oafish and ignorant and that child rearing is therefore a civilizing activity that prepares them for the civil discourse of citizenship. Will maintained further that it is precisely because humans are socially inclined that we ought to be interested in a politics that concerns itself with the ethics of that inherent sociability. He opposed utilitarian and mechanistic conceptions that organized individuals out of fear or mutual defense to prevent chaos.

Michael Novak added that, since we are more social and political than rational animals, we respond to images in both social and political institutional forms. It is therefore important to get the initial metaphorical insight "right," since both realms rely heavily on normative images that speak to our sociability. Specifically, the melting pot metaphor incorrectly characterizes the human impulse to sociability. Unlike Kirkpatrick and Will, Novak expressed more ambivalence over the ethical merits of cultivating civility as a civic virtue necessary to the conduct of democratic processes. In his earlier writings,
Novak severely criticized civil behavior as a WASP mask for more subtle violence toward ethnic sensibilities. The Americanization process of civilizing immigrant groups, he argued, seeks to replace their preference for direct confrontation and explicit expression of anger with cool reason. This rationality is often a veneer of civility that justifies WASP hostility, condescension, and prejudice. In more recent texts, however, he seemed to have assimilated that emphasis on reason and civility in public debate over the common good. He relied heavily on Aquinas's definition of civilization as civil discourse, the view that civil society "is constituted by acts of such respect-by rational persuasion, rather than by coercion." Since societies generally fall short of that ideal, Novak, like Will, concluded that we ought to judge a society's civil virtue by the level of civility it routinely expresses, that is, the frequency with which citizens display mutual acts of respect.

**Human capacity for good and evil**

Conservative rhetoric in public moral argument over private and civil virtue appropriates the egalitarian impulse in democratic concepts for normative purposes. Just as democracy assumes that citizens are capable of self-government, so too are citizens capable of the democratic virtues upon which the vitality of democracy depends. The corollary to the view that, democratically, we are all capable of achieving certain virtues is that we are morally responsible if we fail to accomplish this task.

The democratic assumption about human nature posits that we are generally capable of pursuing our own interests and that individuals usually know those interests better than others know them. The assumption holds that very few citizens will choose to pursue genuine excellence but liberal democracy does not inhibit those rare pursuits. Moreover, Irving Kristol asserted, the Founders had the insight to see that self interest was sufficiently "far sighted and prudent" to permit the communal impulse to thrive alongside self interest. They understood self-interest to be the "most reliable of human motivations on which to
build a political system." But they also believed citizens to be capable of the republican virtue of disinterestedness; on "critical occasions" they could transcend private interest and devote themselves "directly and disinterestedly to the common good."18

Leftist challenges to self-interest as materialistic, philistine, or spiritually empty, are more focused on the vices of democratic capitalism than on the inner life of citizens. This leaves it to conservative defenders of the democratic impulse to offer what they believe is a much needed corrective in public talk over those virtues that bend that impulse toward the public good over time. Specific theories about human nature contribute to a conception of conservative insights that stand in opposition to critical theories of false consciousness, an idea most regard as paternalistic, arrogant, and more than a little totalitarian with respect to self-interest. Conservative beliefs about human nature also exhibit Thomistic overtones, (which are, in turn, Christian extensions of Aristotelian thought) in the assumption that policies and norms which seem to follow natural tendencies are therefore good because they foster a fuller development of our nature.

Conservatives who defend self-interest as a virtue are concerned to articulate how it fits within a concept of civil virtue. The task, if one wants to sustain the democratic capitalist tradition with a virtuous citizenry, is to infuse a natural human tendency to maximize self-interest with ethical dimensions. The problem, as Kristol sees it, is how to talk about virtue within an urban mentality, since we no longer have agrarian models of self-government associated with "moral earnestness and intellectual sobriety" to tame our inherent bias toward self-interest. We need to find ways to talk about self-restraint in a more isolated urban environment, he noted, but, he added, that environment is also detached from an awareness of any relationship between personal character and effective government. "If things go wrong in our democracy, the persons we are least likely to blame is ourselves."19
Conservatives frequently ground the moral legitimacy of democratic capitalism in the belief that the system takes account of human nature's capacity for other personal virtues that add up to enlightened self-interest. Political regimes that are "true" to human capabilities are on safe ethical ground on several counts. For one, Gertrude Himmelfarb argued, in taking people as they are, a political regime is more likely to produce a "more efficient and prosperous economy and a freer polity and society." It will also be more genuine, more authentically "moral because it requires no violation or transformation of human nature. It takes people as they are and as they always have been, as human beings capable of being enlightened as well as selfish—enlightened precisely because they are selfish, because their 'self' naturally embraces family and community, religion and tradition, interests and values." This is the "democratic ethos," which is undergirded by the universally accessible, common virtues, the "modest, mundane, lowly virtues--hard work, sobriety, frugality, foresight that are within everyone's grasp. They do not assume special breeding or class, social status, talent, grace, or money." Himmelfarb recalled Victorian middle class values of "thrift, prudence, diligence, punctuality, self-discipline, self-reliance as the common virtues accessible to all for cultivation in democratic systems. The Victorians, she noted, correctly understood that political equality presupposed moral equality. She argued that even the Chartists, who comprised the most radical of Victorian reformers, expected that the poor could embrace and live up to these values, that class and economics did not include differences "of character or nature or spirit." Against Marxists and other social theorists, Himmelfarb argued that these virtues were genuinely held as enlightened self-interest. Theorists who claim that these values were merely false consciousness condescend to workers, treating them as deluded children or victims who cannot know their own interests.20 Robert Nisbet agreed and added that modern liberal bureaucracy makes the same leftist mistake by treating citizens as children. He cited Tocqueville's characterization of bureaucratic regulation in democratic life as "absolute,
minute, regular, provident, and mild," a parent to keep us in a "perpetual state of childhood" as prescient in this regard.\textsuperscript{21}

The democratic virtues are also classically liberal virtues insofar as they locate "responsibility and authority within each individual." We are, in Kantian terms, free moral agents. Himmelfarb saw the British Victorian period as a valuable historical model of this crucial tie between liberty and the self. The emphasis on the self necessitated moral self restraint. The more internalized this restraint was, the less need there was for external control, in the form of coercive laws. Today's liberal, according to Himmelfarb, has shifted this responsibility for moral restraint to the state, and so it takes a conservative to remind us of the crucial links among freedom, virtue, and self restraint. "Yesterday's liberalism is today's conservatism," Himmelfarb argued, because liberals stopped using moral language. When liberals transferred responsibility to the state, it shifted moral agency away from the individual, and, eventually, public talk about virtue. If responsibility lies outside an individual, there is less need to talk about the virtues attached to moral agency. Since agency, and therefore responsibility, lies outside the individual, then he or she has to be characterized in other ways, usually as deluded, sick, or oppressed. So long as individuals are perceived in these terms, it is not useful to talk about the virtues of the sick, of children, of the oppressed; it is only useful to talk of compassion, which, from conservatives' perception, is much too thin a term to sustain a liberal democracy.\textsuperscript{22}

Conservatives link the preservation of virtue to a preservation of liberty, which they regard as the only reliable bulwark against an increasingly oppressive state. Liberty, in turn, rests on citizens' own capacity for self-control; thus, the stakes are very high if the language of virtue is removed from deliberations over public goods. We are likely to lose liberty when we lose this underlying moral framework for discussions. Conservatives see their role as articulating the relationship between freedom and virtues accessible to all, which can be expressed only in moral language.
In addition to being capable of virtuous behavior, most conservatives believe that human nature includes a large capacity for evil. Many perceive that liberals have abandoned the concept of evil in their effort to gain important individual rights. Novak contended that when liberalism overturned the old regime they became inattentive to the human capacity for evil, too complacent with regard to "the threat of darkness from within every human heart." Liberalism today neglects "the internal life of human beings: the struggle for character, the learning of moral and intellectual habits, the quest for God, and the battle against egoism, the flesh, and the demons."23

We are on much wiser ground in social policy, Robert Nisbet reasoned, if we acknowledge that human nature is, because of this capacity, not perfectible. Since humans are flawed, and display their capacity for evil regularly, social progress to improve large numbers of individuals at once is neither predictable nor assured. The "glorification of human nature, the belief in the intrinsic goodness of individuals," the modern trend that began in the Renaissance, has destroyed the social fabric, according to Nisbet.24 For the same reason, utopian plans do violence to human nature in their reliance on the ability to produce massive behavioral changes that will lead to universal harmony. Nisbet recalled Aristotle's observation that class conflict was a persistent aspect of human nature to claim that it cannot be eradicated. The pervasiveness of conflict, he insisted, cannot be "doubted by anyone who ever bothered to look at the real world."25

Attached to the notion of human imperfectibility is the conservative view that humans are not equal. Kirkpatrick maintained that it was the false liberal assumption in human perfectability that produces unwarranted faith in the ability to bring about some desired conception of progress, especially through egalitarian plans. We cling to a false belief in absolute equality, Kirkpatrick noted and forget that many of our inequalities are rooted in human nature and cannot be eliminated by government fiat.26 Nonrational defenses of social and individual differences are denigrated in the liberal scheme and are
replaced by the view that "all peoples and societies should strive to organize themselves upon a rationalist and scientific paradigm." 27

Rationalist utopian plans forget that humans, being unequal in talents, have a desire to press their advantage. It "is natural for people to want their preferences elevated," Kristol observed, and therefore it is a perversion of human nature and "a bizarre inversion of priorities" to expect a laissez faire attitude in manners and morals alongside an oppressive welfare state and highly regulated market to produce a just society. 28 Will agreed, and noted that government interests had been reversed, with disastrous results among the poor. 29

On an international scale, Kirkpatrick argued, the consequences of removing evil from our vocabulary are potentially disastrous. Foreign policy extends our beliefs about human nature into more dangerous realms for Kirkpatrick with large consequences. Reiterating a conservative theme that ideas have consequences, she noted that the consequences of giving up the notion of the human evil include a weakened and vulnerable U. S., internationally. Since we no longer believe in evil, Kirkpatrick observed, we refused to take Reagan's evil empire seriously. Thus, our collective will to fight is sapped. Instead, we "regularly deny the existence of evil and explain away its manifestations as a response of the weak to the strong. As there are no bad boys, so there are no bad governments. It is only necessary, the theory argues, to change the environment in order to alter the behavior." 30 This translates into an uncritical belief in progress based on a misguided view of human nature. She quoted Saul Bellow's observation that progress assumes "that each of us is at heart trustworthy. Each of us is naturally decent and wills the good." A failure to believe that human nature is flawed has unwanted political consequences. Since we deny the persistence of evil, especially on the international scene, then efforts to resist it are not political virtues but vices. Moreover, all flaws are located within our own political system and not from any danger from competing regimes. This
translates into a rigorous doubt about our merits while giving the presumption of goodwill to other nations. Other nations receive every benefit of good intentions and we engage in "systematic doubt" with regard to "our seriousness, competence, good faith, and good intentions. Blaming ourselves is the opposite side to the coin of denying the menace outside." The outside menace of Soviet evil was real to Will as well, who chastized Reagan for expecting personal charm to overtake communism.

Domestic political and social problems arise out of the imperfection of human nature as well, from Kirkpatrick's perspective. She looked to experience to note that power tends toward abuse, that self-interest and the tendency to tyranny is part of human experience. And it is by human experience that we know human nature and its capacity for good and evil. In light of this we pursue happiness and liberty within the framework of a constitution to rule political life. We cannot reform human nature through Platonic models of virtue, through a good ruler or through the imaginative control of the symbolic environment. Moreover, the personal virtue of citizens is not enough to bring about a good society. Quoting the Federalist papers, she argued that "the prudence and love of liberty of the American people" were not enough. Their virtue was necessary but not sufficient to control the political effects of human weakness; only "a properly constructed constitution could produce that happy effect."

All of this suggests an association of liberty and virtue, a willingness to put moral reins on the urge to be free in conservative deliberations. Nisbet noted Burke's insight that people "are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites." There is nothing innate in humans that guarantees the success of democracy, which is why the Framers spoke of the human "tendency toward mischief, evil" and assumed that a range of intermediary institutions and Judeo-Christian morality would make democracy work. The institutions are the font of public virtue; it is
through family, kinship, and locality that we habituate the virtues that lead to good citizenship.34

Christian insights into human nature

Part of Christian understanding of human nature as flawed and capable of evil rests on our communal experience in original sin, our 'metaphysical communion in sin," as Buckley put it. "Guru chasing" of the sixties affirmed his belief in "man as a religious animal."35

Human nature also has a drive to understand itself as human, a need to justify a choice to live one way and not another. This universal impulse, which Novak called "intelligent subjectivity," can be good in two ways: it encourages fidelity to the criteria we choose to live by; and, it subjects the criteria to others for judgment. Since the drive to understand is also a drive to know the good, it is the root of human wisdom, it discriminates, shows insight. Humans display virtue then in the Aristotelian sense of intelligent knowing, but also in the moral sense of volition, a good will to understand what is good. This virtuous impulse to understand takes on a political dimension when it asks how we ought to act with others. As such, it unites believers and nonbelievers alike, since we all need to answer the political question of how we ought to treat each other. Believers add a religious dimension in the claim that human interest in self understanding is connected to a drive to know God. We can contemplate necessary political virtues without a belief in God, and reach a kinship based on friendship, mutual defense, and comfort. But this is essentially an isolating move, Novak argued, one that makes humans insignificant. Can we develop public virtues without a belief in God, be good collectively without him? The answer seems to be yes, Novak replied, but with the unfortunate consequence of diminishing ourselves.36 Novak concluded that since human nature wants to understand the self and the self in relation to others, it is in our nature to pursue both
personal and social ends; acting according to nature will tend to make the personal and communal aspects of our drive toward self-identity coincide. For Novak, prudential reasoning over public goods must take account of this will to understand in terms of something larger than ourselves.

In the American tradition, he noted, Madison's understanding of "private rights and public happiness" revealed this insight. In the Catholic tradition, the final end of humans is communion with God, so humans are always ends not instruments for someone else's end. A good society is one in which this aspect of human nature is respected, each is free to pursue this end, that is what unites humans together. This theological basis of universal human dignity is a forerunner and compatible with political freedom and equality in democratic systems.

Kristol argued that history offers no examples of political freedom that were not based on economic freedom in the form of private property and free commercial relations between consenting parties. This is because it is in human nature to value individual as well as social prosperity; humans want a share of the collective wealth. Also, their beliefs and values differ so their ideas about virtue vary as well. Only in a monastery or Jewish Kibbutz will we find historical examples of commonly held virtues and common renouncement of wealth strong enough to override personal freedom. It is "political romanticism" to imagine that we can ever achieve more than a "pretense of consensus" on a large scale. Liberals have made a shift from a welfare state that helps people live the kinds of lives they choose to prescribing socialism. This ends in freedom for the state alone. Conservatism, being truer to human nature, and a spirit of pluralism with respect to interests retards the subtle shift of power from individuals to the state. Buckley, in critiquing a collectivist bias in economics at Yale, spoke of socialist tendencies that reflected an unnatural egalitarianism in Keynesian economics and liberal-biased political science.
The proceeding discussion reveals several intersections between conservative views of human nature and their various approaches to practical reasoning over human affairs. What conservatives believe about human nature is a matter of some interest to a discussion of prudential reasoning since those beliefs have a significant influence on conservative perceptions of the purpose and goals of the deliberative process itself. In general terms, this discussion has shown that a given view of human nature drives the nature of the deliberations because beliefs about the former will dictate possibilities for the latter. In addition, the conservative attention to human nature, as revealed in this chapter, points to several specific influences on contemporary deliberations.

The conservative effort to recover pagan modes of practical reasoning is tied to similar efforts to bring forward classical views that stress an innate sociability in humans. Attached to the Aristotelian and Ciceronian view of humans as social and political beings is the belief that this inborn gregariousness contributes to a natural predisposition to engage in discourse over human aspirations. But, conservatives say, we are unlike bees, insofar as we are not born skilled in those virtues necessary to accomplish the deliberative work of public life. The implication for prudential reasoning is that it ought to attend to and valorize those traits necessary for us to pursue the good life together. Human limitations in the area of political organization thus contribute a somewhat communitarian rhetoric among some of the neo-conservatives examined in this study, one which stresses the collective will to locate those attributes needed to pursue what they perceive to be common aspirations.

Conservative efforts to recover a view of humans as intractible, rigid, and prone to error also contribute to and reinforce a similarly conservative bias in prudential reasoning, namely, that since humans are less easily manipulated or changed than some believe, public deliberations should give the presumptive weight to those relatively fixed institutional patterns that reflect the somewhat rigid humans who make them up. This view of human nature makes up the rhetorical boundaries of public deliberations over institutional forms
because conservatives insist that the expression of the rhetorical imagination must not exceed the natural borders set out by human propensity. Human nature tells conservatives not only what institutional forms are likely to be successful, a truism of political philosophy generally speaking, it also tells them what virtues can and ought to be the subject of practical deliberations on a range of political and cultural issues. While human nature is insufficient to provide a full moral vocabulary for deliberations on several issues, it does offer the boundaries for achievable goals. Put another way, the conservative view of human nature provides a rhetorical constraint in public talk by setting dialogical limits on the goals and purposes of the deliberative process itself.

Another influence on prudential reasoning gleaned from this discussion of human nature is that prudence does not deliberate over what we might become, but attempts instead to decide what might or might not follow from a decision to act, as a consequence of how we are innately. Thus questions for deliberation will frequently take the form: what happens if we do x, given our knowledge of a flawed human nature that craves community but is not born knowing how to make a peaceful one? Or, how do we cultivate a virtuous citizenry to make up a peaceable society? Views of human nature that hold humans to be socially determined in more oppressive ways ask: How do we act to free individuals from certain social constraints so that they may seek to fulfill their potential? Practical reasoning that is based on conservative views of human nature thus provides a different set of questions to drive the deliberations from those who espouse competing views; similarly, they will provide answers that differ from those that might flow from questions posed within a framework of considerable human pliancy and potentiality.

In addition, conservative views of human nature are what enable conservatives to attempt a recovery of classical models with a level of confidence since their views assume a relatively stable human nature across time and space. There would be no use in attempting such a recovery if humans were thought to have changed in some fundamental fashion with
respect to their need to organize social life in particular ways. In attempting to recover this view of human nature in tandem with classical modes of reasoning, conservative deliberations also set out one of the ways prudence has changed, since the "nature" of human nature is itself contested in contemporary life. Put briefly, contemporary deliberations are more rhetorical than classical formulations with respect to understandings of human nature since what was given about human nature in Aristotelian and Ciceronian deliberations is a point at issue among contemporary deliberators. Today's deliberators express understandings of human nature and social conditioning that reflect not only the theories of Plato and Aristotle, but also the formulations of Marx, Freud, Sartre, and Skinner, among others.40

In sum, conservative prudence, when viewed from the related orbit of human nature, takes a somewhat pessimistic turn that leads to modest expectations. Politics, as the "art of the possible" because of its contingent nature, must nevertheless yield to what experience has taught us about the frailty of human nature, which is to temper our expectations. However, our collective experience offers positive lessons as well, in the form of customs, tradition, and institutions which offer some comfort in their predictive power. A fuller view of conservative approaches to prudential reasoning requires a much closer look at their use of history, both as personal and collective experience, to guide us from the past to a contingent future.


As quoted in Wills, "The '60's" 41.


Pocock 24-25.


Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards* 123.


18 Kristol, *Reflections* 57.

19 Kristol, *Reflections* 63-68.


21 Nisbet, *Twilight* 54-57.

22 Himmelfarb, "Victorian Values" 30-31.

23 Novak, *Free Persons and the Common Good* 141.

24 Nisbet, *Conservatism* 42.


28 Kristol, *Reflections* 77.


30 Kirkpatrick, *The Reagan Phenomenon* 34.


33 Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards* 225-27.

34 Nisbet, *Twilight* 64-77.


37 Novak, *Free Persons and the Common Good* 32.

39 Buckley, *God and Man at Yale* 49-113.

40 For a brief overview of several rival theories, see, for example, Leslie Stevenson, *Seven Theories of Human Nature*, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973).
CHAPTER IV
THE PRUDENTIAL LESSONS OF HISTORY

The relationship between the meaning of history and the nature of prudence is an intimate one for conservatives since, from their perspective, historiography provides both the method and a moral frame for practical reasoning. Conservatives locate the wisdom of the past in several places, most notably in western intellectual traditions; American foundational documents; historical figures and events; and intermediary social institutions. These loci illuminate virtues that, since they are deemed necessary to sustain a morally legitimate republic, become the subject of how to deliberate well over those public goods associated with its sustenance and vigor.

History, then, yields concrete lessons from texts, people, events, and historically evolved institutional forms. Wills quoted Chesterton to express this preference for a material past against an imaginary future. It is a deferential passage, in praise of past heroes of intellectual and moral excellence with whom conservatives seek communion and strength. But there is an antagonism in the deference, something almost poignantly taunting about the inability to measure up. It is worth citing in its entirety for its revelation of the conservative's almost palpable connection with a vivid, literal, and superior past, against which we must test present accomplishments and future dreams, a connection that prudence cannot do without:

The future is a blank wall on which I can paint my own portrait as large as I like. If I am narrow, I can make the future narrow. If I am mean, I can make the future mean. I cannot make the past mean. I cannot make St. Catherine of Sienna mean. I cannot make Plato narrow. In the past I have real antagonists, men certainly better, braver, or more brilliant than I.
Among the dead I have living rivals. In the future all my rivals are dead because they are unborn. We are fleeing from our fathers because they are faces. We are attracted to the future because it is what is called a soft job. In front of us lies an unknown or unreal world which we can mould according to every cowardice or triviality in our own temperaments. But if we look back at our fathers as they gather in the gate of history, we see it like the gate of Eden, described by one of them in verse which we cannot imitate: "With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms."  

**Historical wisdom**

*Affinities between the historical method and the prudential method*

The ability to search the past for useful insights into the present and the future is, for many conservatives, synonymous with prudential thought and action. "Conservatives have a retrospective cast of mind," Will pointed out. "Their chief virtue, prudence, involves mining the past for instructive precedents and proven institutions and procedures" as guides for nurturing a virtuous citizenry. Nisbet added that the habit of "turning to the past for inspiration and for models on which to base present policy is deeply ingrained in the conservative tradition." The historical method thus looks at the present so as to see its anchor in the past. It is not, he claimed, "just a constant looking back in time, much less the telling of narrative tales; it is the method of studying the present in such a way as to bring out all of what lies in the present," and the "infinity of ways of behavior and of thinking which cannot be understood fully save by recognition of their anchoring in the past." The past is a "continuous, seamless growth, organic not mechanistic in the nature of its institutional relationships. Prudential reasoning over policy changes takes account of accumulated cultural wisdom that is "astronomically superior to any wisdom imaginable" in one person; it is wiser than governments can comprehend. Nisbet summarized a meta-narrative of history in sociological terms and quoted Mannheim's insight into conservatism to suggest the virtuous properties inherent in our collective past:
For progressive thought everything derives its meaning in the last analysis from something either above or beyond itself, from a future utopia or from its relation to a transcendent norm. The conservative, however, sees all the significance of a thing in what lies behind it, either its temporal past or its evolutionary germ. Where the progressive uses the future to interpret things, the conservative uses the past.6

The historical method suggests a realistic, rather than optimistic or idealistic intellectual stance toward practical reasoning among many conservatives. History serves to keep us anchored in human experience and, in doing so, keeps us in touch with human frailty. After all, Kirkpatrick reasoned, we have little if any evidence in history of human perfection. Echoing Machiavelli, she noted that idealists err when "they begin not from how things are but how they ought to be," and regularly underestimate the complexities and difficulties concerning how to get there from here."7

Kirkpatrick observed that the lessons of history tend to make people conservative, although sometimes reluctantly so. "I would rather be a liberal," she noted, but "the cumulative force of what must be called 'truth' and history has caused me to think more deeply, not so much about my basic values and commitments to our institutions--which have been firm and clear all my life--but about the social and historical processes that are relevant to the preservation of those values and institutions." Foreign affairs, she added, is "a distinctly conservative method . . . it is almost surely the method of history, or the insistence on learning from experience, through the examination of experience. We can know ourselves, as we can know the Soviet Union, through a careful examination of actual conduct and of concrete circumstances."8

History is thus the guide to political wisdom that, among other things, signals a need to guard the heritage of cherished beliefs and values. The key assumption is that history as empirical evidence on human behavior ought to yield a consensus of interpretation, at least with respect to the value of the intellectual patrimony. Kirkpatrick voiced the conservative caution that a flawed human nature, which is subject to cultural
constraints, argues against an intellectual stance that celebrates an unlimited human potentiality. Like others, she cited Ortega y Gasset to say that false perceptions about human possibility lead to "demoralization" and "degeneracy." History teaches us that the realistic range of human possibility must "confront limits of body, talent, temperament . . . our time, our place, our civilization. We are bound by the culture we have in common, that culture which distinguishes us from other people in other times and places. Cultural constraints condition and limit our choices, shaping our character with their imperatives."9

The normative meaning of history

Himmelfarb and Nisbet also identified moral lessons in history that led them to oppose public policy that restricts its historical interests to the bureaucratic structures, geography, and economic factors in past experience. They countered with a humanistic objection to what they regard as a misguided, objective, and overly distanced view of the past, the "deeper realities" of history versus the historiography of, say, Tacitus's Annals. Himmelfarb emphasized that historical methodology that mimics social science does not employ a normative language of praise and blame; in doing so, it tends to obscure what Trilling called the "evils of the long view." The danger of this objectivity, Trilling noted, was that "when seen from a sufficient distance, the corpses and the hacked limbs are not so very terrible, and eventually they even begin to compose themselves into a 'meaningful pattern'."10

The idea of progress

Despite Trilling's caution against a moral densensitization that accompanies a long view, the conservative historical consciousness nevertheless searches for legitimate meanings in history when confronting the idea of progress. History as progressive movement also offers insights into the possibility and likelihood that we can strive toward
or attain a state of equality and justice. Prudential historiography must negotiate between the extremes of historical determinism and narrative deconstruction. Conservatives differ in the faith professed in the idea of progress although several continue to view the idea's instrumental value as a dogma that spurs a kind of competitive inventiveness that wants to do more. From this perspective, the idea of progress draws on past accomplishments to sustain its dynamism and continued hopes for the future. As such it is a useful faith. Nisbet compared the loss of secular faith in a gradually better future to a loss of religious faith and quotes Chesterton's remark that the danger accompanying a loss of faith is not that people will consequently believe in nothing, it is that they will believe in anything.\textsuperscript{11} Chesterton's defense of religion as a restraint on unbridled belief parallel many conservative fears about the loss of secular faith in a past that can guide us to a better future. The analogue runs that just as without God, anything evil is possible, so too without a sense of history, any potentially harmful social scheme is imaginable.

While Nisbet cited Chesterton in a utilitarian appeal in melioristic views of history, other conservatives, notably Will and Lasch, disagree to say that one of the wisest lessons history has to offer us is that the idea of progress is dead. A few other, such as Novak and Kirkpatrick, take a middle position to say that history teaches us that progress is possible but not inevitable. While these disagreements suggest the difficulties in locating a univocal progressive message in history, a consistent point for conservatives nevertheless remains: if we want to know the range of human potential, we look to history, rather than imaginative "rhetoric," as being authoritative on the matter. All we can be, in a large sense, is what history has taught us about what we have been in the past, not what our imagination tells us we might be in the future.
History as common moral sense

Prudence, since it calculates probabilities that one course of action is better than others, needs to account for the accumulated wisdom in its deliberations, which suggests a *prima facie* conservative and historical bias. But, while prudence cannot be a "fresh start" every time it is called upon to judge and act, it nevertheless has to decide a new case for which the present rule is inadequate. If conservative deliberations are to follow classical models, they must resolve the tension between the presumptive weight given to received wisdom when confronting proposed change and the need to make wise interpretive use of human experience. Prudence, as the "right reason about things to be done" displays its virtue "by making such use of one's experience, and that of others, that good results may be expected to follow." Equally important, then to the instrumental use of experience is the ability to insure long term stability through change. Prudential disruptions or discontinuities are not undertaken as ends in themselves, but as a means to a valued end that includes a stable, albeit altered, form.

Conservatives, in regarding the species as cumulatively, which is to say, historically wise, begin from a view that prudence embodies a kind of collective "second nature" in the form of a common moral sense about the lessons of experience. Since this second nature manifests itself in traditions and customs that take account of many others' experience, it suggests to them that institutionalized common sensibilities are more likely to respond to human needs than are the pleas of the relatively fewer people living in the present. Conservative reverence for history reflects its "trust in experience over abstract and deductive thought in matters of human relationships." Wills made the point by noting that what we trust is what we share, historically, in the form of "a language, a history, a concrete set of loyalties." While we do not agree on everything, we band together to preserve those things we love in common. Conservatism presumes this shared realm,
wants to insure its preservation because that is what self preservation requires. "Conservatism is the sphere of social affections."\textsuperscript{13}

This trust in experience becomes the basis for a faith in traditions viewed as the outgrowth of numerous human experiences and Burke's view of history as a multi-generational partnership influences conservative attitudes toward any rapid change today. Society, Burke insisted, is a relationship among the living, the dead, and the unborn. Following Burke, Nisbet argued that "the present is not free, as so much rationalist thought has been devoted to proving, to remake the social structure as fancy or 'a spirit of innovation' might dictate."

Conservatives insist that the common moral sense is a wise teacher. Buckley, for one, has been particularly forceful in the conservative defense of a wise patrimony, particularly in American foundational documents and major thinkers in western political philosophy. "Conservatism," he explained, "is the tacit acknowledgment that all that is finally important in human experience is behind us; that the crucial explorations have been undertaken, and that it is given to man to know what are the great truths that emerged from them. Whatever is to come cannot outweigh the importance to man of what has gone before." This conservative respect for a wise past is in turn a great respect for the human mind. Unlike liberals, Buckley pointed out, "we credit it with having arrived at certain great conclusions."\textsuperscript{14}

Similarly, Lasch has argued that a denial of the past as collective wisdom, when accompanied by a release of old taboos, traditions, and restraints, has brought no new wisdom, virtue, or peace to citizens, only a fervid, empty hedonism. Our culture's devaluation of the past, he proposed, "is only superficially progressive and optimistic. It reveals on closer analysis to embody the despair of a society that cannot face the future." Citizens increasingly see the world as dangerous and forbidding and so retreat into self-abortion in lieu of social action. They lack real hope for the future and so do not identify
with posterity or consider the continuity of the past in the present, especially in public deliberations. The optimism about "personal growth" and "self actualization," he countered, is more genuinely "profound despair and resignation. It is the faith of those without faith" in the past as a guide to the future.15

*Historical ironies in good intentions and the unintended consequence*

Conservatives maintain that sometimes the lessons of history are ironic, as evident in the preoccupation with the prevalence of the unintended consequence in human affairs. Given this concern, most view what they perceive to be good intentions with jaundiced eyes. A key assumption undergirding these twin concerns with good intentions and unwanted consequences relies on the philosophical principle that posits a moral distinction between good people and good actions. Kirkpatrick articulated this distinction when she conceded that, while personal habits of leaders can affect citizens' behavior, there is no reason to expect leaders to be more virtuous than they citizenry or to treat their personal failings more seriously, because they do not necessarily cripple good government.16 Conversely, there is no reason to believe that one's inner dispositions has much predictive power with respect to good decision-making in the public realm. The more reliable indicator, from this perspective, is historical experience, not personal character.

This view has particular vibrance for Novak, Lasch, and Kirkpatrick, who embrace a Niebuhrian view of collective action that points to the persistence of tragedy in human events and the capacity of well-intentioned, good people to blunder.17 Also significant from this perspective is the historical evidence of good produced by evil people. Conservative wisdom dictates therefore that we cannot decide wisely on a course of action based on the intentionality of advocates. Novak's appeal to Niebuhr highlights significant relationships among a conservative view of human nature and the meaning of history. It also signals a marked change in emphasis on the pagan role of character in prudential
deliberations that may have developed in part out of Christian insights into human nature. Even though Novak insisted that prudence rigorously attends to the here and now, in specific contexts that are subject to change, he invoked Niebuhr for his insights into the tragedy of history that arises out of more or less fixed human capacities for good and evil. We "need Niebuhr again" in these new contexts, Novak insisted, to remind ourselves of timeless truths about humanity and history. New programs, new hopes for progress, and the new class's optimism must confront a flawed human nature and our collective experience that speak to the potential harms of well-intentioned, rational planning. Novak drew on Niebuhr's assumption that power and self-interest pervade political life to say that we ought to frame our central political deliberations over ethical action in light of human limitations, especially as those limits are exhibited historically, in collective behavior.\textsuperscript{18} Kirkpatrick added that history tempers our good intentions with realistic expectations, given a flawed human nature and historical experience. When applied to foreign policy, Kirkpatrick again looked to the "cure of history" to provide a realistic attention to human rights in light of a workable context. She regarded the immediate context as the means available for appropriate ends; the larger context acknowledges the variety of human nature, and its capacity for both good and evil.\textsuperscript{19} This diminishes the role for inner character to play in public deliberations. In this case, it is not so much that we cannot know the inner character of actors, but that ethos is not a good predictor of decisions that will bring good results. Deliberators of high credibility can and do err. This is a major shift from Aristotelian and Ciceronian understandings that tie character to prudence in public life on the belief that character enables deliberators to choose good ends. It is because we have learned that humans are tragically flawed, conservatives seem to respond, that we can no longer give their character equal weight in deliberations, at least with respect to a virtuous ability to make good means and ends coincide.
**Foundational documents teach pragmatism within a larger orbit of ideals**

Wills located additional lessons of history in the American experience that struck a wise bargain between pragmatism and idealism, evident in the original intent of our foundational documents. The Founders are wise because they established the basis for a good and decent society and that evolved pragmatically, not ideally, from experience. With respect to the Declaration of Independence, for example, Wills noted that we should "honor the spirit of Jefferson" by attending to Jefferson's pragmatic intentions for the document. A close reading of the text, he claimed, would reveal its interest in freeing the colonies from British alliance in order to form other lucrative alliances. The document was not, he insisted, a "blank check" for "idealists" to champion every cause imaginable.

Ideals, for Wills, Kirkpatrick, and Novak, are valued for the effort we make to approximate them, not achieve them. We cannot achieve them, given a view of earthly life as a pilgrim's progress. We should not be surprised by the number of times we fall short of them, but we should celebrate the number of times we strive for them. Wills pointed to Abraham Lincoln, for example, as capable of making the ideal of emancipation concrete when it was possible to do so. Later, Martin Luther King, Jr. died for his contribution to the same ideal that he could not materialize in his own time. Both serve as cohesive forces on their own merits irrespective of success. Thus, we praise them and others who have died as not having died in vain because they displayed the virtue of sacrifice. The martyr bears more visible witness to virtue, which enables us to calculate the consequences of the sacrifice. Prudence must take account of ideals so it can calculate consequences more effectively. Thus, we articulate a set of ideals we want to bear witness to, commemorate martyrs to those ideals, and hope that this honoring is diffused into a citizenry who can then approximate those ideals. But it is the ideal that precedes and makes possible the martyr, so it is crucial to clarify the ideals so that we might produce heroes and martyrs to them.
In speaking of these ideals, Wills assumed a set of beliefs that he offered audiences for good deliberations. He believed that the wisdom of foundational documents can and ought to guide pragmatic decisions about loyalty and patriotism and that fundamental beliefs about the system's ideals should shape a view of how we valorize those who embody them. The heart of Wills' political conservatism and his approach to prudential politics emphasizes that "peace is the soul of society: keeping society alive, at peace with itself to the degree that it remains one society, is the first thing necessary. Let the wheat and the weeds grow together. Don't uproot the whole society to get at the weeds."22

Wills' conservatism, then, rests on two key Augustinian assumptions. One, the peaceable society is the good society because self-preservation is the chief concern. Second, the good society is not a just society because justice is not of this world, given our imperfect knowledge of which imperfect humans are saved and which are damned. For Augustine, society is merely a middle realm, a place where people come together, "united by accord on loved things held in common." As a transition, a pilgrimage on the way to God's justice in a heavenly city, it is only a way station. Following Augustine, Wills concluded that a politics that occupies this middle realm "has only process, not finality."23 Since human nature is flawed, we must give up justice as the precondition of a good society, and look instead to the realistic wisdom of history as preserved in our foundational documents.

In suggesting how to interpret primary sources, Wills noted that if we view the Declaration of Independence as Jefferson did, pragmatically and empirically, not romantically as Lincoln did, we will find a better clue to their value in deliberating well over public goods today. We should not look to public polls that show citizen controversy over the principles of the Declaration, and despair that the controversy signals an enervated civic will. It was a controversial idea from the start, Wills maintained, and does not bear on present levels of public virtue. Jefferson crafted a modest and pragmatic document to
declare ourselves independent, a country that was free to form other alliances. In short, it was a political compromise, whose spirit was debated then, as it is debated today.\textsuperscript{24} It was Lincoln, he has argued most recently, who gave it a loftier meaning and made its spirit a test of virtue in the Gettysburg Address. In doing so, Lincoln altered it from within" to give us a "new past" which carried a new ideology.\textsuperscript{25}

Kirkpatrick agreed with Wills to say that American foundational documents counsel tempered expectations with respect to the ideals of justice and equality. In the public realm, the Framers understood the distinction between ideals and pragmatic expectations, Kirkpatrick claimed. "Rights, they believed and I believe, are embodied in political and social institutions, not in rhetoric. They are the consequence of wise judgments, not of good motives. Their protection and their realization are always the consequence of complex arrangements; they always rest on patterns of social and political life rather than on individual virtues." Pointedly, she remarked that clues to our public virtue were not to be found in the imaginative rhetoric of Tom Paine's "inspiring slogans;" rather, they derived from a "careful web of restraints, permissions, interest, traditions woven. . . into the Constitution and explained in the Federalist papers."\textsuperscript{26}

Today, Kristol added, we are too arrogant with regard to the American foundational wisdom. The Founders understood that republican self-government rested on republican virtues of self control, self reliance, and a disinterested regard for the public good. The founding documents embodied these insights, which were derived from the drafters' own experience and historical understandings. Public virtue today involves a recovery of this past wisdom through piety and reverence and assumes that the Founders "still understand us better than we understand ourselves" with respect to democratic virtues. Importantly, if we can understand them as they understood themselves, we will be in a better position to "understand ourselves and our predicaments" because the founding documents still speak to our present condition.\textsuperscript{27}
Kirkpatrick and Kristol do not explicitly engage Wood's thesis that the American Revolution was radical, but insist that, on political grounds, it provided a stable transition. For Kirkpatrick, the American revolutionary past is a model of political stability. The Founders, in moderating Enlightenment ideas and their experience of tyranny, produced "a conservative revolution" that left a largely British political philosophy in place after the war. No break with history in the form of utopian plans were required. As empiricists, they looked to history and human nature to guide them. Novak also invoked the Framers to support the claim that "ideas apart from experience are nearly always mischievous, if not pernicious." Importantly, "the human race does not arrive at laws, traditions, customs, and habits apart from hard-won lessons." Classical liberals knew this and Aquinas knew it from Aristotle, which is why Hayek called Aquinas "the first whig." More to the point, the Founders knew it and drew on this older wisdom to reorder the colonial political system.

As revolutions go, Kristol agreed, the American experience was civilized and prudent insofar as made a transition to a new order without social upheaval or a reign of terror. Kristol noted that the Anglo-Scottish influence on our political system was more cool-headed than passionate. They looked to "calm historical sociology" not messianic fervor to advance an idea of progress. They favored a meliorism that linked progress to personal responsibility rather than to a moral vanguard. This bourgeois approach produced a decent, if not perfect community. The Founders, drawing on Locke and Smith, assumed only a weak consensus of morals, whose development was best left to family and church, while the government was run on "laws not virtue." They assumed these institutions would act as sufficient restraint on unchecked acquisitiveness while we pursued material success and a gradually better life. Today, Kristol believed, the question facing us in not whether the Founders were wrong but, given capitalism's material success and the breakdown of institutional restraints, whether we should reopen the older classical concern
with a virtuous citizenry. Kristol answered in the affirmative to say that in late capitalism
good deliberations need to recover the Aristotelian unity of politics and ethics to produce
virtue, given our social institutions' inability to do so.

Will agreed with Kristol that the American revolution, while it shook off English
domination, was a kind of evolution of related colonies into a community of shared
interests and values. It was unified "by the common endeavor of rebellion in defence of
traditional rights." He also agreed that we need to recover the classical conception of
politics as ethics. But he disagreed with Kristol to say that the question of the Founders
wisdom does matter, because on the key point of self-interest some of them were wrong.
The consequence of their wrongheadedness is that the Founders, especially Madison,
cannot help us work out a modern political philosophy. Madison merely pandered to self-
interest, pitting interest against interest instead of trying to shape it to more noble ends.30

Wills countered by saying that Madison is misread, especially by Will. Madison
did not trust the liberal view of the free play of ideas or interests and should be read in
terms of the American Enlightenment, a world of "classical virtues reborn," especially
Roman. If we wish to recover the classical view of politics we can look to the Framers.
The public man of the Federalist was the Roman "publius," an exemplar of disinterest, not
self-interest, who offers a useful lesson for today.31

Novak was concerned to locate shared interests and compatibilities between
American foundational documents and a Christian theology of human nature, concerns
which have important implications for a conservative view of practical reasoning over
public goods. Novak's more communitarian reading of the Founders' intent located an
implicit common good in the formal arrangements of the institutions. Civic virtue within
this framework consists of a loyalty to them, a willingness to link the status quo with the
common good even as we respect the plural interests of others, whose free will and dignity
as persons made them free to pursue their own interests. But our perfect choice is
communion with God, which in natural law, means that it is in our nature to tend toward a good choice, a Thomistic extension of Aristotelian thought. Union with God is "both the common good of humankind and the personal good of each." The political implication of this is that no government can frustrate this natural tendency, and must respect personal conscience and personal responsibility to pursue individual ends. In some sense, Novak maintained, when we are pursuing our personal ends, unfettered by the state, we are also pursuing the common good. When we act in accordance with our nature, the personal and the communal tend to coincide, at least in Aristotelian and, later, in Thomistic terms. Novak located a similar Aristotelian correlation in Madison's notion of "private rights and public happiness," and Tocqueville's rendering of "self-interest, rightly understood."

While the Framers understood human nature as flawed and self-interested, Novak pointed out that they also understood that laws were insufficient restraints on that flawed nature. They wisely calculated that the strength of the new republic would be borne by institutional strength in the political, economic, and moral-cultural orders and trusted that the coercive power of established social forms would sustain the newer democratic forms. They knew from experience and human nature that the best hope for achieving the common good rested in strong institutions. Madison wisely noted that "If men were angels, no government would be necessary" and Hamilton added a "Niebuhrian flavor" to the constitution through his efforts to check power. Hamilton understood the Niebuhrian insight that governments tended toward power even as individuals tended toward passion. Since there was nothing in the founders' knowledge of politics or people to say each would work for the common good, they relied on that "best oracle of wisdom, experience" to set up the three systems (political, economic, and moral-cultural) to check power and passion and let a common good emerge.

Novak has suggested that we read primary sources with these implicit communitarian ideals in mind. He located a symbolic social basis of our foundational
documents in the Seal of the United States: the eye of providence, symbol of the moral-cultural order of newspapers, churches, universities, and other free associations; and the twin bases of the pyramid, which we can imagine as the political and economic supports. The deeper roots of democratic wisdom, Novak contended, were in a Judeo-Christian tradition that structured "life around the intellect." Specifically, this tradition teaches that our nature "is not merely to reflect the world, to contemplate it, or to be reconciled with it, but also to change it, to analyze it, seek out its secrets, reconstruct it, complete it." As heirs to this tradition, we possess the intellect to fulfill our nature by creating the wealth of nations and systematic order in institutions that reflect our intellection and creativity. The Constitution is a "landmark" of intellectual creativity, whose originality and importance is not understood today. In the university today, especially, he lamented, "the general intellectual mood is to derogate" the importance of this foundational document, "even in some quarters to despise it, and quite largely to ignore it."32

Finally, Novak concluded, the Founders understood that liberty depended on the protection of the "unequal faculties for acquiring property." This, Novak emphasized, was a "wholly virtuous and legitimate inequality" that was rooted in "the normal diversity of individual natures, characters, and fortunes, and is essential for preserving liberty." Our common human nature demands equal rights of liberty under the law to shape our own property to a way of life; however, it does not insure equality of outcomes. E pluribus unum has a double meaning then. The unum is the enlarged orbit of the modern polity and the pluribus is the diversity that remains and is not to be assimilated, if only to keep destructive envy and tyrannous majorities at bay.

Thus the Founders were "better than their critics" in seeing the wisdom of their economic principles to promote love of a common good.33 They understood human nature as possessing free will, a flawed insight, and imperfect ability to choose the good. Yet, if the constitution could protect individual rights as ends not means as in socialism, it might
also achieve prosperity and liberty. Rightly understood, self-interest is enlightened self-interest that helps others too; it "perfectly expresses the social nature of the human person, in whose profound interest it is to exercize his liberty in free, kindly, and open cooperation with his fellows." Liberty and the common good are made to coincide, drawing on human nature to accomplish it. The enlightened self-interest cannot be accomplished without first learning the virtue of self-mastery, for part of liberty is liberation from "the chains of passion, ignorance, bigotry, self-enclosure, and intolerance." Once free of these, we will have "learned habits of liberty," whose Christian overtones of humility are unlike the aristocratic virtues of antiquity. Modern republican virtues have their greatest analogue in the redemption myth of a lowly carpenter and a lowly chosen people. It looks to human nature as social, purposeful, and capable of self-reflection. In "looking again" humans adapt, by taking account of others, tending toward a social order. This order arises out of the capacities of "reflective animals, whose most social faculty is practical intellect." The classical liberals who drafted a social constitution "trusted experience, observation and experiment." In addition, "by temperament and choice," they were "conservatives concerning habits and institutions. . . that is, they had great respect for the tacit knowing that accompanies experience, habit, tradition, and practical judgment."

The Founders' respect in turn becomes the basis for our own. From a conservative viewpoint, we ought to accept our shared patrimony as a legitimate, living force in present deliberations. Loyalty and gratitude are commonplace assumptions to begin a cultural conversation over the forms those virtues ought to take. Buckley maintained that the centrifugal forces of factional politics and high immigration rates can be offset by a shared loyalty that bears witness to a morally legitimate republic. Public virtue as love of the republic is evidences by one's "continuing affection and pride." and "first class" citizenship is evidenced by a good memory of what they has been given and what they owe. The cultivation of citizenship becomes, in part, the cultivation of memory to build
loyalty and gratitude for past benefits. Buckley added that our inheritance comprises a
community bond that extends beyond the state or the marketplace and recalled J. S. Mill's
"essentially conservative insight" that "everyone who receives the protection of society
owes a return for the benefit." Himmelfarb made a similar appeal to Mill, noting that his
appeals to liberty were not absolute. The belief that loyalty to one's land is a closed
question, "above discussion" even in open societies, is an assumption, she noted, that Mill
explicitly granted.37

Historical models of heroism

The surface inconsistencies between the conservative view that prudential
deliberations rigorously attend to virtue and yet discount its usefulness in deliberators can
be partially explained if we distinguish between the form and content of prudence. Many
conservatives imply this distinction by claiming that we deliberate intellectually over moral
substance, that is, the constituent properties of a virtuous citizenry that will lead to good
ends, but we cannot count on deliberators' personal moral character to get us to those good
ends. For this we look to history, and those past virtues, already validated by history, as
more likely to achieve good ends. The personal character of deliberators, history teaches,
cannot insure good results; we cannot know where a deliberator's good will might lead us.

In the case of heroic models, however, the relationship between the moral and
intellectual components is somewhat different. Conservatives celebrate and trust the virtues
associated with past models on the basis that, one, certain virtues are consistent with
human nature and aspirations as they have displayed themselves over time and, secondly,
that we have empirical evidence that these virtues achieved good results and because they
clarify and bear witness to cultural ideals. Consequently, when conservatives hold up
certain dispositions as virtuous, they see them through historical and Ciceronian lens to
note how they seemed to work out in the world, irrespective of any intrinsic goodness they might possess.

Nisbet lamented that we have lost our capacity to produce heroes, in the pagan sense of heroes as embodiments of a culture's ideals. He collapsed traits of excellence in heroes, saints, and prophets alike to identify models for the common virtues of courage, loyalty, and fortitude to emulate. We need heroes to foster a creative spirit that the "acids of modernity" destroy, he argued, especially the corrosive effects of modern egalitarianism and skepticism. Nisbet echoed several other conservatives' complaint that the collapse of hero-worship results in blurring the polarities of good and evil. With the destruction of this polarity today, collective talk about human behavior takes place in largely therapeutic terms.38

Buckley and Will, however, see pockets of heroism today. They pointed to the space program as evidence of the continuing heroic impulse in humanity as well as a pervasive human capacity for awe and wonder. The space program also reveals human capacity to face life-threatening challenges with audacity and boldness.39 For Buckley, space exploration exemplified classical notions of virtue as virile strength, manly courage and respect for the mysteries of the unknown which attend noble quests. In response to a woman's comment that the U. S. space program was an example that "boys will be boys," Buckley concurred, adding that at times, what it means to be a boy or man is to be a hero. In space exploration, astronauts go into space knowing that even with the most careful calculation they might die, an act of heroic courage.40 Will noted this same courage in Charles Lindbergh, as a forerunner of the space program. He was a genuine American hero, Will noted, by virtue of his bravery, solitary discipline, and "applied knowledge" rather than abstract contemplation that takes no risks.41 Both Buckley and Will held up Churchill as a hero for his persuasive abilities, and his willingness, as Will put it, to rule by persuasion and not the privilege that accompanied his aristocratic background. Will
concluded that modern democracy produces few Churchills and their public virtues of independence, imagination, spiritedness, character, and eloquence. In addition to his rhetorical eloquence, Buckley added, Churchill's heroism was tied to his willingness to speak the truth about the evils of Nazism. Both applied Ciceronian standards for American models of the vir bonus and valorized the power of oratory to make the truth persuasive.

Himmelfarb also sought to preserve historical models of heroism. She was concerned to defend a normative historical method that looks to large events, ideas, and individuals as instructive exemplars and employed the dictum that "no man is a hero to his valet" as a metaphor to defend this canonical approach. Her method coincides a view of human nature as largely stable over space and time, capable of good and evil, and thus able to reap present benefits from a repertory of past models. She extended the valet metaphor to argue that the entire leftist trend in revisionist historiography toward deconstructing texts, events, and people has made critics and historians the "valets" of democracy. Valets cannot see what is heroic or virtuous in a public sense; they see only the personal flaws in the people they serve because they, themselves, are small-minded and prosaic. Quoting Hegel, Himmelfarb spoke against a trend of "small-minded men, men with the souls of valets, who reduce historical individuals to their own level of sensibility and consciousness." Today, heroes are an anachronism and historians, as valets, undress them to reveal their private ordinariness. It is a particularly modern approach, she noted, in the name of democratic efforts to level; postmodern revisions that seek to "problematize" representation and celebrate difference are equally misguided. A better approach, Himmelfarb offered, is to wed a classical historiography of excellence in "minds and works" to a Victorian biographical style that humanized heroes by exposing "their private vices without denying their public virtue." In this dual approach, Himmelfarb made a Machiavellian distinction between the public virtues displayed by "great figures, great
events, great ideas--which actually determined the course of history for all people" and the private virtues of saints who are generally outside this realm.45

Himmelfarb conceded that historians are appropriately interested in ordinary lives, the mundane that speaks to private virtue (mundane or saintly) as well as the greatness, public virtues that transcend race and gender. Like Buckley and Will, she held up Ken Burns' Civil War documentary to note that we have models of patriotic virtue both in the public sentiments of Lincoln's speeches and in private thoughts of Major Ballou's letters to his wife. But, she claimed, efforts to shift the normative focus from canonical figures to the ordinary and mundane exclusively are elitist. When we reject a Hegelian approach that assumes a "universal consciousness," a capability of ordinary people to transcend their immediate circumstances, we trivialize and underrate human potential. To assume that ordinary people care only about their daily lives is academic arrogance, she claimed, "as if only a Harvard professor could be expected to care about his job, home, and children, and also about the last election." This trivialization also belittles free will, the force and freedom of individuals acting in history.46 "Historical reality" shows us the wisdom of the view that common and uncommon virtues are accessible to ordinary people.47

**Institutional wisdom**

Many conservatives draw on a tradition that runs from Aristotle and Cicero to Aquinas, Burke and Tocqueville to make a "clear distinction between social institutions and the political state." Each of these thinkers, Nisbet noted, regarded political forms as less important than the relationships between the political state, "whatever its form of government, and the several institutions of the social sphere." Each was concerned to prevent political power from saturating the social sphere, thereby constraining freedom. Nisbet traced a competing intellectual strand from Plato to Hobbes and Rousseau that represented a tendency toward centralized power at odds with a society of atomized
individuals. Conservatives, especially libertarian conservatives, valorize freedom and the social bonds of historically evolved social institutions which they regard as benign historical and cultural formations. Just as prudent historiography ought to take account of intellectual traditions, events, and people, conservative prudential reasoning should look to institutional wisdom as a guide to wise public deliberations.

In addition to a settled core of convictions emerging from the wisdom of intellectual history, institutional forms and functions also provide several first premises of prudential reasoning. Nisbet articulated the common assumption among conservatives that social and political institutions have arisen out of human need and wants and are formed out of a relatively benign interest in fulfilling certain desired functions. The innate desire for kinship and social inventiveness has brought about social, economic, and political formations, he pointed out, in the form of monasteries, guilds, universities, labor union; even organizations as seemingly disparate as the NAACP and the multinational corporation arose out of a social impulse. There is nothing esoteric about this sociability, Nisbet argued, since institutions comprise "all the ordinary relationships that bind human beings together and separate them from the horde." They also bear witness to human ingenuity. Importantly, this human ingenuity is a reciprocal social virtue: it both allows the variety of institutional forms to arise, and is nurtured by the forms themselves. This inventiveness is part of the collective wisdom developed slowly over centuries and explains the conservative suspicion of rapid change that might undo the benefits of laboriously developed understandings. In the same way that Aristotle identified phronimoi as people of accumulated experiential wisdom, Nisbet characterized wise institutions as repositories of accumulated collective wisdom. Institutions acquired their wisdom "by the same combination of perceived need and ingenuity that spurred the invention of clocks, mills, steam engines, art forms, and games." Will made a similar point, arguing that even games are ingenious inventions to ritualize commonly held cultural values. Done well, they
teach us "to appreciate worthy things, like courage and beauty" and by doing so deserve honor.49

Conservatives also stress communal functions as important in fulfilling the social aspect of human nature, the impulse to develop a social self. As a consequence of this view, they give presumptive weight to institutional strength and valorize the virtues nurtured by institutions when deliberating. Conservatives believe liberalism has raised legitimate complaints against the excesses of the social impulse, but have currently overemphasized the rights bearing aspects of our nature. Since the social conservative does not accept the left's critique of family, church, and corporate power as oppressive and inhibiting human potential, they respond to the liberal catalogue of institutional vices with a list of their virtues and regard themselves as caretakers of those social virtues that are a legitimate subject of public deliberations. They repeatedly argue that, since institutional inception and growth emerged in response to innate social needs, we cannot predict how much we will lose if we upset the triangulated balance of power in modern society among individuals, groups, and the state. This assumption justifies its argumentative force and, from their perspective, characterizes their deliberations as prudence rather than the imposition of a tyrannous majority.

Kirkpatrick articulated this position when she noted that since "institutions reflect people as much as people reflect institutions," we should regard large scale, systemic reform with distrust and skepticism. Like others, she granted strong presumptive weight to habit and custom, not as entrenched resistance to change, but as a prudent response to the human needs for culture and personality. Her resistance also reflected the conservative fear of the unintended consequence. With Nisbet, she reasoned that, since institutions have evolved largely in response to human nature and experiential wisdom, broad change represents an unknown quantity and poses a large risk for a potentially small gain. Key assumptions underlying this fear include the view that historical experience is one we can
know and largely agree on, that social reform generally carries unwanted, unintended results, and that institutions function to reflect human frailties, needs, and desires, which we may not be able to identify until they are dismantled. In short, institutions are more beneficial than oppresssive and their benefits are complex, and often hidden.\textsuperscript{50}

Nisbet concurred and added that the conservative bias against innovation derived from their concern that "however obsolete a given structure" is, it may contain a "continuing, still vital function" that it serves" either psychologically or sociologically. In this sense he defended a social scientific approach to institutional change that is based on the "historically real" empirical data rather than on hypotheses about a pre-social natural state.\textsuperscript{51} It is this presumptive weight that needs to be reinforced in prudential reasoning, against efforts to shift the burden of benevolence to established forms.

Nisbet argued that it was worse to dismantle institutions, as totalitarian regimes have tried to do, than to leave them in place despite some abuse. It is true, he acknowledged, that social ties can bind negatively, some ages are oppressive, and a few individuals "desire solitude and liberation from the social bond in any form." But oppressive conditions and asocial individuals are not the rule; it is "counterfactual" to to suppose that we are merely "aggregates of individuals" who do not cherish the ties of work, friendship, recreation, faith, and mutual aid.\textsuperscript{52} Prudential deliberations, when considering institutional change, should speak to the perceived bulk of human conditions, not the isolated loner, or poorly functioning institution that fails to serve some needs. In foreign policy relations, this positive view of institutions translates into support for authoritarian regimes over totalitarian ones because the former leave the intermediate institutions in place, allowing some autonomy to family, church, and social class as a counterforce to unleashed state power.

Democracy, Nisbet added, cannot provide a tranquil social order by virtue of its political forms alone. It relies, as the Framers understood, on the social forms of property,
family, local community, religion, and voluntary association to nourish western virtues of "charity, brotherhood, reason, and justice." As students of history, the Framers understood that freedom collapses without these. The love, loyalty, and selflessness we learn through these social connections make the larger loyalties and love of democratic forms possible. Therefore, we are wise to preserve the small connections that nurture private virtues if we hope to sustain the larger attachments that make public virtue possible. Conservatives perceive that progressive liberalism disparages these institutions and looks to rationalistic programs instead to achieve justice. Nisbet, among others, complained that these interventions are sterile; they lack the force of commitment and love that democracy requires. Institutions nourish the devotion on a concrete, social basis, which is more enduring than abstract modernist loyalty to self alone. It is in this sociological sense that he, as invoked Mannheim's "sense of the sacred" in family arrangements, neighborhood associations, and church affiliations. It is through institutional attachments, connected passions that patriotism ultimately rests. For all of these reasons conservatives defend a strong level of autonomy and authority in intermediate social institutions. This authority provides the order in which human liberty can thrive, especially in families, local community, and religion. Many, especially Nisbet, Will, Novak, and Kirkpatrick invoke the medieval view of authority that ascended from individual, family, parish, church, and state to God as an orderly hierarchical chain of being as a useful model for a peaceable society today. Nisbet added that strong institutions protect pluralism, as well, because their functional autonomy allowed members to pursue their distinctive ends. The result was an Aristotelian harmony, a consonance of diverse elements. Pluralists should protect, not dismantle, this intermediary strength against the power of a "political clericy." If institutions serve to check the power of the state, then, conservatives argued, we are wise to protect a triangular relationship that diffuses power among individuals, groups, and the state. By protecting these broad rights and powers, intermediate institutions protect
their members from a Leviathan state. This balance has its analogue in the political realm, Nisbet suggested, in the republican process of checks and balances and separation of powers.\textsuperscript{56} He added the libertarian distinction between a legitimately strong government and one that is pervasive in institutional life: "omnicompetent, responsible for daily existence, and ever in our lives, and, worst of all, pretended moral teacher, guide to virtue, and mother of spirit."\textsuperscript{57}

Strong government, from Nisbet's view is not to be trusted, except to help the genuinely powerless and oppressed, not to impose its version of freedom. Modern democracy, he suggested, is not about freedom; it is about power. State power to end slavery was a display of virtuous power; busing to redress educational disparities was a vicious bureaucratic imposition against community will. Similarly, anti-abortion protests wrongly politicize religion and admit the state "into the very recesses of the womb." For Nisbet, these religious protests misplace legitimate religious power by politicizing it, which suggests that whatever spiritual nourishment religion might provide individual members, its larger value is sociological.\textsuperscript{58}

\textit{Religious institutions}

While conservatives themselves range in views from strongly held religious beliefs to agnosticism, Nisbet noted that they rarely dismissed the sociological role of religion in articulating a transcendent core of cultural beliefs. He drew on Weber and Durkheim to identify religion's cohesive functions over time in an effort to link a conservative historical consciousness to a social scientific interest in the "historical reality" of religious institutions. He also sought a middle ground between politically active religious groups on the right and "new class" intellectuals on the left. With respect to the right, he noted that no Burkean conservative "could look out on today's Moral Majority with equanimity" since Burke looked to religious institutions to restrain not collaborate with state power.
Conversely, Burkean conservatism would not support intellectual efforts to explain away religion, rather than attend to any cohesive function it served to bind shared human aspirations. Similarly, Nisbet embraced the Burkean view that religion functioned as a valuable social mooring, a counterforce against unchecked state power and against the indiscriminant embrace of ideas. Kristol echoed Nisbet's sentiments with the observation that it was "common sense and common prudence to a secular government not to put itself unnecessarily at odds with the religious sensibilities of its citizenry. Diplomacy and tact are called for, not ruthless self-denial." Buckley made stronger claims to say that no true conservative can be truly hostile to religion, by which he meant a categorical denial that religious tenets should be debated on their own intellectual merit. Conservatives, he noted, can be atheists or believers but they cannot trivialize religion. If one regarded religion as beneath serious intellectual consideration, and "dismisses religion as intellectually contemptible, it becomes difficult to identify oneself wholly with a movement in which religion plays a vital role." However, Buckley argued, liberal academics, especially in the social sciences, are more interested in "shaking up beliefs of the students" than they are in engaging religion. As a consequence, students who "guilelessly" seek to learn sociology get an additional lesson as well: "that faith in God and the scientific approach to human problems are mutually exclusive." In recalling his undergraduate life at Yale, Buckley saw "widespread academic reliance on relativism, pragmatism, and utilitarianism." At Yale and numerous other campuses, he protested, student preparation for public life included the view that the only absolute is "that there are no absolutes, no intrinsic rights, no ultimate truths." This "makes impossible any intelligent conception of an omnipotent, purposeful, and benign Supreme Being who has laid down immutable laws, endowed his creatures with inalienable rights, and posited unchangeable rules of human conduct." To deny the historical force of religious insights in shaping several public issues, he concluded, is to deny a large part of our cultural
heritage, and schools that fail to acknowledge this deny historical reality.\textsuperscript{65} One such historical force in our civil and religious past, he pointed out, is righteous anger, which is as old as Job and Jonah. Buckley defended the religious right in their efforts to speak of values such as patriotism, sanctity of life, and the importance of family. Why "should they not say so, believing such values to be true?"\textsuperscript{66}

Property

Conservatives also valorize institutionally evolved wisdom that regards property rights as a buffer against an intrusive state. Wills looked to historically developed rights attached to individual property as an important impetus to the development of other personal rights. He also advocated institutional forms of property as a counterweight to abusive state power, and articulated the distributist view of property advanced by Belloc and Chesterton, supporting both the wide distribution of land to small businesses, shops, guilds, unions and the anti-trust legislation to protect them. Proprietorship, Wills argued, is more than nostalgia for a simpler feudal age; it is Jeffersonian "common sense" that understands property as giving citizens a place to stand when asserting other rights. Labor unions, as outgrowths of guilds, give property rights to a job and a way of life. As such, Wills maintained, "unions are conservative in the large sense," which is why he finds conservative objections to them incomprehensible. The original liberal objection is more understandable, he noted, because it looked to the free market to open up unlimited possibilities and potential, which are liberal notions. The labor union does not foster liberal virtues of progress and liberation; on the contrary, it binds as feudalism bound, to reduce the "rootlessness and drift of industrial life. It gives people a stake in society; it makes for social cohesion and stability--conservative values."\textsuperscript{67} Will added that conservative values work against this dynamism with its cherished traditions of small towns and enterprises,
family farms and local government. It also favors habit and custom, against the cosmopolitanism Burke objected to in the French luminaries.68

Novak also accentuated the value of property as a buffer against the state and points to the intimate connections between property rights and family autonomy. Freely held property, widely understood, provides a "spiritual moat around the home," that the king, and now the state, could not enter without cause. Home is the locus of liberty, initially wrested from feudal nobility and now the state. Home is the family's contribution to political liberty, the precious space in which to practice self-government. "The more the state invades the family," he predicted, "the less likely the prospect of self-government." Novak shared the conservative presumption that families will generally function well or at least better when free from bureaucratic interference.

Institutions like the family function to express communal values. To the extent that conservatives agree that we are alienated from this function of family life, it is, they believe, because institutions have lost the connection to governing virtues. They no longer exemplify, magnify or sustain them. As they become more impersonal, our institutions serve to alienate us from them, and lose their legitimate authority. We are more detached, Kristol argued, precisely because institutions have lost our support in developing the virtues that used to connect us to them.69 Prudential reasoning over institutional change or continuity proceeds from the belief that institutions, especially the family, are the font of virtue and necessary institutional protections against pervasive state power.

*The family as a seat of practical intelligence*

Prudential reasoning over the common good takes account of the family as the generator of those virtues we deliberate over most often, although much public dispute over family life issues centers around legitimate formal arrangements rather than appropriate function. Conservatives begin from the view that traditional configurations serve the needs
of its members better than alternative forms. There seems little disagreement between conservatives and liberals that families ought to function to nurture some level of mutual devotion, respect, and responsibility among its members. While deliberations during periods of social change routinely challenge the presumptive weight given to the status quo, the problem of how to deliberate well over kinship ties is a particularly challenging question for conservatives and for prudence. This is so because the family is intimately connected to those virtues many hope to nourish in public life and because citizens' personal experiences play a particularly forceful role in shaping their attitudes toward family arrangements. Citizens' knowledge of families then is both nearly universally shared and intensely unique, even, it is suggested, among siblings in the same family. Deliberations over the family then are a particular challenge for prudence because the very experiential wisdom that undergirds it is at issue. Conservatives respond to this challenge in distinct ways.

Conservatives generally enter the current debate over legitimate definitions of the family using historical, sociological, and religious understanding of the term. When they invoke the normative historical function of the family they impart a common cultural wisdom to its definition. Nisbet offered traditional sociological understandings of the word to preserve the nuanced functions it performs. The family, as saturated in traditions, ethnicity, celebrations, and authority, is not a strictly "rational" force, he noted, which is why family traditions carry little weight in "rational planning." Plato and Marx, he reminded readers, saw them as an impediment to an ideal state. Nisbet proposed that the strength of the family lies in the consanguinal bond, not the conjugal tie, because blood ties are more reliable and enduring. "Let us have no nonsense about love and unremitting devotion . . . for, paradoxical as it may seem, it is not love--least of all sexual passion--that the family has been built around historically, but, rather, duty and obligation." Love is too fragile a bond to build a family on, he insisted. Wisely, the key elements have been "duty, obligation, honor, mutual aid, and protection."
Novak also supported family wisdom as a legitimate part of personal patrimony that serves the public good. We inherit a family norm, which transmits "ancient values and lessons in ways that escape completely rational articulation, carrying forward motivations and standards of judgment, and shaping the distribution of energy and emotion, preferences and inclinations." All children cannot start out equal because all family wisdom is not equal in "techniques for advancement, mistakes to avoid, opportunities to seize." It is acquired over generations but can be lost in one generation, so its vulnerability must be protected. The economic virtues of families must also be protected so that they can be nurtured and molded into public virtue. The lessons that teach savings, deferred gratification, and long-term investment become the virtues that democratic capitalism relies on as well.

Family wisdom is also a moderating influence in society. It tempers the exaggerated individualism of individual economic actors and provides liberty to correct exaggerated collectivism. Families nurture other qualities that fit well with democracy as well, especially property, meritocracy, upward mobility, industry, and economic independence. Family wisdom is also compatible with Niebuhr's sense of moral realism in that it teaches humility about and acceptance of human imperfection. It is a maturation process for parents and children alike, in which both work against perfection. Novak added that America was built on the notion that "self-government rests upon the virtue of its citizens," looks to family life to prepare citizens for self rule.

The family, Nisbet claimed, is not a barrier to freedom. Through the family and kinship, we learn "motivation toward education, reason, and achievement generally." It both socializes and encourages its members to individual achievement and accomplishes these social tasks in ways that "the family alone seems able to effect." The family is the "touchstone of the material and cultural prosperity of a people." It is noteworthy, he claimed, that "the Greeks, Jews, and Chinese, "the three most creative peoples in history"
had "immense strength of the family ties" during their creative peaks. The family has been an inspirational source of themes in literature and art, and has been the source of cohesion and continuity.\textsuperscript{71}

Will agreed that family life is not part of the rational realm and that parenting skills are more reflective of the natural than the scientific order. He criticized experts who, he believed, have diminished natural parenting talents and undercutting family wisdom with expertise. Will cited the post war thirst for stability as the reason women and men chose tranquil domesticity; it was a natural longing for cohesion and continuity after a disruptive war. It was only later, he argued, that sociology and psychology stereotyped women homemakers and made them uneasy about their choice.\textsuperscript{72} The government's role in relation to the family ought to be to strengthen it, along with the other institutional forms that serve as Burke's "little platoons" of strength. Expertise usurps natural strengths thereby weakening the very institutions government needs to develop citizens.\textsuperscript{73}

The family, Lasch contended, is a nonpolitical unit not subject to state intervention. It should function as a safe haven in which to learn, among other virtues, a love of work that transcends its economic dimension. But it is besieged by a profusion of "unwholesome influences" of sex and violence, from which parents are unable to shelter their children. The needs of children, he argued, are met with "icy indifference" in a culture that promotes sex, violence and "the pornography of making it."\textsuperscript{74} In addition, many parents are overworked and self-absorbed, which creates a vicious cycle of neglect and indulgence that gives rise to permissiveness and a breakdown in moral authority and generational ties. Under these pressures, family relationships deteriorate into a clash of individual rights that social and political programs attempt to address.

Extrapolating these views to the political realm, Lasch reiterated the conservative view that the roots of civil virtue are in a loyalty that begins at home. If family loyalties are not nurtured in an atmosphere of devotion supported by legitimate moral authority, then, a
fortiori, we cannot hope for larger loyalties to emerge. Loyalties to land begin in more particular loyalties. "In a world dominated by suspicion and mistrust, a renewal of the capacity for loyalty and devotion has to begin . . . at the most elementary level, with families and friends." Wills, contrary to Lasch, viewed the family as a political unit and supported some changes in the family although, like Lasch, he grounded his argument in conservative values of responsibility.

The relationship between the family and members' maturity is crucial to Novak's defense of the family. He agreed with Wills that the family is a political unit; indeed, it is "the most potent moral, intellectual, and political cell in the body politic." Being in a family bears witness to its merits, and makes a political statement of realistic liberation from self-absorption. "It is a statement of flesh, intelligence, and courage. It draws its strength from nature, from tradition, and from the future." Novak valorized the institution in an effort to offset what he perceived as a great hostility toward the family as a locus of moral and economic virtues from corporations, universities, news media, and films. He shared Lasch's concern that the demand of economic success worked against local attachments and loyalties, imparting "enormous centrifugal forces to the souls of those who have most internalized its values; and these forces shear marriages and families apart." Moreover, the intellectual class disparages the constraints of marriage, he maintained, in opposition to the roughly ninety percent of the population that regards it as the "one institution they could trust." With Lasch, he claimed that the family was the training ground for civic virtues; whatever "strengthens the family strengthens society." Families provide "nurture, grace, and hope," but despite this "suffer under the attacks of both the media and the economic system." They also suffer from an intellectual class that celebrates the individual over the family. It is true that many leave troubled families, he added, but it is hubris to imagine we can live free from others. The concrete love of family members always takes precedence over abstract love of "distant collectivities."
The family, Novak continued, is also the seat of liberty, not its enemy, at least in the realist tradition. This tradition associates liberation with "the concrete toils of involvement" with family communities, and thus represents a "forced liberation, a challenge to become something other than self-contained, an atomic self." In this scheme, families are enlarging, humbling, taking us outside ourselves. The difficulty is that with "vague sentiments of progress" and education we think we should make better families than our ancestors and when we fail we blame the institution for our own failings.78 This view suggests a pre-enlightenment view of marriage as wisdom of the body and mind, before Cartesian dualism devalued sentiments as components of authentic wisdom. Prudential reasoning over the family, from this perspective, seeks to preserve this earlier, holistic approach to it, on the basis that the family itself is a microcosm of pre-enlightenment reasoning that retains a legitimate role for both *logos* and *pathos*.

Novak reiterated a prevalent conservative view that liberals were "hostile critics of the family" and "shockingly vague about what they want to put in its place beyond 'liberation' and 'openness'." Novak charged that "new class" liberals exaggerated liberalism's legitimate moves to empower autonomous individuals over feudal hierarchies by polarizing the individual against the state. Liberalism has succeeded too well in its work, Novak claimed, and conservatives are bound by their commitment to a stable culture to restore the balance.79

**Conservative commonplaces**

Conservatives sum up the lessons of history and institutions in the form of commonplace assumptions to act as first premises in public deliberations. These shared beliefs, which hold true for conservatives, form the basis of deliberations over which virtues will sustain the wisdom gleaned from our common cultural heritage.
Several conservatives sum up a wise patrimony as culturally bound even as it is culturally binding. Kirkpatrick expressed this view most succinctly when she sought out a cultural wisdom to teach us that we not only confront limits of body, talent, and temperament; we also must live in our own time and place and remain bound by a culture which distinguishes us from other people in other times and places. Cultural constraints thus condition and limit our choices, and shape our character with their norms.

Even though conservatives believe that citizenship is socially constructed, they break with those who extend this malleability to all aspects of human development. For conservatives, especially those who align with certain Christian tenets, human nature is weak and prone to error. This being so, they express a high regard for the wisdom of our foundational documents to adjust for human imperfection. A related assumption arising out of this view of a flawed human nature speaks to the twin concerns of public deliberations with respect to aiming toward good ends and achieving those ends. Conservatives make sharp distinctions in this realm between well-intended plans that aim for good ends and the unwanted consequences that often attend them. In making a moral distinction between good people and good actions, conservatives suggest some changes in practical reasoning from classical models of prudence, which will become more evident as the language and process of conservative deliberations are traced in more detail.

With respect to institutional formations, conservatives see affinities between innate human sociability and the inception and growth of largely beneficient social institutions in response to that natural gregariousness. Attending this view is a fear that rapid institutional change may cause more harm than good, which we cannot know until after the fact. Key assumptions underlying this fear include the view that historical experience is one we can know and largely agree on, that social reform generally carries unwanted, unintended results, and that institutions function to reflect human frailties, needs, and desires, which we may not be able to identify until they are dismantled.
Finally, the presumptive weight given to received institutional wisdom gives rise to assumptions about larger loyalties to the democratic forms which allowed certain beneficent patterns to take shape. For this, many look to Mill to say that loyalty and gratitude to a wise patrimony in political thought as well as institutional forms must be a given in public deliberations. We must proceed from the view that deliberations over change and modification do not also open the question of the republic's moral legitimacy for its own citizens.

This discussion has suggested ways in which a particular historical consciousness shapes an approach to practical reasoning over contemporary cultural and political issues. History provides a method and a moral frame for conservative deliberations insofar as it teaches them both how and what we might learn from experience. Importantly, the historical method many conservatives conflate with the prudential method is both descriptive and prescriptive with respect to human nature, serving to reaffirm beliefs about how we display ourselves on the historical stage and how those manifestations ought to inform our decisionmaking today. If a particular view of human nature sets the natural boundaries of prudential reasoning for conservatives, then a particular historical consciousness with respect to how that human nature manifests itself over time gives those boundaries additional normative shape. We are motivated to look to history, then, not merely to find a lesson, deepen understanding, etc, but to bring those lessons to bear on current decisionmaking. When conservatives grasp specific morals of stories, assign praise, blame and a certain normative weight to people and events in current discussions, they assign the past a role as powerful collaborator in the present.

The heightened role conservatives assign to the past is in some part a reaction to an entire post Enlightenment trend toward the scientific approach to the problems of human affairs. Just as conservatives attempt to recover pre-Enlightenment modes of practical reasoning, they are concerned to revalidate pre-Cartesian humanistic values with respect to
the important role history plays in the conduct of current decisionmaking, including the historian's role to chronicle particular manners and mores of a culture, a role Descartes rejected as not useful for developing a general science of humanity. Conservatives, given their strong stance against communism and socialism, cannot fit easily into the historical scholarship of others, such as Giambattista Vico or Johann Herder, who reacted against Cartesian rejection of history by articulating a kind of cultural pluralism. Even so, they express a similar deference to the legitimate forces of custom and cultural heritage, derived largely from their homage to Edmund Burke, that plays out in foreign affairs as unabashed nationalism, even among the neoconservatives. In domestic affairs, this deference translates collective experience into a wise participant in deliberations. The effects of the conservatives' heightened sense of history on prudence are several.

The most noticeable effect of emphasizing a historical consciousness in practical reasoning is the apparent concomitant diminution of the role that individual deliberators' character should play in identifying good ends and the means to achieve them. Conservatives are at pains to note that a long history of good intentions and good people gone wrong should encourage us to attend closely to the wisdom of specific democratic and institutional forms as being "wiser than we know" with respect to human needs and wants. While a closer look at the conservative deliberative process in the following chapters suggests that character, while changed from classical forms, still has a role in conservative reasoning, this chapter serves to highlight how the conservative focus on restoring a role for experience as a needed corrective in public deliberations might easily obscure their interest in the specific characteristics of good deliberators themselves.

In offering a particular view of history to the deliberative process, conservatives also clearly heighten the rhetorical dimension in prudence, since they are required to argue for as well as from a range of maxims and aphorisms that are more contested among diverse citizen deliberators than they might have been in pagan deliberations. The appeal to
historical wisdom that might serve as a first premise to Greeks and Romans is today challenged on several counts. Some continue the modern trend to reject the merits of history as too subjective for monistic projects, others are motivated to see different lessons in it. Even among conservatives, there is dispute over the wisdom and original intent of foundational documents and some concern that strict constructionist readings may not fully address contemporary issues. Conservative attempts to recover certain historical truths, then, become a need to reaffirm them as well; it is a deliberative process that finds itself reinforcing the probability of first premises even as it argues from them. Sometimes this effort lends a communitarian flavor to deliberations, as conservatives attempt to locate a public interest in those commonplace assumptions, binding us to them in the name of res publica. Generally speaking, however, the use of history in contemporary deliberations, even among conservatives, is less the experiential pillar that supported classical prudence than a somewhat destabilizing component, causing some slippage in the deductive force of a line of reasoning that proceeds from probable history commonplaces.

Finally, this discussion of how a conservative sense of history influences contemporary deliberations serves to fill in the rhetorical boundaries set out by perceptions of human nature. The conservative sense of history contributes to some moral vocabulary in the form of praise and censure as legitimate components of prudential reasoning. Whereas human nature keeps open the possibility of human weakness and evil in discussions, history contributes events and models to clarify and exemplify those components. The following chapter details conservative efforts to fashion a fuller moral vocabulary for deliberations, drawing again on human nature and history, but more specifically on perceptions of a demoralized liberalism. Chapter Five addresses the specific language of conservative deliberations to note its response to a cultural context infused with the language of classical liberalism. This focus on language not only identifies purposeful linguistic choices by conservatives, it also calls attention to specific discussions of language
by conservatives and the self conscious rejection of liberal language as inadequate for the moral task of public talk.

1Wills, Confessions 217.

2Will, The Morning After 343-43.

3Nisbet, Conservatism 18.


5Nisbet, Conservatism 18; Twilight 240.

6Nisbet, Conservatism 89

7Kirkpatrick, Dictatorships and Double Standards 9-10.

8Kirkpatrick, Legitimacy and Force 35-41, 61-73.

9Kirkpatrick, The Reagan Phenomenon 212.

10Himmelfarb, "Of Heroes" 26.


12Pocock, 24.

13Wills, Confessions 213.

14Buckley, Up From Liberalism 182.

15Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism xviii, 51.


17For other insights into a "metahistorical" view of history as tragedy, see Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1983), especially 191-229.

18Novak, "Needing Niebuhr Again," 53.
19 Kirkpatrick, *The Reagan Phenomenon* 44.


21 Wills, *Confessions* 214.

22 Wills, *Confessions* 188.

23 Wills, *Confessions* 194-201.


26 Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards* 8-9; *The Reagan Phenomenon* 39-42.


29 Kristol, *Reflections* 82-83.

30 Will, *The Pursuit of Happiness* 244-45; *Statecraft* 20.

31 Wills, *Explaining America* 265-70.


33 Novak, "The New Science" 38, 58.

34 Novak, *Free Persons and the Common Good* 78.


36 Buckley, *Gratitude* 66-69.


38 Nisbet, *Twilight* 109-112.


43 Buckley, *Right Reason* 60-61.

44 Himmelfarb, "Of Heroes" 20-21.

45 Himmelfarb, "Of Heroes" 22-23. Italics removed.


47 Himmelfarb, "Victorian Values" 24.


50 Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards* 111-21.

51 Nisbet, *Conservatism* 76

52 Nisbet, *Twilight of Authority* 277.

53 Nisbet, *Twilight of Authority* 76-86.

54 Nisbet, *Conservatism* 34-35.


57 Nisbet, *Conservatism* 42.

58 Nisbet, "Beseiged by the State" 52.
59 Nisbet, *Conservatism* 73-76.

60 Nisbet, *Conservatism* 68-72.

61 Kristol, "Christmas" 27.


63 Buckley, *God and Man at Yale* 17.

64 Buckley, *God and Man at Yale* 25-6.

65 Buckley, *God and Man at Yale* 42.

66 Buckley, *Right Reason* 50.

67 Wills, *Confessions* 137.

68 Will, *The Pursuit of Happiness* 191; *Statecraft* 143-44.

69 Irving Kristol, "When Virtue Loses All Her Loveliness--Some Reflections on Capitalism and 'the Free Society'," *Public Interest* Fall 1970: 11-12.

70 Nisbet, *Twilight of Authority* 256-57, 280.

71 Nisbet, *Twilight of Authority* 253-54.


73 Will, *Statecraft* 152.

74 Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 33.

75 Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven* 32.


CHAPTER V
COMMON MORAL VOCABULARY

John Stuart Mill and the language of classical liberalism

Since conservatives explicitly frame public deliberations as moral issues, they are concerned to identify an expansive moral vocabulary that public discourse should embrace to reaffirm a common ground of shared assumptions. The search for appropriate normative language directs most conservative efforts to possible resources in the past; just as it was possible to trace key conservative assumptions in social institutions and specific foundational texts of western political philosophy and democratic capitalism, so too does this western tradition yield virtuous models and a vibrant moral lexicon.

Part of the common historical past audiences for conservative discourse share in late capitalism is the system's foundation in classical liberalism. American culture reflects the liberal tradition of liberalism insofar as most of its citizens understand and speak the language of rights, especially as articulated by John Stuart Mill. Mill's views have exerted a large influence on the political economy, which partially accounts for a concern among many conservatives to reconcile his views to the vocabulary of conservatism. Many seek affinities to Mill as a way to locate conservatism within a broader intellectual heritage of classical liberalism that undergirds modern republican forms.

Frequently, conservatives attribute the problem of current deliberations to an almost exclusive reliance on a language of rights that they believe has emerged out of liberal politics. Rights talk, they often claim, is too thin a discourse to sustain the cultural conversation and fails to energize and enhance the quality of collective decisionmaking.
Since they perceive that a shared inheritance of rights carries disproportionate argumentative force in public talk, they offer a normative vocabulary of responsibility as a counterweight.

Himmelfarb, as an intellectual historian with an interest in Victorian morality, has written extensively on Mill. Her study of Mill's corpus of texts and correspondence led her to conclude that he espoused a more moderate view of individual rights than he detailed in *On Liberty*. She traced Mill's intellectual genealogy to Burke, Montesquieu, the American Framers, and Tocqueville, a tradition which made him compatible with much of contemporary conservative thought, since it claims a similar heritage. With respect to *On Liberty*, Himmelfarb took note of Mill's radical contribution to a theory of liberty in the realm of action. But, she argued, the "other" Mill, as revealed in the larger body of work, didn't value freedom of action as highly.¹ Himmelfarb was concerned to show that received wisdom is a useful tool that Mill only seemingly discarded for other goals.

Today, Himmelfarb charged, we have exhausted the moral capital Mill assumed would constrain actions despite his liberty principle. We appeal to Mill's conception of autonomous liberty and autonomy as a first principle most grant in public moral discourse, but do nothing to keep the terms of institutional constraints also in play. She observed that both conservatives and radicals have appropriated Mill as an "icon" of classical liberalism. Thus, *On Liberty* has become "the classic text of a libertarian conservatism that regards itself as the true heir of classical liberalism" and it is also a seminal text of a "radicalism . . . that sees itself as carrying out the failed agenda of liberalism."² We all speak the language of rights legitimated and given intellectual authority by Mill, because it is the only common vocabulary we have. The difficulty, Himmelfarb concluded, is that we lack any vocabulary of responsibility to accompany it. This imbalance inhibits public talk because both terms need explicit expression if we to deliberate well.³ Mill, as a canonical source of democratic
rights is also rich in the language of moral responsibility, but its value as a resource for the latter has been attenuated by the progressive momentum we have drawn from the former.

Nisbet agreed that Mill's laissez faire views continue to influence policies today, but in convoluted ways. Mills was not a moral relativist, he reminded readers, he merely wanted to establish a political principle of social neutrality in order to let citizens find their own way. Laissez faire politics appropriates the western idea of progress to let the invisible hand of the marketplace change the private vices of self-interest into public virtues of enlightened self-interest that is other-directed. Mill justified both limited government as well as intrusive government to promote material, intellectual and moral progress and his crucial connection between progress and freedom, Nisbet asserted, persists today. Classical liberalism continues to influence us through Mill's belief that without near absolute freedom to better oneself by trial and error, progress falters.

But if Mill suggests a common ground of liberal democratic aspirations for a better future, he also points to the dynamic aspect of conservatism, its adjustments to perceived shifts in moderate and radical leftist positions. Nisbet observed that when we invoke liberalism today we still speak of freedom and autonomy in Mill's terms but also call for a multitude of government interventions to take away other citizens' freedoms when they interfere with our own. Moreover, we have exhausted the religiously grounded moral base that Himmelfarb elaborated and we cannot refine our ability to deliberate well until we replenish it. The great failing of liberalism today, Nisbet contended, is its silence on how to replenish this base, its paucity of language to even speak of it in collective terms. His reasoning echoed Himmelfarb's perception of the paradox of modern liberalism. She noted that when individual freedoms are seen as unlimited, then government powers of intervention will also become unlimited as they rush to fill the vacuum of freedoms demanded by a proliferation of groups. She viewed the demand for unlimited right as a zero sum game for citizens, since each new law and regulation takes from one group to
give to another; net gains accrue only to the issuer of laws and regulations, the government. Both Nisbet and Himmelfarb were persuaded that, as conservatives, they are much truer to Mill than are present day liberals. From their perspective, nineteenth century liberalism is today's conservatism, given the leftward shift of present day liberalism and the abandonment of nineteenth century social morality. The chief problem for prudence today, Himmelfarb concluded, is the problem of liberalism itself. "How can a society that celebrates the virtues of liberty, individuality, variety, and tolerance sustain itself when those virtues, carried to extreme, threaten to subvert that liberal society and with it those very virtues?" The problem for prudential reasoning, in the context of late capitalism, then, is more social and moral than political, even though we deliberate it in the political realm. "It is the ethos of liberalism that is at issue," which can be resolved only in normative terms.6

Lasch acknowledged that liberalism was well-founded as a legitimate response to the excesses of tribalism and nationalism in early modernity. But today, he argued, liberalism is marked by its own excesses. In an essay entitled "Why Liberals Lack Virtue," he described the current liberal state as a morally neutral one in which "toleration" is the only term in the liberal vocabulary. Liberalism, he noted, came to say that a free society "needs virtuous institutions not virtuous citizens." It became merely a "procedural republic" whose major goal was to keep power diffused and leave most matters to private conscience. This overemphasis on negative liberty is at odds with prudential reasoning, because it connotes "chilly associations" that undercut civic will fueled by a passion for loved goods held in common.

Lasch shared Himmelfarb's view that classical liberalism assumed a large reservoir of moral capital in citizens through the influence of social institutions. It assumed further that a neutral state would function so long as institutions continued to exert their influence in the ethical conduct of daily life. But, as liberalism initially neglected and eventually
inveighed against these organic institutions, we used up the capital habituated in citizens over the generations. Lasch concluded with other cultural conservatives that liberalism is now morally bankrupt because it turned against the institutional fonts of virtue and put nothing normative in its place. To the question of how we deliberate well over molding self-governing individuals without strong families, neighborhoods, and churches, Lasch insisted, "[l]iberalism has never had an answer."7

By way of contrast, Nisbet argued, conservatives are in a particularly strong position to revive a normative politics along classical lines because they have preserved a moral lexicon available for public discourse. Conservatism has the linguistic advantage in public deliberations, he pointed out, given "its clear hold upon the symbols and mystiques of family, local community, parish, neighborhood, and mutual-aid groups of all kinds. These "conservative words" are historically real and developed in institutions that conservatives seek to preserve and strengthen. They develop over time and have their effect in the present. To speak of their historical social role is also to evoke the virtues nurtured in and promulgated by them since, historically, their function has also been a normative one.

*Rehearsing historic ambivalences toward the power of logos*

Kirkpatrick expressed a long-standing cultural ambivalence toward eloquent persuasion in her suspicion of wordsmiths' efforts to become the "guardians of the symbolic environment" through their rhetorical powers. Precisely because they "regard their own ability to communicate effectively as the *sine qua non* for respect and power," she argued, they exerted an influence that was disproportionate to their political wisdom. She conceded that verbal communication was an insight into a person's mental activities, but denied that verbal facility was any better a predictor of political performance than, say, business acumen. It was no accident, she believed, that potentially able public servants
have been dissuaded from public service in a climate in which any verbal *faux pas* could wreck a political career.\(^8\)

Kirkpatrick noted that in periods of rapid social change, intellectuals are engaged in "the demoralization and remoralization of politics and society." Intellectuals assume a large role in this process as they critique the reigning myths and values of the political culture in which they live and offer new myths and authorities. Today, as in ancient Greece, she observed, we are experiencing rapid change that calls for a new class of intellectuals to legitimize new forms of authority. The problem for Kirkpatrick is that, as with Plato, Aristotle and the Sophists, there seems to be a concerted effort today by liberals to control the language of the debate. Today's new class, while it ranges across the political spectrum, tends toward liberalism. Liberal wordsmiths, she argued, run the risk of trying to bring reality in line with their imaginative rendering of it. "Concentration on the manipulation of ideas and words (like concentration on the manipulation of paints or musical tones) probably induces an exaggerated notion of the world's plasticity and also of human powers, since the only limits on artistic or intellectual creation are those imposed by imagination, creativity." The great danger of the liberal verbal imagination, she concluded, was its Platonic inclination toward idealized political rhetoric. Liberals should learn from Aristotle's break with Plato on the approach to politics, and attend to Aristotle's objection that Plato "overestimated human malleability and under-estimated the tenacity of organic ties and human wickedness." Wordsmiths would be better served to study more history to temper their tendency to infinite possibility, and rein in their exaggerated imagination with a more restrained language.\(^9\)

Pointedly, Kirkpatrick remarked that the language of prudent deliberations was not to be found in the imaginative rhetoric of Tom Paine's "inspiring slogans;" rather, they derived from a "careful web of restraints, permissions, interest, traditions woven... into the Constitution and explained in the Federalist papers."\(^10\) She countered that we are not
free to begin the world again, as Paine suggested, instead, we are bound by the culture we have in common. "Cultural constraints condition and limit our choices, shaping our character with their imperatives." The Judeo-Christian heritage command continues to operate for us: worship God, value life, respect law, seek justice, honor truth." As heirs to this heritage, we are defined and bound by it more than any language of freedom."11

Kirkpatrick's emphasis on the detrimental effects of unfettered imaginative discourse is related to more common conservative critiques of liberal language as too scientific and value-neutral. These qualities are also unfettered and idealized because they are detached from institutional loyalties and affections. This objection is particularly evident on social issues, which conservatives insist, cannot be fruitfully addressed in what they regard as value neutral liberal language. Himmelfarb maintained that liberal efforts have brought welfare issues through a long process of "de-moralization" that works against responsible social policy that is also faithful to the classical liberal tradition. "Today the language of morality, applied to social problems and social policies, is often assumed to be the language of conservatism," she noted, but, in Mill's time, it was the language of both radicals and moderate reformers. Victorian reformers preserved the connection between morality and poverty, and understood the latter as "a matter of manners and morals, of individual character and social ethos." Todays efforts to sever that link, to find a "value-free" approach in policy discussions are ultimately doomed. Conservatives have shown that today "we are finding these policies fraught with moral implications that have we have grave material and social consequence."12

Buckley agreed with Kirkpatrick to say that conservative language should be both modest and precise in its claims. In reference to a Reagan text, he noted that "as a republican and a conservative, Reagan "does not have the ordinary man's licence to exaggerate."13 Buckley also inveighed against "the hideousness of a science-centered age," expressed in bureaucratic language.14 He labeled Robert McNamara's pronouncements for
the Kennedy Administration as Orwellian newspeak and cautioned Reagan to avoid similarly sanitized pronouncements. At other times, Buckley expressed the wordsmith's concern to find the right word to convey the right nuance, which required an expansive vocabulary. However, even in these cases Buckley's praise for verbal agility emphasized the power of language to convey a rich historical wisdom over its power to stimulate an audience's imagination. The conservative impulse with respect to language is to resist overly innovative, that is subjectively held, meanings of key cultural terms on the basis that subjectivity diminishes the communal bond that coheres through language. In the name of cohesion, he deemed it "right and proper to preserve in currency words which in the course of history were coined as the result of a felt need." Will expressed a similar regard for the historical density and subtlety of language and suggested that we move against efforts to eliminate the nuanced articulations of communal sentiments. Buckley and Will retain a Ciceronian regard for the connection between eloquence and prudence, against the Platonic and Pauline views that the truth itself is eloquent. Yet, they seemed less inclined to embrace Cicero's enthusiasm for the dynamic power of language as a rhetorical force in creating social meaning. This places conservatism at some odds with linguistic approaches that support, among other things, a doctrine of usage to reflect the innately and naturally dynamic properties of language, a doctrine Cicero supported when he appealed to the living and fluid properties of terms in current use as being the most effective for expressing current issues. Against more static views of language, Cicero praised orators who were able to introduce new forms into the language, "following no one but themselves" and their "instinctive judgment" about what to keep and what to reject in both language and subject matter.  

Kirkpatrick was suspicious that the language of prudent deliberations could be found in Cicero's *ingenium* and her rejection of Paine's rhetoric in *Common Sense*
highlights an ambivalence toward fresh starts among conservatives. We are not free to begin the world again, as Paine countered, and so we should temper our language to match our potentialities and reflect our cultural heritage. The Judeo-Christian tradition still commands us to "worship God, value life, respect law, seek justice, honor truth." As heirs to this tradition, she concluded, we are defined and bound by it, barring us from a language of total freedom.

This cultural heritage, then, places limits on a legitimate range of semantic choices in a public moral vocabulary and suggests a kind of argument by etymology among conservatives. Public deliberations over changing definitions of the term "family" illustrate the point since it is a particularly contested term in current public talk. In debates over family forms and functions, for example, Lasch urged attention to the historical density of the term, its saturation with historically evolved prescriptions, traditions, ethnicity, celebrations, and authority. Lasch's concern over definitions of the family reveal a concern to preserve a consensus of values attached to it and explains, in part, a conservative interest in the etymological roots of words, especially those related to virtue. An interest in preserving what virtue meant to, say, ancient Greeks or Romans, assumes that the nuances attached to these early meanings met the social or emotional needs of those cultures and can meet ours as well. To the extent that conservatives also believe that human nature is largely static with respect to social impulses and needs, that contemporary culture is composed of people largely the same, despite radically altered circumstances, then there is worth in an argument by etymology, as it were, to recapture those understanding and illuminate our own needs. To develop such a line of reasoning is to call up the deep cultural root of normative as well as denotative ascriptions, their ability to express deeply felt beliefs and long standing human hopes and needs. Conservatives, in calling up virtue in its classical understandings, invoke what they believe to be 2,500 years of western
wisdom on the matter. We valorize and share in that wisdom when we uphold the term virtue. In the same manner, Lasch argued that it was important that value-laden cultural terms like "family" not be left to subjective definition because it was equally important that the values attached to the word also should not be subjectively drawn. We need to define the term culturally in order to draw some cohesion around what the word means and how we express and enforce our communal duties to it. If we do this privately, we cannot achieve anything like cultural cohesion out of a term such as family, because we have lost the communal base of support for the values it represents, or the hortatory force it possesses through common understanding.

Shame, guilt, and coercion as appropriate normative language to nurture virtue

The conservative interest in a virtuous citizenry to sustain a morally legitimate democratic capitalism leads logically to an interest in determining the appropriate social and political mechanisms to nudge the growth of that virtue. Like communitarians on the left, conservatives differ in their views about the efficacy of collective efforts to coerce virtue. Most agree, however, that notions of guilt, shame, and stigma, are legitimate terms in a prudential deliberations over how to cultivate a virtuous citizenry. Conservatives, Will noted, see the locus of controversy on social and cultural issues as "the extent to which the law should, or can, influence manners, broadly understood." He included shame as an instrumental personal virtue insofar as it bolsters self restraint, one good we hold in common. Shame and embarrassment become civil virtues when they provide a powerful collective moral response to some vulgarity that must be governed.

Similarly, guilt expresses the cumulative cultural wisdom when it calls for punishment in response to humanity's flawed nature. In most cases of criminal justice, Will added, we don't serve justice if we routinely substitute therapeutic interventions into the system. The experts, Buckley agreed, are often wrong when it comes to deliberating
treatment for criminal offenders. When they offer treatment over punishment, experts reveal that they know less than "the solid judgment of the American public," who call for punishment. The public understands better than experts that it is in our nature to seek order, to codify our speech and behavior, given human understanding that we are capable of evil. Over time we have codified appropriate, civilized responses to injustice. We understand civil discourse, for example, to be a plea that wrongdoers be brought to the bar of justice rather than cursing them to death from a painful disease. The curse is a barbaric excess, but the call for punishment is not. With respect to stigma, Buckley looked to the high pregnancy rates among unwed women as a case in point to correlate the high rates with the disappearing censure that attached to this behavior. Historically, social approbation kept these numbers low, he argued. Today, the consequence of removing them has brought higher rates of illegitimate births and almost guaranteed poverty for the child.25

Although conservatives in this analysis agree on the usefulness of public censure, they differ in their attitudes toward the legitimacy of social and political efforts to coerce virtue. Also, while conservatives generally agree on the need to nurture virtue, they differ widely on the state's role in the process. Kirkpatrick, for one, rejected a view that social and political constraints are equally coercive and favored utilitarian language to emphasize long term consequences. From her perspective, political coercion does worse harm than social pressure because each law restrains freedom and, together, over time, coercive codes lead to a significant loss of freedom. Instead, liberal regimes ought to preserve the distinction between the state and society and leave open "those interstices of the law in which freedom thrives."26 She added that political efforts to coerce virtue fail on utilitarian grounds because citizens won't conform thorough force. Kirkpatrick favored individual freedom that allows individuals to learn from experience and natural consequences and quoted Mill to note that coercion can only succeed in the short term: "if there be among those whom it is tempted to coerce into prudence or temperance any of the material of
which vigorous and independent characters are made, they will infallibly rebel against the yoke.\textsuperscript{27}

Novak agreed, on free will grounds. We don't all choose the tendency toward God, and no one can be coerced to enter His kingdom. But, since virtues will not spring up of themselves, and laws alone cannot ensure them, we rely on institutional strength in the political, economic, and moral-cultural orders to offset the vices of faction, self-interest and individualism. Society should and does exert more power in coercing virtue than the law. Society relies on "civil argument, moral suasion, the raised eyebrow, shame and ridicule, in the inculcation of republican virtue, sound education." The best hope for achieving the common good then rests in strong institutions, not coercive law.\textsuperscript{28}

Will, on the other hand, believed that legislation ought to urge citizens a little more explicitly toward certain values. His reasoning in several concrete cases exemplified conservative thinking on many points, although he broke with several on the issue of government intervention. In terms of legislation, Will consistently argued from social consequences as he viewed them. Thus, he believed that communities have a legitimate interest in passing laws that affirm communal values that life is good and activities that cheapen it are not good. We can and should legislate morality because some communitarian rights override individual civil rights. Will argued that governments, as educators, ought to attend to the inner life of citizens. Just as all education is moral from this point of view because "learning conditions conduct," so too "much legislation is moral legislation because it conditions the action and the thought of the nation in broad and important spheres of life." Government should enact laws and implement policies that "proscribe, mandate, regulate, or subsidize behavior that will, over time, have the predictable effect of nurturing, bolstering, or altering habits, dispositions, and values on a large scale."\textsuperscript{29} Public deliberations should exhort the work of legislators to deliberate the public good and help citizens "want what they ought to want." As they deliberate various
constituent interests, they attempt to reconcile wants to duties. When this is not possible legislators are obliged to disregard citizen desires and follow their judgment. This is an obligation to citizens. We want leaders to lead, not follow, with "calmness, reasonableness, civility, detachment, and long-headedness--a due concern for the long term." Implicit in Will's understanding is a slow, evolutionary process that will shape political behavior. In turn, he predicted, "such shaped behavior should shape national character."

Lasch looked to coercion in other contexts to favor its explicit use when deliberating over actions to work against consumerism. Agrarian virtues have vanished, he observed, and consumption distracts us from the pursuit of justice and equality. In addressing the question of whether private or public virtue can be taught, Lasch argued that private virtues in the form of love and duty to family, especially children, probably need to be coerced, in light of the consumerist context. Hortatory language is insufficient to offset the materialistic tendencies of late capitalism and, this being so, coercive language is appropriate to deliberate in this changed cultural context.30

Perceptions of imprudent value-neutral and therapeutic language

Conservatives often claim that liberals have infused public talk on social and political issues with therapeutic language and with what conservatives regard as the value-neutral language of the social sciences. From their perspective, this diminishes the quality of public deliberations on several bases, all related to a diminution of any shared moral vocabulary to energize the discourse.

On one level, Buckley maintained, therapeutic language gives us only superficial knowledge of one another. He voiced the concern that, since we can empathize but never truly know another as ourselves, psychology often invades our privacy with shallow insights. Common cultural wisdom understands better than psychology that in some sense
people are "inviolably other," which is why we value privacy. Prudential language not only lacks access to the inner selves of others in public communication; it explicitly eschews efforts to fashion such a public discourse.

Will added that ordinary citizens also understand better than social scientists that therapeutic answers demean. He noted that sociological explanations of race riots demoralize by saying that we can expect no better moral behavior; rioters are excused because of moral inferiority. We would do better to study the reasons offered by the many who did not riot. Moreover, he claimed, political scientists were especially unable to talk of political virtue since they were preoccupied with the language of efficiency. Will maintained that they rejected his suggestion for term limits on the basis of calculations which were ill equipped to account for public virtue. From Will's perspective, the social and behavioral sciences are not engaging in prudential reasoning because these scholars restrict their scope to those variables which can be operationalized into nonjudgmental categories. They are unable to join in the deliberations over term limits, as a case in point, because they have been unable to quantify the qualitative variable of civic virtue which, in Will's view, is the most significant term of the debate.

Lasch looked to the post-WWII debate over conceptions of a rational public to note that liberalism moved away from "the virtuous social actor" as an "old-fashioned" and "unsophisticated" term of public discourse because this conception stood in the way of progress. Virtue itself, Lasch argued, became an anti-progressive concept when experts relegated moral language and concern over a virtuous citizenry to the category of archaisms. Despite conservative attempts to keep the term alive, Lippman, Mencken, and the Scopes Trial associated values espoused by the lower middle class as redneck, backward, and tribal. Academic criticism became more detached and social science left its roots in the German tradition to join abstract criticism.
The New Deal, he charged, signalled the rise of the expert in domestic and social relations. Gunnar Myrdal mistakenly thought whites had to solve the American dilemma of race relations by characterizing blacks as victims only, with no role to play in rising out of poverty. This set up a paternalistic, bureaucratic impulse that can speak in terms of social pathology only, terms which are incompatible with moral language. Anti-progressive whites were thought to be immature and needed to grow up. This paved the way for an entire therapy as maturation movement with gross imbalances of power. People classified as victims or mentally backward children are at a significant disadvantage in public talk because their pathology implied the weakness of childhood and sickness in contrast to the strength of maturity and mental health. This whole line of reasoning, he argued, obviated any ability to discuss value differences on their own merits. Liberals wanted to cure conservatives, Lasch noted; Martin Luther King, Jr. was more right in telling them to repent. Adorno's research on the authoritarian personality suffered from the same flaw. Rather than see the basis of modern racism in ancient tribal loyalties as Adorno did, Lasch suggested that we adopt Hannah Arendt's view that racism emerged out of imperialism and a modern "rootlessness" that is alienated from particular loyalties.

Myrdal and Adorno also provided therapeutic interventions into matters of genuine value differences. In substituting therapy for debate, it assumed that certain attitudes were social diseases and therefore did not probe for values undergirding those assumptions. Soon, liberalism became the mark of mental health. Richard Hofstadter contributed to this liberal bias of "psychological reductionism" in political studies that interpreted "every departure from orthodox liberalism as an expression of the 'paranoid style'." Political conservatism was merely "psychological rigidity" and therefore conservative ideas need not be taken seriously, on their own merits. On the other hand, liberal researchers noted that "the articulate and informed classes were preponderately liberal in their outlook." They were capable of "reasoning out and forming attitudes on complex social questions "in a
purely disinterested way," above the "ideological babble of poorly informed and discordant opinions." Today, academic jargon has taken this disinterested, rational approach to extremes, as a direct result of liberalism's influence. Even today, he complained, Reagan democrats are discussed in terms of "status anxiety" and liberals still refuse to cast their grievances in normative terms. But politics is normative, Lasch insisted, and arena for equals. As a consequence, therapeutic language and related social scientific expertise have contributed to the atrophy of public moral talk. Liberal strategies to dismiss conservatives as either sick or archaic, Lasch argued, created a moral void in the public sphere, because vibrant public talk to debate value-laden issues can only thrive in moral terms among competent adults. If we cannot find a way to frame value-laden issues in these terms, we will not find a way to deliberate well.

**Liberal tolerance as vice**

Conservative generally regard liberal tolerance as too open-ended with respect to First Amendment rights; value-neutral in its language; and hostile to the particular loyalties of ethnic and religious beliefs. It also alienates large groups of middle class citizens who feel disbarred from deliberations that diminish their ethnic and religious values. To the extent that conservatives view unfettered tolerance as working against these norms, they accord it a limited usefulness. A more useful concept is a qualified tolerance that speaks to relative freedoms.

Free speech cases serve to emphasize the tension between democratic procedures and *res publica* that elicits conservative efforts to deliberate well. Conservatives agree that we ought to value tolerance as a virtue of the democratic process. But, Buckley pointed out, since it is only a relative good in this process, we must seek its prudent limits at the outer boundaries of communal ties. As citizens, we deliberate effectively only from within the boundaries of that bond so it is not productive to tolerate speech that operates outside of
it. In deciding a specific case of a communist invited to speak at Yale, Buckley urged students to withdraw their invitation. Students, he reasoned, would share little in the way of the political vocabulary of communists' rote speeches because communists had renounced the "fragile bond" that unites liberals and conservatives. Since communists have rejected that bond, we cannot speak to each other meaningfully; "however deep we reach, we cannot find a common vocabulary." Since civility would prevent a stronger reaction, students could only offer polite applause and, in clapping, humiliate themselves. Public debate was better served by more polemical and open political fight in a different venue.35

Buckley compared this academic tolerance, which he views as helplessness, to the increasing inability of universities to provide any guiding assistance to students. Some of the arguments of feminism and affirmative action, he maintained, are less the expressions of an open society than "the refusal of society to make wholesome commitments: to natural distinctions and natural inclinations to meritocratic priorities."36

In the political arena, Buckley recalled the McCarthy era as exemplifying the weakness of liberal tolerance. From his perspective, the liberal reaction against all aspects of the McCarthy investigations highlighted their inability to do more than stand on an open society premise, refusing to give serious consideration to any of McCarthy's concerns. Buckley agreed with Will to say that even in an open society, some questions must be closed; not all ideas must have a continuous hearing, with no "terminal" for a view.37 With respect to McCarthy, Buckley saw him as the lesser of two evils, at least in one sense: While we should not praise McCarthy's demagoguery, we should at least admit that McCarthy did not work to the advantage of communism here and abroad. Radically left academics, on the other hand, continue to do just that.38 Kirkpatrick agreed, adding that McCarthyism signalled the rise of the new class, who "won" the debate over whether the government could legitimately demand any test of loyalty.39
Imprudent compassion

Will complained that liberals have restricted their public talk to the two terms of tolerance and compassion. They operate a "compassion industry" that goes against the "essence of the conservative premise" of fairness as equality of opportunity rather than government action to distribute justice. The "foundation of fairness," he argued, "is economic dynamism." By liberal logic, we should be equal because we suffer equally. But, he countered, we suffer unequally because we are unequal. Unrestrained compassion is misplaced, from Will's viewpoint, because it looks to universal humanity as the source of universal trouble. He concluded that liberal compassion dehumanized citizens by assuming that they were not capable of moral choice. "In depicting the 'compassionately', as toys of fate, it causes their personhood to disappear."

On issues of sexuality, Buckley agreed, noting that "moral liberalism and state compassion" have allowed the erosion of a normative public discourse. For generations, he noted, we "spoke the language of duty and morality, of loyalty and obligation." With no resistance from liberals, hedonism, including the "playboy philosophy" has become the dominant public language, one that has hit African-American families hard because they are less self-reliant. In a "fanatical" eagerness to remove the language of duty, liberal have emptied public talk of what it most needs and substituted a language of compassion that has caused continuing harm to those it sought to help.

Finding a language of hope

Conservatives frequently seek to restore a language of hope by restoring a proactive memory that can move us to action. Hope provides the will to action in the face of potentially debilitating evidence that human frailty causes much evil in the world. However, historical evidence, since it charts a course of human weakness, can only offer tempered hope as a moral term.
In offering a moderated hope for public deliberations, Lasch looked to virtuous hope and memory as antidotes to what he regards as vicious optimism and nostalgia. He appropriated Christian, particularly Puritan, understandings of hope to fill the vacuum left by progressive liberalism's failure to deliver its promise for the future. A Christian rendering fills the void because it harnesses the power of emotions that move us to purposeful action, despite a diminished faith in progress. Just as the emotional truth of "trust, loyalty, gratitude, and contrition," for example, "could not be established simply by argumentation," Niebuhr is useful in this context to remind us that a tempered hope is also one that cannot be asserted by sheer force of secular will, or even intelligence. Lasch linked this volitional force of hope to the power of memory to offset the perceived corrosive effects of nostalgia at work today.

From Lasch's perspective, a cultivated memory bolsters hope by setting appropriate limits for the future. In doing so, he recalled the Puritan tradition as a useful complement to the pagan notion of virtue as power, a positive force against the vagaries of fortune. Calvinism, he noted, asks us to demand less of the world and more of ourselves. With the help of God's grace, we gain the strength to do so. Lasch juxtaposed the relationship of Puritan virtue to grace against the pagan link between virtue and fortune. Whereas pagan virtue was a challenge to fate, Christian virtue was wedded to God's grace. In both traditions, to know something virtuously is to know its power, and for Calvinists to know virtue is to know God's life-giving force of coherence and order in the world.

Carlyle added that human virtue recognizes this source of power even as it retains a sense of awe and wonder in relation to the world. Lasch saw remnants of Calvinist theology in Carlyle in the twin notions of grace and virtue. In an age of misguided notions of progress, where material advances outpace moral gains, we can gather strength for a future good society in recalling Carlyle's understanding of the moral value of work, the inescapability of evil, the natural limits on human freedom, and the sinful pride in a
rebellion against those limits. It is only by submitting to human frailty, Carlyle taught, that
we are able to transcend it. We can draw on our memory of good works to guide us, and
face the future with strength and wonder.

Lasch also recalled Emerson's acceptance and peace with God as an Puritan
antidote to the obsessive "pursuit of happiness," that Emerson observed in eighteenth
century life. He located Emerson's Puritan roots in Jonathan Edwards' theology of
consent and Edwards' conception of "true virtue." True virtue manifested itself as a love of
being, one which imparts the strength to accept an imperfect world by affirming God and
life. This acceptance of an imperfect world linked William James to this tradition as well.
Lasch claimed that James may be the last of the Puritans, given his articulation of the
ambivalence between pagan and Christian notions of virtue as both power to act and
acceptance of imperfection and frailty. He noted James's observation that optimism and
pessimism were equated in the American mind with health and sickness; as a result
Americans tended to reduce all spiritual questions to "questions of mental health." Lasch
contended that we should recall James' understanding of the twice born person, one who
moves to virtue as a heroic act of will. This virtuous capacity converts despair to hope, not
optimism, and "asserts the goodness of being in the very teeth of suffering and evil."

Lasch looked again to Niebuhr to criticize a perception of liberal political wisdom as
more optimistic than hopeful. Liberal optimism, he argued, was undisciplined and without
moral energy, because it relied on rational, enlightened self-interest to produce an ever-
expanding abundance. It is a non-heroic stance, he claimed, because it makes no demands
and asks no restraint. Genuine hope, however, is heroic because it seeks a larger
conception of life, a deeper view of it than a process of arousing and satisfying consumer
wants. Lasch seemed to retain the notion of Christian hope as both Christian piety and
pagan virtu, a combination of trust and courage to act. Trust and courage make up political
wisdom as "intelligent action," he concluded, and hope, as an intellectual virtue, is a
predisposition that "serves us better" than optimism "in steering troubled waters ahead."^44

Conversely, nostalgia for the past is a vice, another way of forgetting the past by
dismissing its relevance because it assumes it is no more. Like childhood innocence, it is
gone forever and therefore has no practical bearing on the present or usefulness as a guide
for the future. In contrast to memory, nostalgia is passive; it "evokes the past to bury it
alive" at places such as Disneyland, Colonial Williamsburg, and Greenfield Village.

Memory's more active contemplation is one "that seeks to grasp the past's
formative influence on the present." Childhood, as formative memory, is a particularly
important component of virtue. Lasch recalled Wordsworth's idealization of childhood as
restorative memory, which the poet regarded as a form of virtuous power itself, a
"reanimating influence" of vitality and energy, and a force for action. Similarly, he looked
to Coleridge's valorization of memory as the ability to "contemplate the Past in the Present,
and so to produce by a virtuous and thoughtful sensibility that continuity in the self-
consciousness."

Childhood is the personal past we can plumb to cultivate hope. This differs from an
enervated, "hopeless" nostalgia for childhood that denies its continuing vitality. Lasch
criticized many on the political right for trivializing the real power of the past. From his
perspective, they have politicized nostalgia, heightened cultural interest in exploiting it, and
in doing so have left us bereft of any hope of drawing on its virtuous power. Equally
misguided, Lasch insisted, were leftists who spent their time criticizing nostalgia, instead
of engaging the power of true memory to serve the commonweal.^45

To Lasch, Martin Luther King, Jr. remains an exemplar of hope and memory. His
hope grew out of and was sustained by character virtues cultivated in youth. King's
memory included both the humility and suffering of his race as well as religious traditions
that infused his suffering with redemptive hope. Together, this "inheritance" of "suffering
and security" cultivated courage and leadership. The memory of both built his character; he
drew on both to face the future. His popular religion, with its twin languages of hope and
fatalism, were "quite alien to liberalism," that is, its melioristic tendencies, but is congenial
to conservatism's more reserved hopes for human nature. The Civil Rights movement was
most successful, Lasch maintained, when it drew on King's use of memory as restorative
power, when it relied on the language of its popular religion and its family ethic of thrift
and responsibility. The movement faltered in the northern ghettos where this institutional
support was missing. The ghettos were "hopeless," Lasch argued, precisely because they
lacked the memory of their church and family to sustain them through suffering.46

Novak also cited Niebuhr to stress a similar need to give up the utopian optimism of
one's youth, even as a youthful America gave up the expectations of a nineteenth-century
Protestant social gospel that reflected an unbridled progress.47 He wanted to distinguish
optimism from the hope of immigrant families who looked to gradual improvement in their
own group over time. This family hope for a better future "generates love for the republic
that makes the improvement possible." It is the republican ideal, not soil that we are loyal
to, precisely because we collapse the republic's success with our own; we see them as
having grown together over time. This was the source of immigrant love for America.48

Nisbet shared Lasch's view that nostalgia was a powerless and passive term, with
little evocative force in public deliberations over future goods. "Nostalgia is the rust of
memory," he contended, what is left over from defunct traditions. It "has nothing to do
with respect for the past." It is an effort to escape to a past, rather than look to its wisdom
to nourish the present. It is, in T. S. Eliot's terms, a means of "disowning the past," a
"superficial plunge" that doesn't bind us to anything. Instead, we ought not despair, or
retreat into nostalgia. We can also gather strength from Matthew Arnold's observation that
good citizenship is not despairing, does not believe that a state's fall and decline is
inevitable. Especially when living in an "ungolden" age, as Nisbet believed we now do,
citizens' chief virtue must be a sustaining hope, and their langue suffused with a hopeful willingness to see the possibility of new growth emerging from the present decay. Wills added that the past as memory is constitutive. We make ourselves out of an intimate knowledge of the past. Nostalgia, on the other hand, recalls a make-believe past, a "Disney cult of childhood," of little use in shaping our present selves. Memory doesn't try to escape the past but brings it up in its entirety in order to go forward. Also, he noted, genius cannot proceed any other way.

The virtue of patriotism

Conservatives believe that several public virtues can blossom from a fertile language of hope and memory, most notably patriotism, in the form of love and gratitude for the blessings of liberty. Patriotism, as a key term in the moral vocabulary of conservative discourse, derives from the Ciceronian premise that even a morally defensible republic cannot thrive without the active love of its citizens. The virtuous mean of patriotism is somewhat defensively determined out of perceptions that liberal challenges threaten to sever loyalties already undermined by contemporary life. Wills recalled Montesquieu to say that a republic has need of public virtue as a sentiment, a love of the republic that places the public good over private interests. "In a republic, loving democracy means loving the people." Importantly, the authority of the republic flows from republican virtue, not a church or set of Christian virtues. This secular basis is a crucial tie to conservative interest in virtue since, if one is concerned to show the viability of a certain form of government, one must also be concerned to show the contours of loving behavior that sustain it. The republic guarantees us a liberty which inspires a spirit of patriotism that in turn keeps a desire for the benefits of liberty thriving. Conservatives, Buckley noted, have a special role to play in infusing public talk with patriotism so that loyalty and liberty might grow through a shared sense of indebtedness for received benefits.
of interest in accepting the obligations of our patrimony, an unwillingness to replenish the common past for the public good, Buckley argued, is what makes America and other western democracies weak. Part of making democracy strong includes strengthening citizenship acknowledgment of this patrimony. "Americans growing into citizenhood should be persuasively induced to acknowledge this patrimony and to demonstrate their gratitude for it."

Civil virtue is thus marked by a pious patriotism that acknowledges and is willing to pay a collective debt to one's patrimony. Buckley, like others, invoked the sentiments of Major Ballou in the Ken Burns documentary on the Civil War to advance devotion and patriotism as an antidote to plural ends. He also recalled Nelson Rockefeller's terse "no fatherhood, no brotherhood" to note that without a shared devotion to a common debt, a common bond would not emerge. In citizen terms, the "fatherhood" is the patrimony all children of democracy share; if this love of the father is not kept alive, brotherhood dies as well. Nisbet shared Buckley's view that patriotism has the power to envelop citizens in a common bond of loving gratitude and worried with Tocqueville to say that a democracy that severed the links in the community chain would produce an alienated citizenry.

On the other hand, Wills argued, if conservatives "glory in inherited values and traditions," then consistency demands that they "must admit accountability for historical wrongs" that also contribute to a disaffected public. This too keeps faith in institutions firm. "Guilt for the past is the other side of gratitude for the past." Buckley agreed with Wills to say that we have made mistakes. As such, we were right to back away from the excesses of manifest destiny that sought to export democracy; nevertheless, we were still obliged to acknowledge the relative goodness of our system for ourselves. Although we are attempting to restore this aspect of civic virtue in the aftermath of Vietnam, "there is a hard academic undertow that continues to disparage America" and work against a legitimate patriotism. Since a system cannot remain a source of legitimate authority if it is widely
disparaged, and since intellectuals tend toward disparagement, it remains for conservatives
to speak of the sustaining function of patriotism if we are to nurture public virtue. Buckley is suggesting that, in light of this aggressive drag on public talk, conservatives ought not moderate their hortatory rhetoric of patriotism; more modest appeals would, to extend his nautical metaphor, drown in leftist negativism.

Wills agreed that patriotic language is appropriately conspicuous but wanted to uncover a more nuanced rhetoric than Buckley's. Wills dissected patriotism into several forms. The first is a loyalty that says "my country right or wrong," which, he noted, has the merit of admitting that it can be wrong. A second, generally liberal view, makes the country a cause and carries it to abstract proportions. This loyalty is attached to the country only when it is right. "This leads to an integrity . . . so lofty as to be irrelevant; whose country, after all, can be right very much of the time?" The third follows Woodrow Wilson's "Puritan" strand of moralism, which makes patriotism a noble fight that is blind to its less noble interests and motivations. Against these various ideals, Wills held up Robert E. Lee as a model of concrete patriotism. Lee is worth emulating because he displays a pragmatic loyalty, not to an ideal, but to real people. More to Wills' point, it is a loyalty to specific compatriots over a larger number of others, and not the false choice between ideals and friends that E. M. Forster claimed it was when he said, "I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my friends and betraying my country, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country." Lee had the courage to choose between one band of citizens over another, knowing he couldn't join the latter to slaughter the former. Wills offered a patriotism that chooses among loyalties and rejects Forster's dilemma as a generally false one that prevents a pragmatic choice among relative goods.
The virtues of particular loyalties

Novak, like Wills, described a more particular patrimony in the "habits, instincts, and aspirations" of one's ancestors that form much of the "emotional and imaginal weight" in one's life. These "organic connections" with the past, in the form of "emotions, instincts, memory, imagination, passions, and ways of perceiving" lie beyond reason and consciousness. We should valorize these various patrimonies in public life to lead us to a civic virtue marked by a genuine cultural pluralism. Deliberating well over common goods does not begin from the presumption that plural cultural ties must be severed. The melting pot metaphor is misguided, Novak concluded, because it wastes the experience ethnic groups can bring to the public forum.

Lasch also praised the particularities of loyalty against a melting pot myth that seeks to advance the American Way of Life. This "amnesiac" progress, which demands that we forget our roots in order to face the future, produces an insipid leveling but no strong loyalties. A provincialism that speaks of loyalty to a particular place and people is better, from Lasch's perspective, since even "blind loyalty is better than thoughtless individualism which is loyal to nothing." More worrisome for him were the tendencies of the cosmopolitan spirit to diminish community and strengthen "the spirit of the crowd or of the mob." Attempts to assimilate smaller loyalties merely fosters a degeneration into "ancient narrowness." Lasch warned that we cannot count on assimilation to produce ethnic tolerance because these efforts to bury personal loyalties only make them emerge with more brutal force when unleashed.

Lasch shared conservatives' concerns to defend particular loyalties because he believed that liberals had abandoned provincial ties in favor of a liberating cosmopolitan optimism. Leftist efforts to break down particular loyalties made perversion of them easier, as in the rise of national socialism. In neglecting the virtue of loyalty, liberals encouraged it to emerge in vicious form, "in desperate and demonic affirmation of the imperiled values"
Niebuhr put it.\textsuperscript{60} Niebuhr's insight into human nature has large implications for conservative conceptions of prudence. The human capacity for loyalty, Niebuhr maintained, was only possible in small groups. Humans can only attach themselves to particulars and it is through this love of imperfect concrete objects that we learn the virtues of love, respect, and duty in more general terms, thereby moving closer to perfect love in God. The republican virtue of disinterest can thus be cultivated best by love and caring of particular people. Lasch praised King as a model of particular love, one who rejected the excesses of tribalism and nationalism. His inner discipline avoided self-righteousness and the tendency to see the particular community as the only universal value; it accepted responsibility for behavior even in the face of injustice, and made the wise distinction between forgiveness and tolerance.\textsuperscript{61} Lasch accused liberals of speaking only of general goals and narrow minds, and who are incapable of nurturing the disinterest needed to consider common goods. Liberals, he concluded, have "no understanding of the virtue of particularism" and therefore no conception of how or why we need to cultivate it.\textsuperscript{62} Lasch reiterates Buckley's position that legitimate boundaries of loyalty should account for and redress the liberal excess, in this case a rationalistic bias toward universal attachments.

\textit{The virtue of compromise}

Kirkpatrick alluded to Aristotelian moderation in public life to say that the extreme pursuit of any virtue in public life was a vice. The only political virtues that serve the public good, she claimed, are those of "accommodation, tolerance, compromise, patience." In "normal times and places, they are the only means to the public good." From Aristotle, she aligned this view with Mill's utilitarianism, Madison's pragmatism, and Niebuhr's moral realism. Wills concurred, noting that the ideal of the peaceable community ought to drive our interest in all other public virtues worthy of our deliberation. Since self-preservation is
a closed question for Wills, and since "middling, accommodating" virtues serve this national interest, compromise is a virtue that serves the people.\textsuperscript{63} It serves the common good in a way that the fervor of prophets can never do because righteous and rigid prophets can never bring a permanent peace. The art of compromise, Wills insisted, is the chief political virtue we ought to develop in leaders. He agreed with Kirkpatrick in saying that, if we are to preserve the peace, then purists cannot reign.\textsuperscript{64} Reformers, he noted, have the virtues of prophets, and these same virtues would be vices in leaders. It is a good thing most prophets are unarmed, he added, since, generally, the only way to stop them is to kill them. The prophet is not bound by unjust laws, "no matter how proper their enactment, how strict their interpretation by the courts." Prophets are "rigid and unyielding; proud and self-righteous." They cannot live by "compromise, easily pleased vanity, and mediocre expectations--the virtues that make for conformity in society." For Wills, the virtue of compromise as mediocrity comes full circle from Aristotle to liberal democratic republics, in the evolution of its meaning from a virtuous mean to one of middling expectations.

\textit{Democratic virtues}

Novak also looked to liberal democracy as the wellspring of a new set of virtues. In addition to a demand for "compromise over moral absolutism," modern democracy also required another set of replacements to free us from tyranny, censorship, and poverty. Modern democratic virtues demanded more of us in the way of enterprise over resignation, civil virtue over religious piety, respect for law over submission to command, and self mastery over static position. Moreover, the Founders wisely understood that modern politics could not be built on a classical polity of citizens who relied largely on "friendship and upon respect for one another's virtue." They looked instead to a larger orbit, a "new science" as they put it, which relied on "the virtues of a republic anchored in commerce" whose activities "soften fanaticism, teach practical compromise, give instruction in
prudence, temper manners, and focus attention on small gains and small losses. The specific moral virtues and habits involved in commerce are not the most noble; nonetheless, they better protect what is most noble than any known alternative."^65

Himmelfarb also proposed more pedestrian virtues for public emulation, against the magnanimity of classical models. Again, she proposed the Victorian model to distinguish between aristocratic conceptions of excellence and more democratic criteria for private virtue. These mundane virtues, when applied to social policy will act as a moral constraint, keeping both compassion and expectations within a non-heroic orbit. In this scheme, virtuous compassion was not "selfless," and its aims for relieving poverty, for example, were not "heroic, nor the aspiration of a saint or a martyr."^66 The key Victorian goal was "character," a consensus that the primary emphasis of social reform was that it "contribute to the moral improvement of the poor--at the very least, that it not have a deleterious moral effect." If social reformers were neither saints nor heroes, neither were the poor expected to be. The virtue, (in the double sense of potency and moral legitimacy) of Victorian social policy was its attainability, given human nature. Its democratic impulse was the pursuit of common virtues a "best self" composed of "respectability, responsibility, decency, industriousness, prudence, temperance," attainable by all. Similarly, the economically advantaged in democratic regimes do not require a heroic effort to attain "restraint in the pursuit and consumption of wealth, and solicitude for those less fortunate than oneself."^67 The Victorian philosophy of "always enlightened selfishness," as neither heroic nor altruistic, is far less dangerous, Himmelfarb concluded, than progressive schemes that succeed too well "in establishing oppressive and tyrannical" regimes.^68

Models of virtuous power

Wills offered a concept of virtuous power as a positive term to be included in deliberations. He draws heavily on Ciceronian notions of the *vir bonus* as the right person
for the time, one whose conspicuous action is a model for others. The American Framers, he noted, shared the view that human virtue could influence vast historical forces through a sense of personal autonomy and will. Even Marxist theories, Wills argued, produced heroes in Marx, Mao, and Stalin. In looking to the American past for heroic models of power, Wills found Washington to be an exemplar on several points. Washington remains a touchstone of legitimate authority, Wills contended, because he accepted power when the country needed him and relinquished it when the moment of crisis passed. In giving up power, he exemplified the classical republican virtue of disinterestedness articulated in the legend of Cincinnatus, the Roman farmer who left his plow to take up the sword and returned to it when the danger to Rome passed. Washington, as a modern Cincinnatus, similarly obtained power through the people's trust and resigned the presidency when he was no longer needed. His support of the constitution and his resignations, first as commander-in-chief of the revolutionary troops and later as president personified the republican public spiritedness, a lack of personal ambition for its own sake.

Washington also displayed conservative virtues of stability and continuity through a revolution, which restraint prevented a dynasty of personal power. Washington's great strength in governing was his effective use of power, one which grows, paradoxically, Wills argued, by "prudent trimming." He drew virtuous power out of popular trust, specifically the trust that he would not betray it through abuse or unwillingness to step down when institutional forms were in place. In short, he gained power by a willingness to relinquish it, and in so doing provided the stability necessary for constitutional forms to take shape.

In this connection, Washington was a teacher of virtue for citizens as well. He modeled disinterestedness by making it more conspicuous for others to follow on smaller levels and in turn acquired fame and praise. Wills noted that to "encourage the display of virtue, to make it more conspicuous, and therefore more contaminant, virtue should be
conspicuously rewarded," with fame. There is a "purity" in this kind of fame, Wills argued, one that sought only this recognition and praise, not personal power or profit. Quoting Benjamin Rush, Wills noted that this distinction between praise and power exemplified the difference between the American and French revolutions: Americans gave Washington all their praise while the French gave Napoleon all their power. Honest fame and praise validated the virtue of disinterest and "was thus a social glue." Washington exemplified how "virtue is born from fame" by a popular diffusion of the public-spiritedness citizens could emulate, indeed, must emulate Madison claimed, in order to make the American experiment successful.71

More recently, Wills looked to John F. Kennedy to distinguish vicious notions of a powerful presidency. He contrasted the Weberian notion of charisma as personal authority with Kennedy's use of charm. Charismatic leadership, in Weberian terms, is necessary in periods of formation when institutions are not yet strong, or in transitional periods when institutions give way to the new. But Kennedy, Wills observed, wanted to break with an Eisenhower past and thus rhetorically constructed the level and number of crises that required personal power. Against Arthur Schlesinger's claims for the merits of a strong presidency, Wills argued that Kennedy was an "imperial president" who weakened political institutions by cultivating loyalty to himself and not to his office. Similarly, Kennedy advisors as 'honorary Kennedys" appropriated their power from their proximity to Kennedy rather than from their institutional roles. The Kennedy administration left the office weakened by a charismatic elite that wielded power chaotically, rather than in conservative, which is to say orderly, fashion.72 Wills has voiced the same concerns that Nisbet, Kristol, Will and Lasch articulated; namely, that legitimate authority is weakened by strong persons who rule by a forceful charm instead of the power of office. Kennedy's "trivialization" of Weberian charisma into personal style substituted charm for tradition and the rule of law.
Even among martyrs, Wills contended, charisma is not a virtue of leadership. He noted that King was not charismatic; on the contrary, he drew heavily on the traditions of church and the "order of the liberal state" to adjudicate his claims for justice peaceably. "His power was real" and conservatively virtuous, "because it was not mere assertion--it was a persuasive yielding of private will through nonviolent advocacy."73

Democratic capitalism as an embodiment of practical intelligence

In addition to the mundane virtues of democratic forms and the public virtues of democratic leaders, conservatives also identify virtues of democratic capitalism. They acknowledge the inseparability of the political economy, understood as an intimate connection between political power and the economic distribution of goods and services. In contrast to the left, which looked to power relations in the political economy and its attendant abuses of individual rights, conservatives saw that same inseparability as an imperative to talk about the virtues that accompany those relations and their merits vis a vis socialistic forms. Some are unabashedly enthusiastic about democratic capitalism; others are more reserved. Many neoconservatives, as Kristol noted, distinguish themselves from more traditional conservatives by their ambivalent and uneasy relationship with late capitalism. However, despite many conservatives' shared concerns with the left over late capitalism, conservatives draw different inferences from the same data that troubles the left. It therefore advocates different solutions. Most generally, conservatives seek solutions in the recovery of certain virtues associated with the American past and a Judeo-Christian tradition; they also self consciously seek a moral language in the original intent of capitalism.

In comparing the relative virtues of capitalism, socialism and democracy, Buckley noted that in none of these three forms will the state become "the agent of universal well-being." What is valuable about democratic capitalism is that it tends toward the protection
of human freedoms that can be quantified in at least three areas, that of speech, religion, and property ownership. Democracies won't guarantee these freedoms; after all, they allowed Peron and Hitler to thrive for a time. Yet on a purely quantitative basis, he reasoned, we can say that states that offer better protection of all or some of these freedoms are better than states that protect one or none. Social democracies are wanting because, despite a strong public sector to debate public policies in accordance with a majority will, they tend to lack a strong enough private sector to protect those basic freedoms.74

Democratic capitalism also allows us to speak the language of work. Wills pointed out the classical notion of work in conservative attitudes and shared the perception that liberals, because they emphasize the language of equality, have little interest in speaking of work-associated virtues. "The work ethic of the right." Wills noted, "makes work its own end--satisfying, character-forming, virtuous, productive of good to others," a theme that Lasch reiterated often. The left, Wills suggested, reverses this thought to argue that "politics has no higher goal than to keep the poor from suffering. Equality of possession would complete the human task."75

Novak, like Buckley and Wills, defended democratic capitalism as the best of available alternatives in a world that cannot become the kingdom of God on earth. Capitalism is not a "church, or even a philosophy, he noted," it merely provides institutional liberation from tyranny, torture, and poverty. Unlike Will who has consistently argued the theme of statecraft as soulcraft, Novak maintained that the state was not an ethical system. It did not "fill the soul" or explicitly teach one how to live. But "it is designed to create space, within which the soul may make its own choices." Nevertheless, he proposed that there are some virtues and spiritual values cultivated by democratic capitalism that should find a place in public discourse. Foremost among these is a civic responsibility manifested by the cooperation and coordination evident in community building and the self-reliance necessary for self-government.
Within the economic and cultural realms, the intellectual virtue most evident in
democracy is creativity: meeting a perceived need. This includes the entire social
intelligence in law, business, government and the arts. The moral dimension of creativity
manifests itself in the ingenuity and persistence to carry an idea through to application.
Democracy also spawns a type of associational, communitarian living. These are the little
groups often overlooked by critics, Novak noted, and include voluntary associations,
teamwork, even prosaic committees. Finally, a competitive spirit may be seen as a virtue
insofar as it works against monopolistic controls and unfair economic practices. Novak
viewed the democratic enterprise as a world of "emergent probability." Anything might
happen, good or bad. Democracies can put sin to use, transform its energy into creative
use. Sin is a part of free will, but we can hope, with Aristotle, for a "tincture of virtue," a
modest degree of goodness, decency, and compassion. Democracy aims neither for
"perfect virtue" nor "directly at pure intentions." The chief virtue of this arrangement is that
it gives rein to liberty. Unlike utopias, which are built with saints in mind, democracies are
fashioned for sinners.76

Virtuous self interest emerges in most business settings, he maintained, because
short term profit incentives generally give way to long term interests of shareholders and
customers. This virtue generally subdues greed over time to avoid angry patrons, worker
morale and corrupt executives. Moreover, businesspeople are social, capable of seeing
themselves as others see them; they are "seldom merely self-regarding." Realistically, self
interest in business acts as "a set of realistic limits, it is a key to all the virtues, as prudence
is."77

The Vices of Late Capitalism

Not all conservatives agree that the moral vocabulary derived from democratic
capitalism serves public deliberations. The general consensus, however is that, whichever
position one takes, the political economy itself has insights into a moral language for purposes of critique or emulation.

Will and Lasch are among those cultural conservatives who believe that the current weakness of capitalism resides in its material success. This leads to their view that the value of democracy's practical virtues, as championed by Novak, has been severely undercut in our post-industrial society. Will invoked Solzhenitsyn's critique of the west to note that modernity's moral roots are "short and thin" and joins the dissident in rejecting modern politics for a classical conception that is interested in the virtuous citizen. Our present structure seeks the lowest common denominator, asks little self restraint from citizens, he claimed, and little civic spirit. In addition, it fosters a citizenry that is not inclined to sustain the very work ethic that gave it its original success. Modern politics "assumes that it is not virtue that makes people free, but freedom that makes people virtuous." It looks to a "tamed" materialism that counters interest with interest in the hope that somehow the public interest will be served. Modernity makes a virtue of the necessity of self-interest.  

Lasch agreed that late capitalism has eroded civil virtue and joined those conservatives who argued that socialism is no longer the hope of the future because it could not evolve into a "socialism with a human face." However, he broke with many conservatives to argue that the cold war has cost us our civil virtue. Corporations, academia and the government concentrated power in the rich to fight socialism and stressed a scientific elite at the expense of teaching political virtue in the schools and workplace. As a consequence, we do not have an "intelligent, enterprising, and politically knowledgeable work force." We have instead, a "secret police, the erosion of civil liberties, the stifling of political debate in the interest of bipartisan consensus, the concentration of decision-making in the executive branch, the sheer growth of the executive and its declining accountability." The lying and secrecy surrounding the presidency has resulted in a weak public culture evidenced by little confidence in government, and the destruction of trust "on which civic
life depends." We became evil fighting evil and destroyed a love of our country, which is at the heart of civic virtue.79

This discussion to trace conservatives' efforts to locate several terms of a public moral vocabulary adds considerable detail to the rhetorical boundaries of prudential deliberations sketched in Chapters 3 and 4. In following these efforts, the discussion also took note of the conservative attempt to position specific moral terms within a language of responsibility that would function to offset the perceived inadequacies of rights talk in current public discourse. This selfconscious use of language to fashion a moral framework for deliberations serves to identify several specific virtues offered as important to the work of contemporary prudence and points to additional connections between prudence, rhetoric and ethics in contemporary practical reasoning.

With respect to the virtues themselves, conservatives identify several qualities that give shape to the rhetorical boundaries set out in Chapters 3 and 4. In Chapter 3, conservatives offered a particular view of human nature to mark the outer limits of possibility when deliberating over the affairs of flawed humans. It also provided presumptive weight to the status quo in deliberations, on the basis that slowly evolved institutional formations more genuinely reflected innate human needs and wants than did imaginative or progressive discourse. In Chapter 4, a particular historical consciousness offered conservatives a method and framework for filling in the discursive boundaries by way of models and events of praise and censure. The chapter also pointed to conservative efforts to urge a heightened sense of history as a wise collaborator in public discourse, suggesting that deliberators defer to past wisdom by tempering their hopes for the goals of the process.

Chapter 5 has pointed to several virtues that more clearly define the rhetorical boundaries for prudential reasoning from conservatives' perspective. Specifically, conservatives noted that informal constraints in the form of social censure and social
coercion did not exceed a legitimate range for public talk, nor was the appeal to adversarial or polemical language inappropriate. The chief virtues many identified in prudent deliberators, however, were compromise and moderation, since these offered the best hope for keeping the peace among diverse citizen deliberators pursuing the plural ends permitted within democratic capitalism. Finally, conservatives placed all of these virtues in the service of patriotism, the *sine qua non* of civic virtue. Conservatives identified these virtues in reaction to several liberal contributions to public talk that, from their perspective, had moved beyond an Aristotelian golden mean to a vicious excess. Liberal attributes, which had drifted outside the bounds of prudent discourse into various vicious "isms," included optimism, progressivism, professionalism, and psychological reductionism. When perceptions of an unfettered compassion and tolerance were added to the mix, conservatives felt compelled to restore a virtuous balance with a catalogue of moderating virtues.

In cataloguing these virtues, conservatives have described a prudence that is highly sensitive to context, even with respect to patriotism. The virtuous mean of patriotic loyalty is not atemporally fixed, but is contextually determined, shifting according to the intellectual and political climate, and to the particular loyalties of average Americans. Patriotism is particularly sensitive to perceived drags from the left which have heightened perceptions among many conservatives that they must reinforce certain other public virtues to bolster loyalty. Other virtues extolled in this chapter were especially responsive to a view that, even among a public that is, in the main, culturally conservative, there is great diversity of customs, values and beliefs. As a consequence there is some clear shifting in the mean of civility, the force of experience, and the force of virtuous deliberators themselves.

Finally, this discussion has pointed to several conservatives' self conscious use of normative language to articulate their perceptions of heightened urgency. This strategic
attention to linguistic strategies to direct the course of deliberations in language that is restrained, "arhetorical," and etymologically sound, is of itself a highly rhetorical effort to offer purposeful, intentional, and value laden choices to an imagined audience. In addition to crafting a language of responsibility out of particular virtues, they have also rhetorically constructed the mean of those virtues as well, in response to current circumstances. Thus, the language of responsibility has been crafted out of a tempered tolerance and compassion, middling expectations that differ significantly from pagan deliberative goals, and modest, democratic virtues that replace the magnanimity of a virtuous pagan citizenry. The language of responsibility, then, also comprises a language of the past, a language of modest hopes and potent memory, and a language of imaginative restraint, all rhetorical choices. These choices bring to mind Cicero's observation that Plato revealed himself as a rhetorician most clearly when he was inveighing against rhetoricians and sophists. Similarly, we might add that conservatives display their rhetorical powers most effectively when they articulate a language of responsibility to reject an imaginative rhetoric that is too much in the future.

With a common moral language in place, conservatives have offered a fairly detailed set of rhetorical limits for public deliberations. In the following chapter we can begin to outline the contours of a conservative deliberative process that identifies these virtues not only as the subject but also as the constituent elements of that process.


5 Himmelfarb, *On Liberty and Liberalism* 324.

6 Himmelfarb, "One Very Simple Principle?" 531.


8 Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards* 188-89.

9 Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards* 186-95.


12 Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion* 388-89.


18 There remains, of course, the Ciceronian view of Platonic discourse, expressed in *De oratore*, that Plato's philosophical objections to rhetoric became memorable in large part because they were expressed with enormous rhetorical skill.

19 *De oratore* II. xxiii. 96-99.


22 Nisbet, *Twilight of Authority* 256-57, 280.


24 Will, *The Morning After* 52.

26 Kirkpatrick, Dictatorships and Double Standards 100-01.

27 Kirkpatrick, Legitimacy and Force 451.


29 Will, Statecraft 19-20.


31 Buckley, The Jeweler's Eye 290.

32 Will, The Morning After 46, 367.

33 Will, Restoration 213.

34 Lasch, The True and Only Heaven 423-66.

35 Buckley, The Jeweler's Eye 111.

36 Buckley, "Agenda for the Nineties" 40.

37 Buckley, Up From Liberalism 38-54.

38 Buckley, Right Reason 32.

39 Kirkpatrick, Dictatorships and Double Standards 196-98.

40 Will, Suddenly 266.

41 Will, Statecraft 32-33.

42 Will, The Morning After 162.

43 Lasch, The True and Only Heaven 371-76.

44 Lasch, The True and Only Heaven 81.

45 Lasch, The True and Only Heaven 80-90, 118
Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven* 390-93.

Novak, "Needing Niebuhr Again" 53.


Nisbet, "What To Do When You Don't Live in a Golden Age" 236, 241.


Buckley, *Gratitude* xiv-19. See also "Will Power," 53.

Nisbet, *Conservatism* 45-46.

Wills, *Confessions* 76-77.

Buckley, "Agenda for the Nineties" 35.


Novak, *Politics: Realism and Imagination* 60-63.


Lasch, "Why Liberals Lack Virtue" 32-34.

Wills, *Confessions* 188.

Wills, *Confessions* 66.

Novak, *Free Persons and the Common Good* 111-17.

67 Himmelfarb, Poverty and Compassion 7-8.


70 Wills, Cincinnatus xxi-23.

71 Wills, Cincinnatus 104-31.


73 Wills, Kennedy Imprisonment 299-300.


75 Wills, Confessions 145.


77 Novak, The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism 90-121.


CHAPTER VI
THE CONTOURS OF CONSERVATIVE DELIBERATIONS

An examination of conservatives' use of cultural wisdom and moral language to deliberate over public goods considers both the elements of deliberation, understood as the qualities and preconditions of reasoning, and the deliberative process itself, with respect to its rules, procedures, and goals. The identification of specific elements and processual forms also calls attention to those points of affinity and discontinuity in conservative deliberations with classical understandings of prudence. This comparative move, in turn, establishes the ground for making some concluding speculations about the theoretical and pragmatic implications of conservative reasoning for contemporary public deliberation. For purposes of organizational clarity, the discussion clusters conservative elements and processual forms around the intellectual context of a suspect rationality; an unresolved tension between conservative idealism and pragmatism; and, a continuing conservative effort to fashion a rhetoric of assent out of ideals held out as common cultural aspirations.

Nonrational aspects of conservative deliberations

Since the shape of conservative prudence emerges out of a broader intellectual movement whose project is to reject strict rationality as a productive mode of deliberating well over public goods, conservatives voice objections that parallel this broader rejection. They also attend, as do other critiques of rationality, to the heterogeneous composition of contemporary deliberators, to suggest alternative models for collective decisionmaking.
Conservatives, then, offer nonrational and emotional elements of practical reasoning as an antidote to an arid rationality that, from their perspective, trivializes valuable collective and personal experience available to enrich the quality of public discourse. As they articulate a critique of strict rationality, many suggest several properties of a diverse reasoning process for a heterogenous citizenry that is alternately passionate and civil; selectively compassionate, within larger goals; both adversarial and polemical; respectful of particular, especially familial, wisdoms; democratic; and, populist.

Conservatives often collapse notions of rationality and rationalism in their indictment of abstract reasoning. Kirkpatrick claimed that there was little difference between the two in political deliberations since both tended to set aside "nonrational factors such as sentiment habit, and custom as obstacles" to good decisionmaking. A wiser process, she offered, looks to experience and custom in their institutional forms, and understands that these patterned behaviors "exist and function through the people of a society." The rationalist interest in abstract, universal solutions that are "stripped of every relation," forgets the "intractability of human behavior, the complexity of human institutions." Unlike rationalistic speculation, wise deliberators must distinguish "between ideas and institutions, between form and substance, between conceiving and realizing." Kirkpatrick identified Plato as the prototype of rationalistic thinking about the requirements of a just state, as if Athenians "did not already have loves, hates, habits, temperaments, and ideas of their own" about the good society.

Since conservatives reject strict rationality as useful for deliberating over human affairs, they assign a legitimate role to feelings and passions in prudential reasoning, although they disagree on the amount of argumentative weight nonrational factors ought to receive in good decisionmaking. Kirkpatrick assigned passion a moderate role in public talk, noting that passions spur us to political involvement and foster attachments to the political process itself. Passions keep deliberators attached, and, she believed, loyal to the
political system. She conceded that passionate deliberators often produce conflicts, but this was preferable to an unencumbered reason that produced few loyalties. She faulted Mill on this score, noting that while *On Liberty* remains our tradition's best statement of the open society, its author gave "too little weight to custom, habit, affection, and other non-rational factors." Novak indicted the Rawlsian veil of ignorance on similar grounds, noting that Rawls made the standard liberal mistake of starting in the imagination rather than in real contexts when speculating about justice. In denying the contextual nature of public deliberations, Rawls also wrongly disparaged particular passions and habits that should accompany deliberating over how to distribute justice. Attention to context also partially accounts for Buckley's comment that he "should sooner live in a society governed by the first two thousand names in the Boston telephone directory than in a society governed by the two thousand faculty members of Harvard University." He attributed his preference, not to a perceived lack of brainpower at Harvard, but to an excess of intellectual arrogance than diminishes cultural sentiments that ordinary people respect. For Kirkpatrick, Novak, and Buckley, the important contribution passions make in political contexts is to keep the process more humane.

Kristol added that passionate beliefs were a source of moral energy in deliberations, enabling us to conduct public discourse in "a different kind of reasoning, one that comes from feelings, emotions, and long experience." He quoted Newman on this point to observe that people "will die for a dogma who will not stir for a conclusion." But Kristol also noted that, while passionate commitment to an idea can "give shape to our sentiments, our consciences," commitment to muddled ideas unleash the wrong energies and lead to actions that sometimes produce fairly grotesque political realities. The prudential task is to harness our energies to the right ideas.
With respect to Burkean prejudice, Nisbet joined other conservatives who linked national prejudices to a national ethos, a way of looking at issues through the lens of wont and habit, custom and tradition. He recalled that Burke’s deference to cultural habits and norms led to some reasonable decisions; after, all, he noted, Burke’s reasoning led him to defend the rights of American, Irish, and Indian colonies to live in the liberty of their own cultural ways. Nisbet also took note of the Jamesian distinction between experiential "knowledge of" and bookish "knowledge about" to identify a societal wisdom that serves as a "buffer" and a "restraint" on "pure reason" in decisionmaking. This suggests to some conservatives that appeals to tradition are less a fallacy of reasoning in public debate than a needed corrective to restore needed attention to the feelings of a particular culture.

Lasch disagreed to say that appeals to Burkean prejudice were not sufficient for informing prudential deliberations because they were too passive. This kind of reasoning, Lasch argued, was not practical reasoning in Aristotelian terms because it relied exclusively on warranted assumptions and did not actively develop supporting reasons beyond those assumptions. In argumentative terms, Burkean prejudices may establish the common ground of a first premise in reasoning, but they don’t do the hard work of establishing a minor premise that enables deliberators to earn their concluding claims. Unsupported, they remain fallacious appeals when they remain uncritically accepted.

Others who agree that the communal sentiments and feelings of a culture have a legitimate place in deliberations as motivators to action and a leash on disconnected rationality share Lasch’s concern that unreflective passion contributes little to the process of deliberating well. Many distinguish between an unreflective passion and the judicious use of compassion for others.

Himmelfarb described compassion as the legitimate "fellow feeling" for the "sorrow" of others that lead to acts of benevolence to relieve that sorrow. As such, it has a useful role to play in deciding policies for the common good. But compassion must be
"proportionate and compatible with the proper ends" of deliberations if it is to be included in the calculation. As pure sentiment it knows no proportion and becomes a policy of "feeling good rather than doing good." For Himmelfarb, the Victorian insight into compassion that we might benefit from today is its "unsentimental" power to rein in a potentially destructive mawkish element in public discourse. Himmelfarb especially wanted to recover the Victorian control of unfettered feeling, their "stern sense of proportion, of reason, of self control." This approach was "even scientific" in a pragmatic sense, she maintained, utilizing "means that were consonant with ends, and to define ends in terms that were realistic rather than utopian." We can learn from a Victorian prudence that regulates compassion, uses it judiciously lest it become an unfocused passion that does more social harm than good.

Kristol agreed with Himmelfarb that compassionate feelings must yield to realism: "one does what is do-able, one does what historical experience tells us will work, and one eschews all fanciful new-fangled theories about the causes and cures of poverty." In the case of poverty, he explained, traditional education and economic incentives work. Economically, compassion also looks for incentives to develop self-reliance. This is not a case of blaming the victim, he insisted, but blaming "the unwitting victimizers--people who, in devising social policy, allowed the passion of compassion to obscure the coarse realities of human nature." Prudence is selectively compassionate process, keeping larger goals and beliefs in mind.

Sometimes conservative prudence simply decides to act compassionately, ostensibly to reduce the pain of another. Buckley argued that occasionally we must act to relieve misery, even if such actions skirt the law. In one such case, Buckley confessed to readers that he forged his vacationing doctor's signature to buy a month's supply of heroin to ease the pain of his housekeeper's dying mother. The circumstances demanded his
immediate action since the mother, who lived in Havanna, had no financial access to painrelieving drugs and Buckley's doctor was unavailable.\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{Truth needs a champion}

The role of passion in conservative deliberations is also related to the conservative view that truths need a passionate champion in order to prevail. This contributes to a position that prudent deliberations should exhibit an adversarial and polemical character; among some conservatives, this also means that public talk is not open-ended with respect to free speech rights. Conservatives exhibit a postmodern skepticism with regard to the liberal notion that truths are more likely to emerge in a free marketplace of ideas. Unlike postmodernists on the left, however, conservatives draw different conclusions from this skepticism. These conclusions not only differ from those of the left; they also differ among conservatives, particularly as this skepticism relates to freedom of expression. Conservatives look to history to challenge the Aristotelian and classical liberal assumptions that the truth will out. Truths need a passionate advocate, Buckley reasoned, because "false doctrines do appeal to people."\textsuperscript{14} Historically validated truths with respect to political regimes need particularly vigorous defense, as our twentieth century experience with totalitarianism attests.\textsuperscript{15} Foreign, if not false, prophets also exert a disproportionate appeal, Buckley added, and thus American youths reject a nearby Christianity for distant gurus to guide their lives. Even conservative efforts can be misguided, Buckley cautioned, and pointed to the John Birch Society as evidence that "reason is not king" in the intellectual market.\textsuperscript{16}

Since error is seductive, Buckley reasoned, we need to inculcate not dissipate certain values; America's identity is threatened by a failure "to nourish any orthodoxy at all."\textsuperscript{17} Conservatives, he argued, must actively challenge erroneous political claims because it was not certain that truths would prevail without advocates.\textsuperscript{18} Buckley, in
rejecting the Aristotelian premise that truth or near truth has the natural advantage in deliberating before rational audiences, has given prudence an even more adversarial cast than it assumed in pagan models. As a Platonist, Buckley believes that we have arrived at certain immutable truths about the human condition, truths which require eloquent and polemical presentation before malleable audiences. But, since he doesn't embrace a Ciceronian epistemology, his prudence is less dialogic and more didactic.

The tensions between a search for Platonic truths and the need to decide particular cases in the here and now is particularly evident in Buckley's view of prudential public discourse since, for him, the avowed task is to bring experience in line with certain immutable truths. He cited Richard Weaver to make the point, noting that conservatism was "a paradigm of essences towards which the phenomenology of the world is in continuing approximation." He added that some opinions are better than others for performing this task and that it is important "to traffic in the better ones, in preference to the others." He characterized his ability to discern the better as a "jeweler's eye." Whereas this image suggests to others the ability to discern the flaws as well as clarity in the gems of cultural wisdom, Buckley restricted its function to a talent for seeing certain truths clearly and expertly.

This view has implications for prudential deliberations as they intersect with First Amendment rights. If one does not believe that the best test of truth is an open intellectual market, then not all ideas have an equal right to compete. Buckley claimed that we ought to trust our cultural intuitions with respect to the effect of certain freedoms and include certain restrictions in the prudential effort to champion truth. In the case of free speech and pornography, for example, Buckley noted that he trusted his inner cultural "tug" to ban certain expressions in the name of social cohesion. We understand, for example, that a comedy about Dachau would "hurt a people's feelings. A people whose feelings are hurt withdraw from a sense of kinship, which is what makes society cohere." Moreover,
continued indifference to hurt feelings produces a calloused citizenry. Soon, we become "practiced in the kind of indifference that makes people, and the society they live in, unlovely." Therefore we should override an interest in free speech in the name of larger goals of social cohesion tied to particular values. Objectively based policies derived from strict rationality, he noted, are bound to fail, because they do not attend to these particular loyalties. We deliberate better when we understand that we have to live in our own times and assign priorities to those issues we choose to champion.

Will reasoned in similar fashion to note that if all ideas could compete, then it followed that all possessed a right to "win." From this he inferred that it would be better to be ruled by Nazis than to silence them. A wiser approach to deliberations would link First Amendment rights to founding political documents that presume the legitimacy of the republic. Since there "are political purposes for protecting free speech and some speech is incompatible with those purposes," free speech that risks the health of the republic does not have an equal right to be heard. Will looked to the Nazi experience to conclude also that we cannot trust that the free exchange of ideas will be sufficient to reject totalitarian appeals. Novak agreed and rejected a faith in the "free marketplace, individual autonomy, naked reason and undisguised enlightenment." Given human nature and history, we cannot trust an open-ended deliberative process; instead we must begin from and protect foundational democratic truths.

Wills also rejected the "liberal myth of a free intellectual market" on the basis that it "leads to unwarranted hopes for elections to be a time of great debate and momentous decisions." He agreed with other conservatives to say that "[P]olitics is not rational"; it can't be, if it is to keep the peace. Our deliberative processes, he insisted, are necessarily conservative, not radical. It is not the "system" that works to keep leaders in check, but agitators outside the system who eventually force it to work for their purposes. Civil disobedience begins from the view that there is no virtue in obeying
unjust laws. Protestors have faith that they are right, reason from that belief, and agitate. The system responds eventually with rationalization, not reason, to restore order. In the case of women's suffrage, Wills noted, the political system responded with the rationalizations, not good reasons, that suffrage was good because it quieted the protestors and would probably bring little disruption since women were unlikely to vote in large numbers in any event.\textsuperscript{25} The rational debate model cannot be supported by the evidence of actual deliberations for change, he claimed, which is why, after observing the political process, he developed a deeper faith in the value of social protest.\textsuperscript{26} Wills' attention to the nonrational elements of social protest movements leads him to reach different conclusions about freedom of expression. He does not share Buckley's conclusions because he believes legitimate change begins with "a principled few, not the electoral process." The important implications for prudence, from Wills' perspective, is that deliberating well requires open access to dissident voices, a willingness to accommodate nonviolent protests within the public sphere.

\textit{Diversity}

In their efforts to accommodate plural audiences who hold plural ends between and among themselves, some conservatives attempt to soften those differences, while others trust that a fuller play of diversity will not seriously impede good deliberations. A few make stronger claims to argue that cultural diversity will strengthen our collective ability to reason well together. Those who derive prudence from more plural wisdoms make sharp departures from classical models to articulate diverse elements and a process that is not strictly rational. Whereas Greek and Roman models of prudence rigorously attended to the plurality of opinion on matters related to public goods, neither Aristotle nor Cicero articulated forms of prudential reasoning as diverse as those emerging in contemporary conservative contexts.
Wills' focus on the role of dissident voices in the political process reflects a larger interest among conservatives in the contributions that alternative perspectives might make to the quality of public deliberations. Neoconservatives, especially, speculate on the particular wisdoms of ethnic groups to locate nonrational qualities of good deliberations and raise questions about the role of civility as a norm for public discourse. Novak proposed that ethnicity should be approached initially as an awareness of differences and a sensitivity to cultural heritage. We need not romanticize the "precious wisdom of the uneducated," he argued, nor unduly valorize the intellectual wisdom of the academy to see that liberalism's attachment to rationality has reached its own excess in a Rawlsian veil of ignorance, a position that no real person has ever occupied. Instead, we might draw on ethnic understanding that we decide in passion and contingency and social context.

Novak added that since the amount of current diversity is immense, we cannot hold a number of positions at once. Rather than detachment, a better stance in deliberations is the "pluralistic personality," one who can "pass over," that is, "enter empathetically into the sense of reality, story, symbols, and world of another." We do this "for purposes of understanding and communication" and sometimes to reach an accord, because when two persons pass over they may find elements of a third world story they can share. In a large sense, then, Novak has suggested that intracultural discourse contributes to, not diminishes, the process, a view that contrasts sharply to positions on multiculturalism held by Will, Buckley, and Nisbet. It also signals the sharp difference in the relationship between prudence and the necessity for common ground. Novak, Lasch, and Wills are persuaded that practical reasoning is not inhibited, but may even be enhanced, by multiple perspectives. This contrasts to Will, Buckley, Nisbet, and Himmelfarb who fear that the diminution of common ground will thwart the process.

On pragmatic grounds, Novak argued that we ought to treat others with respect if only because awareness of one's own cultural identity fosters a deeper understanding and
regard for others. The respect for others, he argued, begins with self respect. Liberal characterizations of ethnics do nothing to foster the regard for group affiliation that can be the beginning of a true cosmopolitanism to replace a balkanized America. Novak claimed further that each group had something to contribute to political life that is lost in homogeneity; a heightened awareness of who we are fosters a more peaceful dialogue among citizens who are serene in their possession of a strong sense of identity.

Novak added that ethnics possess a valuable set of experiences that are potentially positive additions to good deliberations. For one, very little in lower middle class experience promotes a great faith in the far-off future. Their faith is in the concrete here and now. White ethnics' experience was of polluted cities, disproportionate sacrifice of sons to war, high taxes on relatively low income, and high crime. Conversely, liberal agendas of the 1960's, from their perception, "did not feel the weight of crime; they lost touch with real experience." Additionally, white ethnics were skeptical of altruistic liberal motives, suspecting them of seeking power and personal advantage. Especially in politics, which is a contingent and contextual activity, we should respect "intelligent subjectivity" of all citizens to keep us in touch. Novak added that middle class rejection of liberal social plans centered on their experience of things, including hard work and strong authority. The political task is to tap the energies and experience of the lower middle class, acknowledging that both are components of deliberating well over complex social policies. As it stands, ethnics feel beseiged by the efforts of 'liberal professors to search out and destroy" their local, uneducated standards, aspirations, prejudices, and tastes. They are perceived as "insensitive or hostile to the home culture of their students," yet their own experience tells them that it was the home culture that enabled them to make gains from a worse past.

Open disagreement, Lasch added, even if carried to the point of violence, was a higher form of respect for diversity than tolerance because it indicated that the arguers take
their beliefs and those of others seriously. For Lasch, tolerant nonjudgment allows passionate beliefs to atrophy in deliberations. "The virtue of particularism means not succumbing to the illusion that conflict can be eliminated. It means the moral capacity to conduct conflict with dignity and respect for the basic humanity of the other." Again, for Lasch, prudential reasoning is a normative, if combative, process conducted among equals.

Will and Kristol posed a stronger relationship between prudence and civility. While prudential language draws on particular loyalties, it also recognizes the cohesive force of certain dialogic forms. Kristol claimed that the civility we once valued in regard to others' views no longer works on a public level. Civility today has lapsed into "perpetual sensitivity," particularly to "militant others, which has invited self-proclaimed spokespersons "to be aggressive, imprudent, and uncivil." Will looked to the common root in the words civic, civil, and citizen to note a cohesion that binds them together. The cohesion is fragile and in need of periodic reminders, he warned, because individual pursuits of happiness depend on civil functioning. Deliberative discourse is undercut by a "rudeness" that frees us from the social niceties necessary to allow the discourse to proceed.

*Family wisdom as a model for public deliberations*

The conservative concern to identify an appropriate level of passion in deliberations leads some to examine patterns of reasoning in traditional families. It is within this intimate orbit, Novak argued, that we might find some elements of practical reasoning skills that combine reason and passion for good ends. He proposed that at "the heart of the bourgeois family is judgment based on reason. Above everything else, this arrangement is built on critical judgment," which is more than "calculation, or logic, or analytical reason, or positivism." Its wisdom also contains elements of the religious and the romantic. It is thus the "capacity of practical peoples to reflect clearly upon the world of their experience, to
make practical judgments about it, and to act." Additionally, the moral realism in families
guides them to maturity and therefore wisdom, which under the higher form of discipline in
the public sphere is the capacity to reflect on our cultural experience and to act. Families,
like the government we originated, are a blend of judgment and passion. Any rationale for
rebellion is cautious, neither rash nor afraid to act. As the seat of practical reasoning, family
wisdom is judgmental, understood as developing the critical capacity to make value
judgments, not to avoid them. Novak agreed with Lasch to say that much current
decisionmaking was a striving for nonjudgment. As such, it displayed no wisdom. A
better approach would be to model our deliberations on those middle class families who
exhibit the practical intelligence necessary to decide and act well for their members.

Nisbet expressed a similar regard to claim that we would do well to acknowledge
and validate the wisdom families pass on in traditional ways of doing and knowing,
intellectual, and nurturing skills. All of this material and immaterial family proprietorship
tends toward charitable processes, a giving to others from a position of responsibility and
strength. Family property, broadly understood, shares two democratic elements necessary
for good deliberations: one, the ability to argue from the strength of rootedness and
belonging; and, two, a capacity to deliberate in a mode of generosity flowing from one's
rooted strength. With Buckley, Nisbet viewed objectivism as rootless, detached from
family wisdom, and wedded to ideas alone.

Democratic deliberations

Novak and Nisbet's correlation between familial and democratic forms of reasoning
as passionate, judgmental, and rooted leads to specific claims for democratic capitalism as
a resource for qualities of good deliberations. Democratic arrangements, like family
arrangements, are "designed to create space, within which the soul may make its own

Novak recalled Adam Smith's insight that we could arrive at the common good in an indirect manner only in democratic processes; and, there was much evidence to conclude that those who claimed they intended the common good rarely did very much to advance it. The invisible hand passage is "so often misunderstood," Novak added, because the misperception about private interest and public good disregards the role of practical intelligence to accomplish the task. The free market fosters the virtue of practical intelligence as well as reliability, and the social virtues of courtesy, good service, boldness, and helpfulness. The market's "central art" is persuasion, and persuasion constitutes any civilized society which engages in "civil discourse, argument, and respect for the rationality of others." The virtues of the free market are not perfect or noble; nevertheless, they deserve our loyalty as the best of alternative choices. They allow for change and innovation, while they provide internal controls against their excesses. Novak saw affinities with this view of democratic virtues and certain arguments by liberal communitarians such as Bellah and his colleagues. We are drawn to the same themes and have the same ends in view, Novak noted, but the left stresses strong government, while the right stresses strong intermediate institutions as the best means for attaining those ends.33

Since Novak viewed the democratic process as a world of emergent probability in which anything might happen, democratic deliberations generally do not aim directly at the common good, an arrangement that gives rein to liberty.34 Prudential deliberations that draw on democratic wisdom seeks a balance between the selfish and public interests in economic enterprise, knowing that too much of either diminishes the chance for long term success. The prudential balance, not the direct aim at good by people of good intentions, is the engine. Society does not necessarily benefit from each member acting from good
intentions; rather, it springs from the interaction of humans whose social nature is other regarding. His "theology of democratic capitalism" takes a larger view of self-interest to include the artistic, religious, moral, and scientific interests of citizens. It is a mistake, he insisted, to let the economists control our understanding of interest in purely economic terms. Capitalism lets people choose what they will, its spirit in theological terms then is analogous to *phronimos*, "the practical provident intelligence embodied in singular agents in singular concrete situations"; it reject the *nous*, or "all-seeing, commanding intelligence" to guide its actions. The practical intelligence of democratic capitalism is akin to Tocqueville's understanding of "calculating and weighing and computing." It is hard work, industrious and sweaty, not aristocratic effortlessness; commercial virtues, therefore, are not enough. In sum, democratic capitalism embodies *phronesis*, a case by case weighing of interest that is at least partially socially determined and adjusted. A preference for the practical eventually translates into a systemic and general practical wisdom.

Since Kristol, Lasch, and Will argue that the vices of late capitalism work against deliberating well and believe that the current weakness of capitalism resides in its material success, they look to other traditions for guidance. Will, for example, rejected Novak's parallel of democratic and prudential wisdom and looked instead to Aristotelian and Ciceronian understandings of a polity comprised of virtuous citizens. Contemporary politics seeks the lowest common denominator, Will complained; it asks little self restraint from citizens, and little civic spirit. As a consequence we must seek deeper roots for deliberative strength.

Lasch agreed that late capitalism no longer exhibits the democratic wisdom of earlier forms, but looks to a nearer past to recover it. Since he located the source of breakdown in an "intelligent, enterprising, and politically knowledgeable work force" in post World War II collusion between academia and the military industrial complex, he sought to recover the populist impulse of nineteenth century anti-progressivism to reverse the trend toward
debilitating professionalism. Both Will and Lasch describe a democratic prudence that emphasizes its strength as a rigorously public process, outside the realm of expertise. Both share Novak's interest in the reciprocal nature of virtue, in this case the desire for citizens to develop the habit of deliberating well in order to strengthen their deliberative abilities. Novak also noted an Aristotelian reciprocity in the joint progress of democratic virtues saying that we strengthen democracy by practicing democratic habits, one of which is reasoning well together. The deliberative process thus develops those virtues necessary to make the process effective. In republican forms of government, he noted, certain virtues need to be strengthened if the republic was to endure and joins other conservatives to say that "in political and economic matters, the virtues of liberty are taught through the experience of institutions of liberty." 

**Historical lessons in elitism and populism: Contemporary prudence and the problem of the expert**

Classical theories of prudence emerged out of a philosophy of knowledge that distinguished the expertise of science and politics. Thus, the scientific wisdom of field experts was different from the practical wisdom of the *phronomoi*. Aristotle noted that scientific expertise could aspire to epistemic certitude because it could locate first principles (*archai*) as foundations of certainty. By definition, this expertise operated outside the realm of rhetorical deliberations which, since it addressed contingent matters, expressed more modest epistemological aspirations. Even so, the practical "expertise" of the *phronomoi* included an expert eye in assessing the relationship between rule and case and a moral disposition to see good ends. The important distinction for contemporary deliberations is that the *phronomoi* were of the public--elites among an elite franchise--but nevertheless, not expert as we understand the term today. The "problem" of the expert in contemporary
deliberations, one with which conservatives as well as other discourse communities grapple, is how to make use of the wisdom of expertise in a culture of dense, complex, and overabundant information in ways that wide audiences can appropriate for their decision-making. The problem, in short, is how to benefit from expertise without allowing it to shortcircuit the public's role in public deliberations on issues that affect their lives in significant ways. Not surprisingly, many conservatives approach this problem in historical terms, seeking out a heritage of populism that may serve us now.

Not all conservatives, however, agree that there is political value in elites. Wills argued that the expertise of both knowledge and money elites can and should be harnessed for good. Against the view that anyone could run the country, he noted that "we cannot do without experts, any more than we can do without brains in order to avoid erroneous thinking." When one group of elites fails, we look, legitimately, for another "best and brightest." Wills defined elites somewhat neutrally as any group of privileged people who can turn that privilege to influence. From his perspective, privilege displays its public virtue when the leisure to persuade is made to serve a public good, in essence employing leisure "not for ornament, but for use." Wills contended that the history of American protests movements is a history of elites from the revolutionaries to Eugene Debs and Martin Luther King, Jr., all of whom had the education, financial resources, and time to commit to social change. Privileged abolitionists and suffragettes felt obliged to engage in reform because they could do so. Populists take the perverse stand, Wills argued, that anyone is free to help humanity except those most able to do so.39 While this reasoning reflects Aristotelian and Ciceronian tendencies to engage the past in the here and now, it represents a shift to accommodate the expert. Deliberations, Wills seems to be saying, contrary to many other conservatives, are too complex to be left to the public alone; they also require the expert's voice.
Kristol pointed out that neoconservative reasoning rightfully insists "on standards of excellence and virtue," especially in the case of education and public morals. In this sense it is elitist but, he argued, "the American people have always had an instinctive deference to such standards;" it is only the intellectual left who don't. He identified populism as a suspicious fear of power to frustrate the popular will and an anti-authoritarian, antinomian democratic spirit. Today populists clash with the new class of scientists, social workers, and educators, whose agenda is libertarian on all but economic issues. Moreover, bourgeois populism in America is both individualistic and communal. It understands that res publica is more than the sum of individual parts, but that it emerges from self-governing institutions. They "do not believe this public interest can be rationally defined" by experts at any moment in time, but emerges at all levels from school boards and trade unions to religious congregations. This is the American orthodoxy that leftist intellectuals are alienated from and it is the task of neoconservatism to add intellectual weight to the people's voice, "to explain to the American people why they are right, and to the intellectuals why they are wrong."40

Echoing his sentiments, Buckley quoted Franklin P. Adams to say that the average American is "above average" in acknowledging "the laws of God" or the "wisdom of our ancestors."41 It is in this sense that the "mental and spiritual health" of the average American surpassed the intellectual.42 Expertise, since it lacks moral wisdom, is not fit to lead deliberations that must include the common moral sense. Lasch's efforts to give voice to the populist impulse in American history also strives to reverse the trend of professionalism that "turned the citizen into a client and transformed the worker from a producer into a consumer." Part of Lasch's appeal to populism is an appeal to citizens to reassert their capabilities in childrearing and consumption and to revive their own "communities of competence." In public affairs, populist "traditions of localism, self-help,
and community action" can reinvigorate the deliberative process from a stance of competence.

Lasch believed that some of populism's contribution to public deliberations lies in its ability to ask what we need, and to answer the query, in part, in the value of good work, in the Aristotelian sense. Whereas liberalism today seems only capable of deliberating over what we want, populism in the democratic tradition sought to protect craftsmanship and the joy of good work against the debilitating effects of progress. Will added that we can learn from populism's patience and reticence. The anti-populist element is uninterested in the deferral of gratification, he observed; they are "citizens with inadequate habits of virtue, with virtue understood as self-control, respect for others rights, and concern for distant consequences."

**Conservative ideals and the pragmatic needs of public discourse**

In addition to the diverse, passionate, adversarial, and egalitarian characteristics arising out of a conservative interest in more nonrational modes of reasoning, several other aspects emerge out of the tensions between conservative idealism and pragmatism. As conservatives attempt to negotiate positions in particular cases that attend to cherished metaphysical and democratic ideals and the pragmatic application of those ideals in material circumstances, their deliberations become deferential and cautious, in light of the inability of good will to overcome the tragic nature of history. Deliberations, nevertheless, reflect a tempered hopefulness, nourished by an active memory. Consistent with these features, the goals of conservative deliberations similarly reflect moderated expectations for success and look to compromise and cooption as the realistic goal of a diverse citizenry. These ingredients, as in the case of the nonrational components, reveal several oscillations between postmodern and traditional stances.
Prudential deliberations as deferential

If cumulative institutional wisdom serves as a pragmatic check on a boundless imagination, then good deliberations will be a deferential process to counteract what conservatives regard as the arrogance of the liberal imagination. In order to deliberate well, conservatives often claim, we ought to temper our expectations, deferring to a historical consciousness that counsels a sense of limits.

Kirkpatrick stressed the deferential quality of practical reasoning in her own attempts to balance the competing demands of pragmatism and idealism. She gave less weight to rhetorical invention in deliberation and more to patterned beliefs in institutional forms. From her perspective, deliberating well over public goods accommodates concrete social forms as experienced collaborators in decisionmaking. Political deliberations for change, then, must take account of the pragmatic reality of institutions to temper the excess of imaginative, innovation forms. Since Kirkpatrick placed the failure to distinguish between the domains of rhetoric and politics within the realm of a suspect rationality, she also regarded the rhetorical domain as categorically outside the domain of prudence. We deliberate in a deferential mode because historical wisdom dictates that we attend to concrete institutional practices that are rightfully slow to change.45

Despite Kirkpatrick's avowed pragmatic approach to deliberation, she cautioned against confusing wise deliberations with the extremes of historicism or pragmatism.46 But the oppositions she polarized suggest this prudential pragmatics is less a Jamesian test of social truths than a method to test proposed actions against certain a priori beliefs about history and human nature. Despite her rigorous attention to concrete, immediate consequences in deliberations, she has nevertheless calculated them within a larger worldview about human nature, a usable past, and faith in moral or material progress. Within this larger schema, her prudence as pragmatics seems to reject the epistemological force that generally attaches to pragmatism as a philosophy of knowledge. From a
rhetorical perspective, we might say that Kirkpatrick’s instrumental use of pragmatism functions on two levels. For one, it provides the means to judge, an empirical guide to establishing collective norms in the social and political spheres. In this sense it functions as a kind of public test of truth. On a second level, this instrumentality functions to add argumentative weight to a set of assumptions held out to audiences about the good society and a virtuous citizenry. Kirkpatrick, like many other conservatives, is not weighing issues in strict consequentialist fashion, but is deliberating the merits of change or continuity within a larger frame of ideals and assumptions that strengthen prior beliefs about human nature and history. Despite her deep contextualist approach, she develops her line of reasoning from the premise that we must cherish democratic ideals even though we fall short of them. It "is not appropriate to judge actual social practices by utopian standards," she insisted, and so critiques of democracy on the grounds that we routinely fall short of democratic ideals are wrongheaded. Instead, she argued, we "must simultaneously affirm our values and accept their relevance to our practice while denying that they are the measuring rods that the Soviets claim they are." She cited Richard Weaver to say that our lives revolve around absolute values, in both the private and public realms. We seek "meaning and epistemological stability," and "a concept of reality which is not, in fact, a function of power and does not shift from day to day to fit the political needs of a totalitarian group." We draw strength from the ideals embodied in the liberal democratic tradition, knowing that we always fall short, given human capacity for evil and error. But we hold the tradition as true across space and time, in light of the alternatives history has offered. We should accept our past failings and distrust utopian futures. Loyalty to these ideals, even as we deliberate over the needs of specific contexts, should be the driving force in our deliberations.
Prudential deference to the cultural canon

Many conservatives defended a traditional canon of cultural accomplishments as the source of those ideals Kirkpatrick was concerned to retain in public discourse. Buckley and Will articulated this view by noting that the western canon embodies a coherent set of excellences deliberators should strive for, a set of worthy goals. Will offered that, just as Homer gave the Greeks "a particular moral understanding, potently expressed in poetry rich in embodiments of virtues and vices," a core curriculum of great books and ideas similarly serves a "unifying and civilizing function" for today.49 This view of education as socialization includes the important goal of building deference to a canon whose moral understandings should shape the shared assumptions of public talk.

In defending a canon as a common moral ground for reasoning well together, Will and Buckley were concerned to show that our collective grasp of this cultural patrimony is only tentatively held. Since they fear further erosion of this fragile cohesion, they urge a pedagogy that encourages students to refine and modify their values, not displace them. Buckley rejected liberal concerns that value inculcation prevents a critical approach to the values being taught, maintaining that it would not produce "unthinking, unreasoning, credulous disciples."50 He is ambivalent about the gullibility of university students, however. On the one hand, they are easily duped, as evidenced by their tendency to accept liberal ideas uncritically; on the other, he has no reason to believe they will accept received wisdom uncritically.51

Will voiced the concern that core curricula urge students toward liking good things. Received wisdom and the western tradition should be preserved as the unifying center of a university, he argued, from which students build their own center. This removes certain academic freedoms from students, he noted, but "true freedom is impossible without comprehension of, and submission to, the natural order," gleaned through the absorption
of "civilization's patrimony." We understand excellence to be a naturally worthy goal of human endeavor.

Since Will shared the conservative view of education as socialization, the effort to prepare entry into a moral community, not into a private domain of "self-expression," he opposed curricular efforts that seemed to threaten that community. Multiculturalist programs pose a threat because they breed cultural "amnesia," a dangerous memory loss of our common inheritance. In forgetting, cultures risk self preservation by fragmentation. Will also supported canonical education as a means of raising students to civility. As a consequence of this function, schools were also obliged to transmit the cultural legacy in the form of good choices. The best in western culture is behind us, Will claimed, and since we must live in our own culture, not another, it is wise to preserve the past wisdom it offers. The canon is also wise, he argued, because it is alert to the restlessness of the moment. History in the form of a canon shows us the many ways that things go wrong. Wise people are wary of intellectual fads, and "respectful of the received greatness" of a canon. "Reason matters supremely, whereas individuals' accidental attributes, such as race, are irrelevant to the great enterprise of thoughtfulness." Will concluded that "America as a product of the western tradition is good because "that tradition is good." When a university shifts from "reason" to "relevance," it become rootless. "Indeed it teaches rootlessness" when it relinquishes its role as a transmitter of culture for the role of demystifier.

Kirkpatrick argued that since public education was the "institution created and maintained by the whole society for the purpose of preparing the young for adult roles in the society", it followed that schools should teach democratic values. Since we are bred not born to democratic citizenship, it "is remarkable that the question of socialization as legitimate should even be raised." Schools teach values on a daily basis, Kirkpatrick
argued. The "question is not whether they should teach values but whether they should teach democratic values and the beliefs and behavior patterns that sustain them, and whether they should teach them in a self-conscious or in a haphazard fashion." We are better served by admitting that we teach values in the classroom and acknowledge that we are not indifferent to what we pass on. Relativism exists only in the abstract, she maintained; in the classroom, teachers do not practice it. The "cultural relativism of most people tends to evaporate when they are confronted with practices profoundly offensive to their moral principles and beliefs." Instead of relativism, pluralism is the key which allows us to live together because we "share some but not all beliefs and values." Pluralism does not require value-free institutions, but accommodates legitimate interest in passing on a valued culture. Since "no society can be indifferent to children's development of respect and affection for its laws and institutions," of course we should try to influence choices and beliefs about that culture. Education is helping students choose what is good about their culture, it is not an indifferent "cafeteria of values" from which students select what they like. Schools' roles in this regard "are not only legitimate; they are irreducible, irreplacable."57

The canon, which functions to socialize us into the collective memory, becomes a part of public deliberations as well since the deliberative process, by invoking core cultural values, serves to reaffirm them. Public deliberations, then, may also be viewed as a socialization process, insofar as they teach us how to reason well together by deferring to canonical standards of excellence.

That citizens will defer to excellence is a position accepted by most conservatives; it is only liberals, they propose, who are too arrogant to yield. Buckley, Nisbet, Will, and Kirkpatrick, especially, articulated a classical view of excellence as mirroring human nature. Buckley noted, for example, that the middle class knows that meritocracy should be the criterion for gains. Careers should be open to talents, with the best leading us. The
middle class will "defer, without animosity, to people of superior learning, achievement, character, generosity." Nisbet agreed, claiming that deference to excellence is a natural phenomenon. This is why, he argued, that the clash between liberty and equality cannot and should not be resolved in societies. Nisbet noted that there "is no principle more basic in the conservative philosophy than that of the inherent and absolute incompatibility between liberty and equality." They arise from incompatible goals, with liberty seeking protection of material and immaterial property and equality seeking to redistribute property.

Choosing wisely to compromise

Since conservatives claim that liberals have taken the idea of equality farther than any historical evidence should carry it, conservative deliberations ought to redress this excess through a goal of compromise, thereby restoring the inherent incompatibilities between ideals of equality and liberty to a state of optimum tension. If human nature supports this tension, evident in a natural deference to excellence, then efforts to stress one at the expense of the other are imprudent. Kirkpatrick argued that the tensions between liberty and equality are built into the values themselves, and the public good can be served only by maintaining an optimum level of equilibrium in deliberations. She looked to Bentham, Riccardo, and Mill for support on this point, noting that each understood that liberty and the public interest were better served by preserving individual freedom. Liberty and equality can exist only when each is pursued moderately, she added, and purist politics from left or right destroys their compatibility by refusing to compromise. When extremists pursue either of these political values, they destroy the fragile balance between the values; pure freedom becomes anarchy and pure equality turns into inequality by eliminating natural advantages. When we apply those "dull virtues--moderation, prudence, restraint," to particular cases involving equity, however, we will see the wisdom of compromise.
When applied to foreign policy, Kirkpatrick described a process of compromise that paid realistic attention to human rights in light of a workable context. She characterized the immediate context as the means available for appropriate ends, while the larger context took account of the variety of human nature and its capacity for both good and evil. Prudence weighs the context and applies the empirical insights of history, much as, she pointed out, Machiavelli negotiated between calculation and purposefulness. Wills joined Kirkpatrick to say that the art of compromise is the chief political virtue we ought to develop in leaders. He also echoed her view that if we are to preserve the peace, then purists cannot reign. For both, contemporary prudence chooses well when it decides to preserve stable political arrangements so that compromise might emerge out of other, plural choices. Compromise is a necessary end of politics because the elected, by their delegated power, "must try to represent the community as a whole." On domestic issues, Kirkpatrick elaborated a view of Aristotelian moderation to make strong claims that the extreme pursuit of any virtue in public life disrupts good deliberations. The only political virtues that serve public talk, she suggested, are those of "accommodation, tolerance, compromise, patience."

Key elements of prudent deliberations thus include a respect for compromise that seeks to moderate the extremes of a view in the name of order and stability, the higher social values. Kirkpatrick has addressed the problem of how to deliberate over change while maintaining long term stability with the implication that contemporary prudence, of necessity, must incorporate more compromise than in its classical forms. She conceded, however, that it is a mark of institutional strength to be able to change when necessary. "The capacity to persist and change in response to environmental change is an important indicator" of this strength. The key danger is in letting good intentions get ahead of the environment, and a belief that well-intentioned "reformers are more prescient than they are." In weighing the balance between good means and good ends, Kirkpatrick weighed means more heavily.
Buckley elaborated this position to say that a goal of compromise in advance of judgment is crucial to good deliberations; the public good is not served by passionate beliefs that will not yield to modification. On domestic issues such as abortion, Buckley described good deliberations as a process of striking a balance between a "fetishness" that protects or prolongs life at all costs and conceding the point that at "some time before the child is born, the child is." For Buckley, conservative prudential reasoning is "willing to listen," and accept "reasonable compromise."65

Kirkpatrick, Nisbet, Buckley, and Nisbet seem to be saying that, since it is only when liberty and equality manifest themselves in the extreme that they are incompatible, they would remain compatible in practice only if imperfectly realized. We don't want to choose between them, Kirkpatrick argued; we prefer to cling to both as best we can in our institutions, weighing one against the other, imperfectly, as required. Wise deliberators know that "the perfect is the enemy of the good" and decisionmaking that must choose among relative goods liberates us to have a heightened appreciation of an imperfect present, which, she pointed out, is the only place we inhabit. Kirkpatrick has described the process of reasoning over the needs of the here and now as a cause for joy, not anguish. In releasing deliberators from the burden of pursuing a more perfect future, they are free to savor the present "however pleasant." Since the status quo's goodness resides in imperfect liberty and equality, manifested in the relative amounts of goods already available under current arrangements, we should view compromise as a legitimate goal in distributing public goods. This should give "liberals as well as conservatives a vested interest in the status quo, she concluded, which, like all vested interests, must be defended."66 Similarly, Kristol added that conservatives would rather live in the existing world with all its imperfections than in "an imaginary anti-world" that can never be.67 Conservative wisdom has no choice but to exhibit restraint in reform, realizing that institutional forms already embody the optimum alliance between equality and freedom. The good society is therefore
the imperfect one that exists in the here and now. Political wisdom, in looking to experience and human nature sees that history has no model of the perfect society but has many models of oppression built on utopian views.68

This somewhat insouciant approach to public discourse removes much of the rhetorical force deliberators traditionally ascribe to exigency in decisionmaking, that is, the need to characterize perceived imperfections as being in urgent need of resolution. Kirkpatrick and others invert this rhetorical strategy by promoting a somewhat cheerful stance toward status quo imperfections in public talk. They adopt this stance in the name of pragmatic equilibrium, given the historical experience that human nature is prone to error. Again, this seeming inconsistency between an oscillating optimism and pessimism is mooted by the conservative assumption regarding the cumulative force of wisdom. Conservatives argue that we can take pleasant comfort in the view that the "species is wise" while striking a more unhappy stance in light of knowledge that the "individual is foolish." In deliberations, Kirkpatrick is saying, she would rather collaborate with a wise species that brought us to the status quo than with a foolish individual who might radically alter it out of passion or whim.

In offering up a goal of compromise for deliberations, these conservatives reaffirm the departure from Aristotelian and Ciceronian forms by stressing the intellectual ability to calculate well over the need to nurture those inner dispositions Aristotle thought phronomoi needed to choose well. A process of compromise and accommodation places less emphasis on good people deliberating wise means to good ends, which their moral character enables them to see. Compromise distinguishes between good intentions and good consequences because it rests on a belief that good intentions have little predictive value with respect to desired results. Kirkpatrick conceded that tradition did not always lead to wise choices. It sanctioned slavery, inquisitions, and the caste system. But it is a mistake, she argued, to dismiss argumentative appeals to tradition as merely fallacious. When we throw off
tradition, we are vulnerable to numerous untried theories. Conversely, "traditional ideas have at least the merit of being integrally related to actual societies and social practices."

Deliberators seek compromise because they cannot trust that any one or any time is wiser than a cumulative past. Since character is untrustworthy, deliberators cannot give individuals of good character a great deal of decisionmaking power, we can only choose to compromise present needs against past gains.69

**Prudence as cooption**

Prudence as cooption gives up justice as a goal of public deliberations, another significant departure from Aristotelian conceptions of deliberating to restore the balance or social equilibrium that justice, the supreme virtue, represented in the Greek polity. Wills and Novak have suggested that political processes, like human nature, are flawed; if this is so we are wise to acknowledge this imperfection in setting less ambitious goals for our collective deliberations. Our efforts to deliberate well will only yield an approximate justice, they argue, because of our flawed nature, and so we ought to judge the worth of deliberations for the effort we make to approximate justice, not achieve it. Justice is an unachievable ideal, given many conservatives' view of earthly life as a pilgrim's progress. Given this view, we should not be surprised or discouraged by the number of times we fall short of ideals, but should celebrate the number of times we strive for them in our deliberations. Importantly, Wills added, since we hold widely divergent beliefs about truth and justice among us, we cannot bind society on these ideals in any deliberation. The more we try to define justice to suit ourselves, he noted, the more citizens we must exclude from peaceable fellowship because they disagree with our rendering of the term. If this is so then all we can do is hear protestors out and coopt their gains in the name of peace.70

Co-option, a vice in the language of the left, is thus an explicit goal in the conservative deliberative process. In the name of stability and self-preservation, Wills
maintained, the prophet's message is legitimately compromised and co-opted into the system. Since politics and the peaceful community cannot survive prideful, intransigent, and unyielding politicians and protestors, anymore than Creon believed he could tolerate Antigone, deliberators need the lawyer's virtues, which are "negotiatory, technical, mediating, neutral. They speak for others, not themselves, one side today, another tomorrow; adversaries in court, friends at a post-trial dinner." Compromise and cooption soften rigidity of opinion and give us enough peace so that we can live in "convenience," understood literally in this context as a coming together.71

Like Kirkpatrick, Wills was concerned to judge the quality of our deliberations by empirical means. He cited Augustine and Newman to support a view that the only basis for judging any process is by observing how it works. How deliberations work in the American system, he insisted, is conservatively. Deliberating well is a conservative process because it strives to accommodate change, even as it looks toward long-term stability and tranquility. The problem in American politics, Wills suggested, is that we "have a conservative loyalty to a liberal theory that purports to explain a conservative system." It is a system that tries to inhibit change because change threatens peace. As a conservative, Wills gives priority to the impulse to preserve peace. "I like our political order because I don't believe for a minute that it is trying (and failing) to do things liberals keep praising it for trying to do and accusing it for failing it to do [insist that justice is the precondition of the good society]."72 Wills shares the Augustinian assumption that the good society cannot be the just society because justice is not of this world. As a consequence, we can only occupy a middle realm and conduct a politics that "has only process, not finality."73

Wills added that since we hold widely divergent beliefs about truth and justice, citizens ought to allow institutional space for protestors to join in public discourse. From his perspective, wise deliberators permit the followers and prophets to lead and the leaders
to follow change, just as Senator Dirkson yielded finally to Martin Luther King, Jr. Wills' positive regard for civil disobedience as a prudential call for change is tied to his belief that prudent change, in Aristotelian terms, is timely change (*kairos*). It is not enough to do good for good reasons; wise deliberators seek the appropriate time and manner. In the case of the civil rights movement, Wills noted that even Dirkson grasped the wisdom of this reasoning when he acknowledged that King was proof that "there is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come." The obverse of this maxim is also true for conservatives; namely, that there are few things more odious than imposing an idea whose time has not yet come. Conservatives believe good deliberations avoid any hint of Skinnerian behaviorism and point to failed liberal agendas that sought to modify behavior in the hope that eventually citizens' hearts and minds would follow.

An important corollary to the maxim of timely change in Wills' schema is the distinction between citizens' and leaders' virtues. It is citizens who herald that an idea's time is at hand and who display their virtue by letting prophets of change have their voice. Citizens, for example, would allow agents of change like Martin Luther King, Jr. to speak peaceably and to hear him out. The process not only grants prophets the right to maneuvering space; a fruitful process imposes a duty on deliberators to let dissident voices be heard. These acts of civil disobedience, from Wills' perspective are America's "great historical treasures." Thus, we occasionally burn the flag and refuse to pay taxes. But the conservative presumption against nonviolence applies in all but the most extreme cases because the key value is peaceful communion. "Without earthly peace we cannot communicate with each other or hold good things in common." Wills' political prudence deliberates how to settle for less, deciding for a change that is modified, reduced, in the name of that peace.

Applying this reasoning to complex value-laden issues such as abortion and pornography, Wills held out "modest" expectations for consensus. In the case of abortion,
prudence cannot lead to a single, just conclusion. Instead, citizens display their virtue by protesting peacefully and legislators display theirs by avoiding the issue as long as possible. Eventually they bargain with one another and give something to everyone that only approximates justice. In this way the justice that reformers seek is co-opted in order to bargain the position into peaceable acceptance. These virtues lead to a "modest politics" through a deliberation that "settles for less."75

Prudence as caution

The conservative view that history counsels a cautious wisdom intersects with a related implication of classical views; namely, that prudential reasoning connotes a slightly conservative processual bias. Aristotle identified a set of right rules, ortho logoi, that yield to the particulars of a case when deliberators determine that the case is sufficiently distinct to make strict application of rule to case incompatible with good ends. Practical wisdom resists applying a rule to the case in uncritical fashion; there is no wisdom required for that, only obedience. Conversely, prudence does not merely attend to the here and now, for that is often self-serving expediency. Aristotle's phronomoi needed to judge that the facts of the case called for conformity to a rule, more or less, or, conversely, that the facts are such that the rule should shift and accommodate itself to a changed context. In either event, the instability between rule and case requires a judgment about the case to see if a shift in rules is warranted. Phronesis, then, gives some presumptive weight to the status quo, since the here and now must successfully challenge well-established cultural rules of thumb as inadequate for making the right choice, for the right reasons, at the right time.

The element of conservative wisdom that emerges as caution, in light of the unknown and unintended consequences of particular actions versus the "known" of the past, highlights the precariousness of this instability in prudential reasoning over contingent matters. It also suggests that the cautious conservative temperament places its deliberations
at the greatest risk for falling outside the realm of prudence. Since prudential tension is characteristically between change and continuity, decisive action and unreflective caution, we are likely to see how prudence might emerge out of circumstances in which conservatives must resolve these conflicting impulses in order to make reasoned judgments. When conservatives invoke a favorite, oft-repeated phrase, "it all depends," in relation to specific issues, they seem to be in the Aristotelian spirit of judging the particularities of a case. When their cautious temperament inhibits an engagement of the case, however, they seem to move away from prudence and toward unchallenged custom. Recalling Aristotle, the more difficult intellectual work of prudential reasoning is in the case, that is, the specific claims of minor premises that support a call for change or continuity. This is why Aristotle argued that *phronimoi* must know more about the particular facts of a case than about generalities that provide the common ground of first premises. The wise begin their deliberations by considering the common ground, but they meet their burden, in Aristotelian terms, when they decide that the specific claims of a case can or cannot be resolved by appeal to general beliefs. Only when deliberators have assessed the relationship between rule and case have they "earned" the right to make claims about the case in their conclusion. Thus, prudence sometimes applies the rule and sometimes adapts it to the circumstances. The crucial bar to prudential reasoning, in pagan terms, then, is not a prohibition against the application of received wisdom, but the uncritical application of conventional wisdom to particular contexts.

This is not to say that conservatives routinely decide in favor of traditional norms in an uncritical fashion; many, for example, develop sociological lines of reasoning to resist change to current institutional arrangements. These lines of reasoning begin from the view that history is wiser than we know. Many conservatives profess skepticism about change because, it is reasoned, we don't know the web of connections built into culturally patterned responses to human relations. Since we cannot know the consequences *a priori,*
and since social science has provided abundant evidence of unintended negative results from well intentioned but misguided liberal ideas for change in history, we shouldn't tamper capriciously with institutional forms that meet relatively fixed human needs. Institutions are more organic than mechanistic, and respond to certain unchanging human impulses for social connection and moral grounding. The organic nature of social institutions suggests that a breakdown in one creates stress in others.

Will pointed out that conservatism trusts the past more than the future, knowing that the "the best guides to the future are those whose knowledge of the past is broadest and deepest, who are most cautious and wary of complexity, least confident that they can 'see' something up ahead." Prudential reasoning, from Will's perspective, is cautious because it is not prescient. More to the point, it is cautious because it sees so much in what lies behind us.

There is a close connection between the conservative bias against hasty action, rapid motion, and the view that history is a cautionary tale that leads its students to a cautious wisdom. The title of one of Buckley's collected essays, *The Governor Listeth*, speaks to this connection in its reference to much more than the author's fondness for sailing. The metaphor of equilibrium, which is the controlling metaphor of the collection, is at the heart of his opposition to disruptive motion that might also capsize the ship of state. Thus, Robert Kennedy was suspect for all his "magic motion," a restless urge to change that is more passionate than it is focused. Similarly, Will indicted modernity for its restless motion, and the attendant need for ever increasing activity and stimulation to satisfy it. Will criticized activists like Simone Weil in language that mirrored Buckley's critique of Kennedy. Weil possessed an "overheated mind," a passion that was always at "full throttle," albeit with good motives. This kind of "self-absorbed rightmindedness" does not weigh heavily enough the social consequences of good intentions. Its passion is less than virtuous because civic virtue is consequentialist; in politics, Will noted, "consequences are
more important than motives." which suggests again a shift from the tripartite arrangement in classical conceptions that give more equal weight to right choice, for right reasons, at the right time. Because we can no longer trust inner dispositions, conservatives look to a caution to fill the void left by an unreliable character as a crucial element in good decisionmaking.

Deliberating cautiously over tragic choices

The shift from pagan conceptions of prudence as timely and right choices that aim at good ends may be attributed in part to Christian insights that permeate some conservative thinking. These insights contribute to a somewhat melancholy view of prudence, since it participates in a tragic historical process as well. The deeper implication of Niebuhr's moral realism is that no one except the separatist escapes participation in this tragic process. If, as citizens and social beings, we desire and have need to develop our capacities to reason well together, we proceed cautiously, knowing that our social impulses implicate us in a flawed process that brings unwanted and unintended consequences. Conservatives often collapse prudence with a tragic historical consciousness, suggesting that prudence itself is, in part, a tragic process, since history gives deliberators little assurance that their choices will not bring unwanted harm and much evidence that they will.

Novak emphasized the point that, while contexts change and people adapt to changed circumstances, the fundamental truths about these tragic dimensions remain stable. Thus Novak counseled caution, and moves according to perceived leftist excesses. As the left moves too far toward progressive liberalism or radicalism, he urged corrective measures within a range of fixed propositions about humanity's capacity, nature, and purpose. If mere participation in a tragic process sometimes dirties hands by doing unwitting evil, then conservative deliberations attempt to minimize the scope of evil
perpetrated by well intentioned people, sometimes by simply choosing to do less. In a complicated world with a long memory of good ideas gone wrong, practical wisdom often manifests itself as hesitancy as it works to restrain perceived errors. This wisdom is necessarily, which is to say naturally, modest in its hopes for success and sensitive to the ease with which we move to passion. The conservative mean is the avoidance of hasty action, however driven by genuine passion or legitimate moral outrage.

*Deliberating over the idea of progress*

Conservatives are torn between a view of history as melioristic and a more pessimistic stance derived from Christian, particularly Puritan influences. This ambivalence plays out in deliberations as a check on innovation. For some, political prudence and progress seem to be polar terms, and so assign prudence the role of providing a rein on progressivism. Others, especially some neoconservatives, want to appropriate public talk of progress from the left while tempering the left's good intentions with cautionary tales from history that speak to complex institutions and the perils of the unintended consequence of systemic change. In all events, the role of historical consciousness in deliberations is strong; both supporters and critics alike call up historical traditions and perceptions on the meaning of history to support a view of its usefulness in contributing to good public deliberations.

For some conservatives, the western idea of progress links the past to the future by attributing past accomplishments to a hope for a better tomorrow. Nisbet, for example, observed that most of the greatest minds in the west were associated with an idea of progress that served as a crucial motivation for intellectual and material gains, which is why he regarded it as "a benign intellectual influence." Moreover the "history of all that is greatest in the West-religion, science, reason, freedom, equality, justice, philosophy, the arts" is associated with the belief that present accomplishments are both a "tribute to the
greatness and indispensability of the past, and confidence in an ever more golden future." The gains of the past then give strength to hope and confidence in the future. Cultures nurture the idea slowly, over time, through "institutions and morality." Today the idea is in decline, not because of twentieth-century wars and totalitarian regimes but because the spiritual and moral values that spawned the idea are in decline; the religious and institutional ground of the idea has eroded. Nisbet identified a loss of faith in the nobility of western civilization, acceptance of economic and scientific growth, and faith in reason as debased values that have undercut our faith in progress. As a consequence of this devaluation of the past, he argued, we have disowned it. Its force as a spur to progress declined when we lost our collective faith in the past's accomplishments. There is nothing "linear or continuous about progress" Nisbet concluded but it has functioned as a spur to some of the best accomplishments of the west.

All modern politics following the French and American revolutions have been progressive, Kristol noted, and all assume a melioristic tendency toward improvement. The French approached progress directly, with a plan for the just society. American society, on the other hand, was influenced by the Anglo-Scottish enlightenment and so moved indirectly, to channel self interest into a marketplace of goods and ideas. Economic activity would lead to material betterment and civility. Classical liberalism assumed that economic and political freedoms would thrive because of the consensus of values in institutions. Today, Kristol maintained, we need to recover this "reforming spirit" in deliberations in conservative terms by balancing our value of liberty and equality against the need for stability and order and bring the antiprogressive insight that moral progress does not necessarily follow material progress into our discourse. In doing so, our deliberations will be able to ask not only what citizens must do to survive and be happy in society but also decide what virtues citizens must possess in order to be a member of a good community and live a good life. Kristol disagreed with the challenge that too many
conservatives make the mistake of basing their political legitimacy "on ownership of the past." Instead, he wanted conservatives to deliberate more aggressively over ownership of the future.81

_Deliberating toward modest goals: prudence as tempered hope and active memory_

Other conservatives express, at most, a tempered faith in the idea of progress, and look instead to a proactive memory to lend a hopeful element to public discourse over future goods. Again, it is a matter of emphasizing the deliberative force of seeing what lies in memory, in the collective or personal past, as being a more reliable element of prudence than pretentions to prescience, the ability to see something ahead.

From Lasch's perspective, the font of practical wisdom is a cultivated memory capable of setting appropriate limits for the future. He joined Kristol in his critique of a material progress that proceeded at the expense of moral gains but found the Calvinist rebuttal against progress more persuasive. With Kristol he noted that public moral discourse ought to decide what citizens ought to demand of themselves, and aim for less expectations from the material world. Extending this modest expectation in terms of Niebuhrian realism, deliberators can engage in "intelligent action" when they aim, with tempered hope, for modest gains.82

This hopeful element in public discourse, then, derives not from progressive aspirations for a better tomorrow, but, Lasch argued, from a proactive memory that seeks continuity with a usable past. Memory's more active contemplation understands the past's formative influence on the present in both collective and personal terms, which suggests a particularly strong narrative cast to some conservative deliberations, despite Nisbet's protest that the value of history did not lie in the telling of tales. On the contrary, Lasch seems to be arguing that the real power of the past to be appropriated for productive public talk is precisely this play of competing narratives in American history between progressive
and anti-progressive forces, and the variety of personal experiences deliberators bring to the public forum. He looks to agents for change such as M.L. King, ethnic immigrant experience, family history, to find inheritances of both suffering and security to be recalled in deliberations as a way to cultivate the collective will to face the future. Novak also looked to Niebuhrian realism to locate a balance to be aimed for in public discourse between progressivism and legitimate progress. With Lasch he believed that ethnic memories would serve as a useful counterweight to progressive excess by bringing their traditions, faith, and associations to the public forum.

Ethnic memory, he suggested, should be respected as useful personal experience that contributes to practical wisdom. Ethnics' "instincts, feelings, intimacies, expectations, patterns of emotion and behavior" provide a "set of stories for individuals--and for the people as a whole--to live out." We are shaped by these stories and the values attached to them. Ethnics have their own hopeful memories, which usually mitigate against optimism, and the American dream that the "sky's the limit." We can learn from their unwillingness to accept unbounded potential and its attendant vices of atomistic, self-regarding, competitive behavior that is eschewed in ethnic extended families. Their memory can contribute common sense, cautious respect for authority, and distrust of faroff plans for which present people must suffer. We can trust the abundant evidence of ethnic memories, then, more than we can trust progressive hopes that seek to assimilate these memories, merge these narratives into a universal story of human progress.

The emphasis Lasch and Novak have placed on the particulars of memory suggest that a contemporary prudence must accommodate various ethnic wisdoms. This attention to ethnic sensibilities also emphasizes the problem for prudence in contemporary deliberations in determining an appropriate argumentative force to allot groups whose memory produces competing narratives. Lasch and Novak are describing the broad contours of a more open-ended prudence than, say, Buckley, Nisbet, and Will trace, since
deliberations driven by multiperspectivism will favor a more dynamic, rhetorical, and contingent decisionmaking process over more static modes.

These efforts to nurture an element of hopefulness in public talk that is borne of active collective and personal memory leads to a final aspect of conservative deliberations, which may be characterized as an effort to fashion a minimal rhetoric of assent out of plural experiences.

**Toward a conservative rhetoric of assent**

Conservative disenchantment with a pluralistic politics that is unable to reason together from shared first principles moves them to press for an element of faith to be included in public discourse as well as some level of collective will to act in the name of common goods. They have been concerned to describe a hope that can invigorate civic will, not a will to any action, but the collective volition to search for those commonalities that will enable citizens to act together. The deliberative work of politics is vitally important, they say with regularity, and often cite Burke to describe its work as a noble partnership between living and dead that citizens should not disdain. Their concern with this goal of collective faith and will to decide and act is very evident in their critique of rationality and the inability of reason alone to bind a culture through shared tenets. In responding to this context, many articulate civic virtue in terms of faith, a willingness by citizens to give their assent to a morally legitimate government as a starting point for deliberating well together. The decisionmaking process in turn requires a faith that past wisdom can still speak to us in ways that logic cannot. A conservative rhetoric of assent seeks to offset skepticism with an appeal to pre-Enlightenment faith, not in particular religious tenets, or a monarch, but in a larger, secular patrimony.

More specifically, a deliberative process grounded in a secular faith proceeds from a frame of credulity that acknowledges legitimate authority. Nisbet, for example, voiced his
concern that we cannot expect a citizenry to engage in fruitful dialogue if they have lost respect for the process itself and for the legislature as models for citizen-deliberators to follow. Faith, on the other hand, begins in the belief that the various institutions are authoritative by virtue of their competence and integrity. This, he added, imposes obligations on all sectors to earn their authority and resist encroachment by other sectors to preserve a balance of power. Thus, self regulation by business to monitor their practices is an instrumental virtue that serves larger goals. If we prevent skepticism about business from growing into a more "full blown cynicism" regarding political institutions, we can preserve a public faith in both realms. Conversely, children who learn that business is routinely deceptive are soon led to a more generalized distrust of the government, a disaffection that not only weakens both sectors, but also weakens the process of public deliberation.

Nisbet also argued that faith provided an antidote to solitary reason and quoted Chesterton to say that humans need dogmatic faith in institutional authority because reason alone will not sustain the relationship. If prudence requires citizens to act on their decisions, then a prudential process needs a significant element of faith to move them to act. Religion and politics respond to dogma for the same reasons, he pointed out. Faith is cohesive and persuasive in a way that rationality is not. Cartesian doubt only serves to corrode the cohesiveness built by faith and so, as Chesterton observed, "the merely rational man will not marry and the rational soldier will not fight."87

In addition to a collective faith that the deliberative process can move us to purposeful action, conservatives articulate a need to be willing to act on our faith by engaging in the deliberative process itself. Belief in the system's integrity and hope for its positive effects on the future are not enough to support the public forum if a strong national will is absent. In this regard, even Will, who admits to being among the most pessimistic of conservatives argued that, while all "government takes place on a slippery
slopes," this should not deter us from risking some action. Prudence weighs costs against incremental social gains in each case, he suggested, a process that takes a calculated risk that it will not devolve into a more coercive mode or a merely obligatory rhetoric that lacks cohesive force. Cultivating prudence, from Will's perspective, including a process of developing citizens' willingness to see a public interest on social issues and weigh each case on that basis. These Ciceronian calculations look to the effects of judgments on social cohesion over the longer term (while drawing on the slowly developed wisdom of the longer past) in order to avoid the merely expedient or momentary good in the political calculus.

In tandem with cultivating communitarian impulses, Kirkpartrick argued that we can benefit from recovering Machiavelli's understanding of national collective will and purpose. Politics, she noted, is a purposive human enterprise whose preeminent interest is self-preservation. The rise and fall of nations depends on "what Machiavelli called virtue, meaning vitality and capacity for collective action." Kirkpatrick praised Machiavelli's pragmatic use of history, his recognition of the tension between Christian and pagan virtues in the polis, and his willfulness to maximize national interest in a given context as useful elements in cultivating a rhetoric of assent, because virtu provided the potency, literally as virtuous power, to energize the civic will. Not all conservatives share Kirkpatrick's positive regard for Machiavelli's vigorous national will, however, and their disagreements over Machiavelli parallels an ambivalence over the limits of volition to drive deliberations. For these conservatives, Machiavelli represented uncontrolled civic will in the form of manipulative purposefulness and a disastrous break from normative politics that prudence must recover.

Novak, for example, favored Kirkpatrick's politics of realism, although in hopes of supporting a more aggressive view of social change. Unlike Kirkpatrick he favored
Niebuhr over Machiavelli on the basis that Niebuhr attended to power and self-interest without lapsing into Machiavelli's "manipulative realism." With respect to the force of civic will in public deliberations, Novak believed that we might be able to rally around the system's intended common good that nevertheless lets each pursue his or her own way, in the name of freedom. thereby sidestepping Machiavellian virtu. Novak compared the intentional common good the law aims at ideally to the Catholic notion of good will, which distinguishes a specific material good from a benevolent view that lets each pursue ends freely. The link between the common good and support for status quo rests in an ideal goodwill inherent in institutional forms. "The formal common good is what is intended by a person of good 'will'." This translates into civic virtue, a civic will to be open intentionally toward a common good prior to knowing which material form it may take, on the belief that a liberal system has a good chance to produce good. Citizens "intend the system--itself a sort of 'common good'--or order to reach the common good in the most effective way possible." Good deliberations, from this perspective, require goodwill and trust in institutional forms, because, even when we fall short, the presumed goodness of the institutional tendency toward the ideal justifies our loyalty. In doing so, he distinguished between the weight of institutional goodwill, to be valued positively in public deliberations, and the good intentions of individuals, which often carries negative valence. Like Kirkpatrick, the moral component of deliberations has assumed a more abstract, implicit form, to be distinguished from its embodiment in real deliberators. Novak seems to be saying, with Kirkpatrick and others, that real deliberators can aim for good, laudable ends, but their goodness is judged by their compatibility with a particular interpretation of the inherent goodness of certain institutional forms, not by any particular manifestation of it.

Kristol shared Novak's rejection of Machiavelli as a useful guide to prudential deliberations on the basis that Machiavelli opened up too many possibilities. In doing so,
Kristol argued, Machiavelli profaned politics, just as the Marquis deSade profaned sexuality; each made the nihilistic claim that all knowledge is good. Machiavelli thus eliminated the prescriptive framework from politics, just as deSade removed it from sexuality. Machiavelli's virtu, which praised all knowledge about how to rule, repudiated both political and Christian virtues as useful insights. Machiavellian virtu then is merely the talent of the virtuoso not the prudent leader; worse, he was the precursor to the modern divorce between political and moral knowledge. As such, he offers no insights into prudent deliberations in pluralistic contexts because he rejected the search for normative first premises.

This examination has considered both the elements and processes of conservative deliberations in order to call further attention to continuities and departures from classical models of prudence already hinted at in earlier chapters. By organizing the discussion around conservative rejection of a rational intellectual marketplace for public discourse, uneasy relations between ideals and pragmatics, and the elaboration of a rhetoric of assent, several characteristics emerged to suggest that conservative efforts to recover classical models have been complicated by the context in which they occur. Some residual classical affinities have emerged, however, in conservative efforts to shape a public moral discourse that was civil, deferential toward traditional wisdom, purposeful, dialogical, adversarial, and somewhat attentive to the particular and various facts of a case. Elements that were discontinuous with classical forms included a plea for greater attention to the nonrational components of discourse, in this case the diverse passions of deliberators, a keener sense of limits with regard to outcomes, and an increased reliance on a proactive memory of particular and collective experiences. Processual changes reflected similar fissures with respect to rules and goals. Conservative reasoning embraced a process that would lead to compromise and cooption, in the name of the peace. Moreover, they described a process
characterized by a heightened emotionality, in light of diverse citizens' passions and particularities of belief.

These comparisons provide the basis for and give rise to several speculations about the nature of public deliberations today, especially as these comparisons bear on the efforts among cultural observers of varying political standpoints to revive a perceived moribund public arena. The contours of conservative discourse also establish the basis for some concluding remarks about the theoretical and pragmatic implications of conservative deliberations for contemporary practical reasoning in a postmodern context. Having traced the shape of conservative deliberations we are better prepared to return to several concerns raised in Chapter 1. Specifically, the nature of practical reasoning among conservatives gives rise to several speculations with regard to the relationships among prudence, rhetoric and ethics. In addressing these connections, issues of community, the role of communication in public discourse, and the ethical dimensions of pedagogy will be explored as well.

1Kirkpatrick, Dictatorships and Double Standards 17-18, 90, 97.
2Kirkpatrick, Dictatorships and Double Standards 11-13.
3Kirkpatrick, Dictatorships and Double Standards 223.
4Kirkpatrick, Legitimacy and Force 451.
6Kirkpatrick, Dictatorships and Double Standards 12.
7Kristol, Reflections 55-56.
8Nisbet, Conservatism 29-31.
9Lasch, The True and Only Heaven 128-30.
10Himmelfarb, Poverty and Compassion 3-6.
11Kristol, "Skepticism" 33-35.

12Kristol, "Skepticism" 38-41.

13Buckley, Right Reason 132.

14Buckley, Inveighing We Will Go 51.

15Buckley, God and Man at Yale 157.

16Buckley, The Governor Listeth 267-68.

17Buckley, Up From Liberalism xx.


19Buckley, The Jeweler's Eye 11-12, 15.

20Buckley, Inveighing We Will Go 57.

21Buckley, Right Reason 412.

22Will, The Pursuit of Virtue 85.

23Novak, The Rise of the Unmelttable Ethnics 70.

24Wills, Confessions 122.

25Wills, Confessions 162-64.

26Wills, Confessions 85; also, Nixon Agonistes


28Lasch, "Why Liberals Lack Virtue" 34.


30Will, Suddenly 383.


32Nisbet, Conservatism 67.
33 Novak, Free Persons and the Common Good 101-09.


35 Novak, The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism 90-121.


38 Novak, Free Persons and the Common Good, 57-59.

39 Wills, Confessions 121, 123, 148-49.


41 Buckley, Rumbles Left and Right 134-35.

42 William F. Buckley, Jr., Quotations From Chairman Bill: The Best of Wm. F. Buckley Jr., Comp. by David Franke (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1970), 118.

43 Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism 218-36.

44 Will, The Morning After 366.


46 Kirkpatrick, The Reagan Phenomenon 35.

47 Kirkpatrick, Legitimacy and Force 77.

48 Kirkpatrick, Legitimacy and Force 81.


50 Buckley, God and Man at Yale 178.

51 Buckley, God and Man at Yale 114-15, 174-78.

53 Will, *Statecraft* 70.

54 Will, *Statecraft* 59.


56 Will, *Suddenly* 210-12.


58 Buckley, *Inveighing We Will Go* 59.

59 Nisbet, *Conservatism* 47.

60 Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards* 204-10.

61 Wills, *Confessions* 66.


65 Buckley, "Agenda for the Nineties" 38. original italics.


67 Kristol, "Skepticism" 41.


69 Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards* 9.

70 Wills, *Confessions* 66-69.

71 Wills, *Confessions* 166-74.

72 Wills, *Confessions* 208, 211.
73 Wills, *Confessions* 194-201.

74 Wills, *Confessions* 201-05.

75 Wills, *Confessions* 205.

76 Wills, *Confessions* 217.

77 Wills, *The Pursuit of Happiness* 17-18. See also *The Morning After* 52.


79 Nisbet, *Twilight* 159.

80 Kristol, "When Virtue Loses All Her Loveliness" 14.


82 Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven* 81.

83 Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven* 80-90; 118; 390-93; "Why Liberals Lack Virtue" 34.

84 Novak, "Needing Niebuhr Again" 53.


88 Will, *The Morning After* 177, 182.


91 Novak, *Free Persons and the Common Good* 81-82.

92 Kristol, *Reflections* 123-34.
Conclusions

In the Introduction, I speculated that the relationship between prudence and contemporary civic life bore examination in light of a revived interest in informal modes of reasoning traditionally associated with the public sphere. I pointed to a burgeoning interest among social and political observers across the disciplines to recover practical reasoning skills that might brook a perceived current impasse between a number of value laden issues and the ability of rigorous reasoning modes to resolve them. Within communication studies, I noted a similar attention in Zarefsky's exhortation to the field in which he urged communication scholars to reaffirm their significant potential to contribute to a community of deliberators who had mastered phronesis, understood as practical wisdom in human affairs.

Within this broader context of disaffection over the state of public moral reasoning, however, Garver and Seigel opened up the possibility that our ability to recover classical models of prudence, an intensely context driven skill, might be less than straightforward; prudence, as both an intellectual and moral virtue, shared somewhat chameleon characteristics with other virtues, waxing and waning, changing, as circumstances dictated their need. Prudence, especially in its Aristotelian and Ciceronian forms, was described as a virtue that oscillated between an intellectual capacity to deliberate well and a habituated inner moral disposition that would lead deliberators of goodwill toward good ends. Keeping this historical instability and ambivalence over the meaning of virtue in mind, I set out to contribute to an exploration of what prudence could look like today, given the
heightened interdisciplinary interest in its recovery to serve res publica. In particular, I asked how conservative perceptions of prudence might contribute to an explanation of its function in the context of contemporary civil space. In posing this question, I suggested that we might also make inquiries into the usefulness and limitations of classical understandings in contemporary public discourse. While there are numerous sites that might illuminate such an inquiry, this study sought to contribute to the search for a postmodern prudence among those voices who express publicly a keen and explicit interest in it. The exploration focused on contemporary conservatism on the grounds that this discourse community was commonly and publicly associated with prudence; indeed, it self-consciously assumed a caretaking and proprietary interest in prudence, among other virtues, as crucial subjects for public talk. In brief, conservatism seemed a reasonable site from which to embark on such a search.

I tried to show in subsequent chapters that what we might learn from conservative discourse about the nature of prudence is that no straightforward appropriation of it from classical models seems easily accomplished, that contemporary conservatives themselves seem unable to revive it, despite their considerable ideological motivations to do so. The difficulty among conservatives raises questions about the ability of other voices who are less committed to the project, and who have different ideological motivations, to recover it. We can speculate that if conservatives, as willing heirs to this tradition, have been unable to revive prudence in its classical forms, then, a fortiori, we should expect that it will pose an even more difficult public challenge to those discourse communities who do not share the assumptions of nor praise the qualities inherent in the classical model. This is not to say that merely because conservatives have been unable to revive prudence intact there are no other, perhaps, unwitting heirs to the tradition. It does, however, suggest that our efforts as scholars to arrive at a critical understanding of the nature and viability of public moral discourse through a recovery of prudential reasoning bears closer scrutiny with respect to
the assumptions and implications of appropriating the latter in service of the former. This should be of especial concern to communitarians on both the left and right who, despite their very different perspectives, often join in a common search for prudential language to unite them.¹

The relationship between contemporary public talk and prudence, I suggested in Chapter Six, was complicated, as evidenced by several affinities and discontinuities between conservative discourse and pagan models of prudential reasoning. Several of these departures in the elements and process of deliberation, as well as the composition of citizen deliberators, supported the claim that conservatives have been unable to revive classical prudence and pointed to several inferences that might tentatively be drawn with regard to the nature of prudence today. The nature of prudence has changed, at least insofar as conservatives have enlisted it.

Overview of Findings

Several changes in the composition of potential deliberators reinforce the conclusion that conservative deliberations cannot faithfully follow classical models because practical reasoning is too sensitive, too responsive to the context in which it operates to permit such a recovery. This sensitivity has led to changes on several bases. These include alterations in the important reciprocal relationship between deliberators' intellect and inner disposition; altered relations between historical consciousness and the here and now; a diminution of the rational model of civic discourse; and, salient elements of the deliberative process itself.

These changes in context, content, and process, in turn, intensify the problem of the expert in the public business of political deliberations, and destabilize the deductive forms of prudential reasoning derived from probable first premises. Since changes in postmodern phronimoi force a rhetorical renegotiation on each of these points, they also alter the interrelationships among prudence, rhetoric and ethics and point to several
theoretical implications that have emerged out of that altered relationship. A brief overview of these changes will provide the basis for a discussion of the implications of these finding, especially as they bear on the connections among prudence, rhetoric, and ethics. The overview also prepares the way for related speculations about the usefulness and limitations of appropriating classical prudence for the tasks of postmodern civil space.

Intellect and inner disposition

Recalling Nussbaum, prudence was a sketch, to be filled in with an optimum blend of character and experience, as the facts of a case dictated. Many conservatives, however, have been at pains to deemphasize the personal virtue of deliberators as a crucial element in reasoning well toward good ends. In giving less weight to deliberators' external or antecedent ethos, conservatives make this component of practical reasoning more rhetorical by locating its potential to influence deliberative outcomes in an audience's judgment that a speaker's good will and character coincides with their interpretation of history. In other words, a deliberators' pleas for a certain action in the name of outrage over current wrongs or in the case of good ends carries far less weight than a belief by an audience of citizen-deliberators that their experience justifies the proposed means to the good end. It is more rhetorical, then, in the sense that it is more sensitive to an audience's judgment, of both the deliberator's goodwill and "correct" understanding of the historical import with respect to a particular case. This is very different from antecedent ethos in the Ciceronian schema and the "good man" theory of Quintilian in which deliberators relied on personal character both to know and to act well toward good ends. It also departs from Aristotelian phronimos who, by virtue of long habit and experience, brings character to the deliberative process to negotiate the appropriate relationship between the wisdom of experience and the case at hand.
This deemphasis of character does have some affinity with Aristotelian rhetorical theory, however. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle identified the *ethos* of persuaders as an artistic or "artificial" proof, that is, residing with an audience who grants a speaker credibility if the logical and emotional appeals of the message resonate with them. For Aristotle, *ethos* was the most important element of the process. Character was thus a crucial component, to be negotiated as part of the rhetorical process itself. Similarly, we might say that, for conservatives, character must be negotiated rhetorically as part of the deliberative process, which is to say it too must be bargained, along with the facts of the case. This is so, with two important distinctions: one, that the important evidence in weighing character value is experiential judgment, and, two, that personal character may continue to play a part in contemporary deliberations, but conservatives' interest in articulating this role is overshadowed by the attention many give to a sense of history.

*Complicating the historical consciousness*

This historical consciousness, in the form of personal narratives and a collective consciousness, suggests that in having prudence make the narrative "turn," good deliberations become a process of putting into practice a particular understanding of the meaning of history. Prudence as narrative is similarly more rhetorical insofar as the compelling force of competing narratives and competing interpretations must now also be negotiated. The analysis in Chapter 4 revealed that, despite a general consensus among conservatives that we ought to preserve a wise patrimony of foundational documents written by Framers who were "wiser than we know," there was no consensus on how to read, that is, interpret primary sources, nor was the still vibrant issue of self-interest vs. disinterest settled with respect to their optimum distribution in citizens and their relationship to the commonweal. In short, despite the shared assumption among conservatives that history was a wise collaborator in the deliberative process, its lessons were less evident
when applied to particular cases of loyalty, the state's role in nurturing a virtuous citizenry, or the autonomy of the family circle.

In addition, I also suggested that a circumstance of diverse deliberators complicates the wisdom of historical consciousness and moves the important pillar of experience in *phronimoi* from a given among the wise to a claim subject to rhetorical negotiation today. The personal histories of deliberators become public occasions for adjudication among the various and competing narratives. In addition to the problem of which memories ought to constitute a collective consciousness or have argumentative weight in deliberations, there is a perception of a long history of abuse and warfare, a deepened sense of a conscious past that tends toward caution, fear, and paralysis among so many people with long memories. These particular memories gave rise to a renewed awareness of the role emotional attachments play in discourse, which signal other departures from pagan models.

*Rational model of civic discourse*

Conservative deliberations retreated from the Aristotelian emphases on the rational model of civic discourse while continuing to echo a longstanding fear of unleashing the polar extremes of a rootless "naked reason" and a latent emotional power of the word for demagoguery. This lost faith in the power of reason alone to make the truth compelling, when added to heightened fears of disconnected rationality and clever wordsmiths, encouraged a renewed faith in more particular powers. Conservatives believed that passionate attachment would offset the excesses of rationality and lend emotional weight to engage the will of apathetic and fearful audiences. Just as Toulmin argued that the rational model of modernity arose out of a context of Renaissance excesses and war weary Europeans unable to resolve their religious differences, conservatives seemed also to be saying that their call for a different configuration among logical, ethical, and emotional appeals arises out of the exaggerated hopes for modernity. Toulmin and the conservatives
seem to agree that new contexts call for a new look at older reasoning patterns. Postmodernity should shake off the excesses of modernity by recovering pre-Enlightenment attachments to passion and particularity. In brief, we can face the future best by looking back. The prudent mean for the emotional attachments to one's own customs and culture has thereby shifted in response to a perception of vicious rationality; and, in making the passions more salient, character assumes a seemingly less explicit role and rationality softens into reasonableness. The perceived change in the context has forced a change in the emotional mean and highlights the rhetorical power of circumstances to dictate what it means to deliberate well over public matters. The shift in context has also led to shifts in the content and, especially, in the process of deliberations.

Processual dynamics

Conservative deliberations revealed several changes with respect to the content of contemporary deliberations. This was expected, since the concerns of a technologically driven society will give rise to controversial issues in medicine, law, social relations, and international policy that were unheard of centuries ago. It was not surprising, then, to find that the substance of deliberation had changed. However, despite some obvious differences in specific social and foreign policy issues from those facing ancient Greeks and Romans, some continuities persisted in recurring deliberations over tests of loyalty, legitimate forms of kinship ties, and the role of education to socialize youth into societal norms of belief and behavior. More notable were changes in the process itself.

In Chapter Six I traced the processual dynamics of conservative deliberations that both reaffirmed the conservative bias inherent in the classical process and articulated several changes, especially with respect to goals. I noted that classical prudence, since it must deliberate when to change and when to follow established rules, grants some prima facie value to maintaining the status quo, otherwise the need to work out rhetorical and ethical
criteria for justifying change would not arise. The difficulty for conservatives, with respect to received wisdom, was to maintain an optimum tension that acknowledged the rule but weighed heavily the merits of particular case challenges to the rule. The difficulty in maintaining this tension resulted in conservative deliberative goals that suggested additional departures from Aristotle and Cicero. In pagan formulations, deliberators were charged with the need to decide and act, whereas conservative reasoning often expressed more hesitancy. Their approach seemed alternately cautious and compromising, sometimes deciding to act less, and frequently choosing to settle for less in the way of change. Choice is tragic, they seemed to say, and in doing so articulated a common postmodern lament. This tentativeness, however, which they articulated in terms of a particular view of human nature and history, is also driven by a breakdown in the number of shared premises that allow a deliberative dialogue to occur. Not only does the process appropriate elements of passion and particularity to confront what conservatives believes to be an excessively rigid and detached rationality in current intellectual and political life, contemporary deliberations also search for new goals of compromise and cooption to mitigate the potential of heterogeneous postmodern citizen-deliberators for disruptive and chaotic behavior.

*Expertise and prudence*

With respect to expertise, pagan models assumed a general intellectual and moral excellence among enfranchised males available to deliberate political issues. This relatively small, homogeneous group has given way to significantly larger numbers of citizens whose plural voices and diverse cultural heritages contribute an egalitarian and anti-intellectual bias associated with the liberal democratic system. Against the residual force of this heritage, however, there is growing evidence that marginalized voices have diminished access to the facts of a case and reduced political access to make their voices heard. This double disadvantage of inaccessibility and lack of power increases the likelihood that expertise will
fill the informative and power vacuum. When this happens, politics as public business calling for practical reasoning skills devolves into field specific argumentation, guided by internal norms and/or the power-driven interests of a relative few. What this means for prudential deliberations today is that the assumption in classical models that deliberators had access to the case and the power to resolve it no longer holds across potential deliberators, but must be negotiated between and among mainstream voices of power, such as those conservatives represented in this study, mainstream liberals, and those craving increased access.

Conservatives explicitly address the problem of the expert by articulating an interest in empowering certain middle class and lower middle class voices. In reaffirming a well established American populist tradition and reasserting the culturally conservative tendencies associated with this tradition, conservatives have also uncovered some changes in practical reasoning to account more fully for a range of ethnic sensibilities, customs, and values. Efforts to "tell the American people why they are right," as Kristol phrased it, led to a process whose contours were often polemical, passionate, emotional, deferential, and tempered with regard to expectations and goals. If we add additional layers of voices not specifically championed by conservatives to the egalitarian rhetoric that Hatch and Wood argue is deeply entrenched in the culture, it is likely that the shift from classical models, already exhibited by those groups conservatives invoke, will be more, not less, dramatic when citizen-deliberators who want to champion issues of gender, race, and sexual orientation are added to the mix. This shift in the mix suggests that the quasi-logical force of prudential reasoning, which moves from commonly held belief, values, etc. to some claim about the fit between those beliefs and the here and now, has weakened.
The deductive force of prudential reasoning

With respect to changes in lines of reasoning, there is much evidence in this discourse to suggest that the formal deductive model of public deliberations is less stable than in its pagan formulations because it cannot account for the mediation among a variety of premises that divide postmodern deliberators. Often, even among conservatives in this study, reasoning modes seemed less a process of moving deductively from shared premises or common goals and more a process of bargaining toward them. Loyalty is a useful case in point, as it has resonated in pleas from Antigone to Kirkpatrick. Among conservatives, there is agreement that we ought to be loyal to the republic as being morally legitimate for ourselves. Buckley added that we should also be grateful for the blessings it has bestowed upon us and manifest this gratitude publicly and conspicuously in national service. But even among conservatives the definition of loyalty is such a slippery term that it too must be bargained, in which case it cannot serve effectively as a shared assumption that is useful when trying to decide particular cases of loyalty and gratitude. Put another way, loyalty as a rallying term is insufficient to move, say, Buckley and Wills, to a particular case of it without prior negotiation over the legitimate range of what it can entail in any case. Moving to the more radical left, it is difficult to imagine that most would concede even the initial agreement that loyalty can start the dialogue, however tentatively. Postmodern deliberations may more appropriately take deductive and inductive shapes, as we bargain from and toward plural ends. If Garver and Berlin and Pocock were right to isolate Machiavelli as a modern bellweather of pluralism, there is little in conservatives' encounter with the postmodern context to suggest a return to monism.

Conservatives, in sum, have been constrained by their context in efforts to reappropriate prudence as a model for postmodern deliberations. The combination of plural deliberators and fewer shared assumptions has meant that they do not balance character and experience in the same way and have shaped a process that departs from classical models in
several ways. These shifts give rise to several theoretical implications as they bear on a heightened interest in the intersections among prudence, rhetoric, and ethics.

**Theoretical implications of these findings**

**Prudence and community**

Prudence in its classical form, was intimately connected to politics, which, in theory, was one form of noble endeavor that allowed male citizens to develop, display, and test their virtuous excellence; excellence in work and warfare were other avenues. Politics was also regarded as a fundamentally contested area of human affairs, requiring a deliberative process in which virtuous citizens judged and acted on issues that were capable of being otherwise. The process required the practical wisdom of citizens whose experience enabled them to note an instability between the contested case before them and the conventional wisdom available to adjudicate others only somewhat like it. Moreover, these wise deliberators were men of good will whose inner moral dispositions allowed them to look clearly toward the good ends served by deciding the case one way or another.

The conservative deliberators examined in this study suggest that we should continue to regard politics as noble work and most have readily conceded that particular political and social issues do not easily yield to singular answers. Many would like to recover a virtuous citizenry whose moral dispositions and experience can reinvigorate what they regard as an enervated public forum that suffers from a pinched moral vocabulary, corruption, overly influential expertise, and a debilitating sense of apathy and impotence among the citizenry. In chapter 1, I situated a search for a postmodern prudence within several interdisciplinary conversations about the state of public discourse. I noted that current communitarian interests in reviving or uncovering a common fund of cultural values and goals to cultivate a reenergized citizenry capable of engaging and resolving vexed
issues were often of a piece. In the preceding chapters, particularly Chapter 5, conservatives expressed similar concerns insofar as they too attempted to locate a common moral language that would speak to common beliefs and aspirations and, thereby, serve as a cohesive force that would lead to productive deliberations. Conservatives' search for a common moral ground has uncovered instead a prudence that is more rhetorical, more polemical than in its classical formulations. On the one hand, it is interesting to note that many mainstream conservative voices are moving away from the language of autonomy and individualism that generally has been associated with traditional conservatism. Communitarians would no doubt regard this shift in emphasis as encouraging for their project. Rhetoricians, however, will note that these linguistic shifts signal the discovery of a contemporary prudence that is more, not less, rhetorically driven, than in classical formulations. This is so because even as conservatives attempt to press prudence into the service of community, they uncover an increased need to influence diverse audiences. They attempt to do this rhetorically, by means of the self conscious use of language intentionally chosen for the purpose of invoking an audiences' assent to a set of values and beliefs. This has been especially evident in Chapter 5 in which conservatives invoked a rhetoric of linguistic restraint to put reins on the liberal imagination.

It has been evident as well in conservative efforts to fashion a language of responsibility. Conservatives understand that certain key values of loyalty, family, work etc., cannot stand alone as first premises of deliberations, without further negotiation. Precisely because of this need to negotiate what those terms mean in any case, they seek to bolster them with various other virtues to cultivate the collective will. This also partially explains why conservatives seem to refocus on the intellectual over the moral component inherent in all virtues, including prudence, because they regard the task as reenergizing an apathetic public through a search for some common goods. This was an effort to make the language of responsibility function as a national will. The public was seen as apathetic and
self absorbed, which called for a language to revive them. This language may be seen more as updating a kind of Machiavellian virtu for deliberators than an effort to locate inner dispositions that will somehow lead them to good ends.

The somewhat communitarian impulse evident in conservative efforts to find a common language of responsibility heightens the rhetorical nature of contemporary prudence in more formal ways by weakening the deductive force of prudential topoi. Since diverse audiences will not concede the communal appeal of certain key cultural terms, but want to bargain over them, it is not likely that conservatives will be able to recover Aristotelian or Ciceronian claims either for material truth or verisimilitude on several matters. The search for a language of responsibility then makes more salient the difficulty of making truth claims. Since conservatives could not reach consensus on particular issues by appeals to cherished beliefs about patriotism, kinship ties, or what history means, they attempt to shore up those traditional beliefs by extolling other virtues they hope citizens will respond to, even as they worried over how much hortatory or coercive rhetoric was required to advance the claims for virtues that spoke to responsibility.

Part of the deductive "slippage" conservatives grapple with may be accounted for by the very historical consciousness they invoke. There is, as conservatives claim, an abundance of evidence available from a long history of events in ancient Athens and Rome to those discussed in Washington, D.C. today. But the proliferation of information has also produced a wide range of interpretations. This very proliferation has changed the face of deliberations and deliberators and has implications for what we can and should know in order to deliberate well.

With respect to issues of community, then, the conservative deliberative process does not complete the communitarian project by locating res publica. On the other hand, we can count conservative articulations of a public rhetoric that is somewhat compatible with communitarian interests as important to that project's viability in public talk. Also,
conservative efforts to offer certain virtues to the dialogical mix at least serve to clarify the strengths and weaknesses of various attributes in terms of their relative vibrancy with diverse audiences. This, in turn, encourages further efforts of communitarians to exploit attributes with the greatest resonance.

*Communication and reasoning*

With respect to the deliberative process itself, however, conservatives seem to be saying that, apart from the need to cultivate the civic will to want to reason well together, citizens need other virtues for deciding actual cases. For this, many conservatives have claimed, we need to recover a proactive memory to guide our deliberations toward good ends and keep a practical if somewhat jaundiced eye on probable negative and unintended consequences of even well meaning but inherently tragic choices. This shift in emphasis to the intellectual over the moral component in the reasoning process itself suggests that the relationship among prudence, ethics, and rhetoric, already connected in Aristotelian and Ciceronian schemes, may be even more intimate today. It also suggests some shift in the kind of virtues needed to engage in public deliberations.

An important implication of the shape of conservative deliberations is that the process itself counts for as much if not more than the product. Process is all, Wills concluded, because we cannot produce justice. If postmodern deliberations give up justice, ostensibly in view of plural conceptions of it, then we cannot look to measurements of distributive or retributive justice outside the process to judge the quality of deliberations. We will need to develop criteria out of the elements of the process itself. But, conservatives argued, history and human nature teach us that the deliberative process is fragile with respect to outcomes, less certain of good consequences, given historical experience, and contingent, given continuing cultural changes that necessitate hearings as circumstances dictate. If this is so, then we will need to bargain over optimum qualities of
passion, polemics, particularity, and compromise to provoke deliberators' will to action while avoiding the paralyzing effects of polarization and balkanization that work against deliberating well.

From the implication that circumstances have shaped conservative deliberations to reflect a somewhat contingent process, whose elements are subject to negotiation, we can conclude that it also is more rhetorical, open-ended with respect to its elements and goals. If this is so, then conservatives seem to be calling for, however wittingly or unwittingly, a process similar to one advocated by Dionne in Chapter 1. Dionne believed that a revitalized public discourse depended on a more nuanced politics of moderation, one not dominated by ideological extremes. Whether or not Dionne's view that an incipient consensus awaits our deliberations once we clear away the cacaphony of extremist rhetoric remains an open question; however, there is much in the conservative rhetoric of compromise examined in this study to suggest some movement toward moderation on several counts that support Dionne's interpretation. All of this leads to a final implication, which suggests that the stakes are higher for developing ethical criteria for a deliberative process that is largely rhetorical, which is to say communicative.

*Ethical dimensions*

Several dimensions of the deliberative process articulated by conservatives suggest that the ethical dimensions already associated with communication in several other contexts parallel conservative interests in rehabilitating prudence in public talk. This overlap also suggests that character, which was overshadowed by a conservative preoccupation with a well-developed sense of history, resurfaces as an important component of the conservative deliberative process, albeit in altered forms. If we set aside for the moment the historical preoccupation and ask what conservative prudence can look like from a dialogical perspective, we can note glimmerings of several changes from classical models. These
dialogical qualities differ somewhat from classical conceptions because they have adjusted to postmodern concerns with respect to public discourse.

In Chapter Two, Cooper's outline of the ethical dimensions of public discourse from a postmodern perspective included several concerns for public discourse that many conservatives find themselves addressing, to lesser degrees and sometimes for very different ends. Even so, it is further testament to the sensitivity of prudence to context that these different voices confront the same dialogical concerns in deliberation, despite different political agendas. Cooper, it will be recalled, was skeptical of the viability of public talk because of the inequitable distribution of skills necessary to participate equally. Importantly, the free flow of information necessary to deliberate well is not accessible to all. Information is increasingly complex and mediated by interested third parties, which makes professionalism and expertise disproportionately powerful collaborators in public business. Cooper, as well as Dionne, also spoke to citizen apathy and skepticism about the ability to address issues in an atmosphere dominated by a relative few who advocate the extremes of a position, who dehumanize opponents and effectively silence a majority who seek access to bargain for moderation. Finally, an intellectual skepticism tempers postmodern expectations that the public at large can locate and act on commonalities that might be identified as a public interest. This suggests that the new values sought to deliberate well from a postmodernist perspective have more to do with empowerment and empathic engagement among factions than it does with a rhetoric based exclusively on pagan character virtues. It is a perspective that seeks to enable more citizens access to the facts of a case and provide them with the communicative skills of empathy and critical understanding necessary to engage in a fruitful process among diverse groups. These differ from classical models which assumed equal access by enfranchised citizens who shared a relatively common fund of experience that placed a lesser demand on the need to find a way to understand radically different viewpoints.
In the preceding chapters many conservatives seem to be responding to an altered context in ways that also call for a deliberative process that is more empowering, for very different ends, of course. Prudence as a process to engage what are perceived to be marginalized ethnic narratives, for example, is intended to accommodate change while maintaining larger stabilities. Since even good deliberations cannot guarantee consensus or good results, some seem to be saying, let's open up the process to include Wills' experts and dissidents, Novak and Lasch's ethnics and populists, Buckley and Kristol's "above average" average Americans, Himmelfarb and Will's Victorians, and Nisbet's libertarians.

The processual intersections with postmodern concerns are also noticeable, if tentative, and for different purposes. They sum up a prudence that calls for new deliberative virtues that, while not entirely abandoning pagan character virtues, deemphasizes pagan understandings of justice, courage, magnanimity, and magnificence in favor of volitional, ethical, and relational skills that allow the deliberations to proceed at all. Given the context, both postmodernists and conservatives seem to be saying, we should be careful about the work that we believe prudence can do and attend carefully to how it ought to proceed, which is with empathy, restraint, and moderation.

In terms of ethical attributes generally associated with communication skills, this translates into deliberators' willingness to hear out alternative perspectives, take seriously the possibility that genuine value differences divide us, respect others' narratives, temper demands, admit contingency, and allow the particularities and passions of groups to offset a sometimes oppressive and suspect civility. Thus, Novak spoke of an empathic engagement in public talk that would allow one to "pass over" into the narrative of another, thereby permitting the possibility that a third story could emerge that would resonate for both. Kirkpatrick joined Himmelfarb to plead for restraint on conceded good intentions, noting that doing good was somehow more than "feeling good" or having the right "individual virtues." Wills' desire to keep the peace led him to promote change from "the
bottom up" and plea for toleration of agents of change in the public square. Kristol and Novak and Lasch insisted that value differences were sometimes just that, genuine value differences among adults which ought not be trivialized or psychologized if we are engage in good deliberations marked by a mutuality of respect. Conversely, Will and Nisbet and Buckley will not give up reasoned debate, marked by a modicum of civility that does not offend the intellectual and moral sensibilities of citizen-deliberators as cultivated "ladies and gentlemen" who are doing the vitally important work of holding the republic together.

An exploration of these various implications suggests that the conservative preoccupation with the experiential component of practical reasoning has obscured their perhaps unknowing discovery of other virtues necessary to engage in the deliberative process they articulated in Chapter Six. These virtues are inherent in the process itself and, while they differ from classical models, are much closer to contemporary standpoints arrived at by observers of public deliberations who hold very different intellectual standpoints. In Chapter One, I pointed briefly to several scholars, including, Benhabib, Jaksa, and Makau, among others, who have located similar virtues in a deliberative process that places increasing stress on communicative ethics arising out of dialogues in diversity. This suggests that the contextual force to dictate prudential reasoning is powerful enough to bring deliberators of varying political and intellectual standpoints, whether selfconsciously or unwittingly, to a similar process; and, if this is so, it suggests that we will find that the context, as Seigel claimed, dictates the virtues we seek.

Returning now to the historical concerns set aside in order to probe other processual dynamics, there are several ethical concerns emerging out of a conservative process that emphasized parallels between the prudential and historical methods in terms of ascribing ethical weights to competing narratives. Of crucial importance is the need to arrive at a critical understanding of what is entailed in a particular narrative, what is entailed by silencing or celebrating a particular narrative, and what criteria enable us to evaluate other
stories in light of a particular account. If conservatives are right to say that we are wise to profit from the lessons of the past, that history should remain a powerful *topos* in dialogue, then we have need to develop criteria to assess and adjudicate the relative merits of competing narratives. The Nazi experience, often cited by the conservatives in the preceding chapters highlights this concern. Even if we could agree on what this experience means with respect to the viability of a free intellectual market, the rationality of mass audiences, the western idea of progress, or the nature of human frailty, an enormous "if," we would still confront the need to discover dialogical criteria for determining the applicability of this and other large world events to other contexts. What does it mean, for example, to deliberate well in post WWII Germany over bioethical issues such as physician-assisted suicide or the care of severely imperiled newborns, in light of Germans' memories of the Aryan *mythos*; conversely, how should other countries interpret the actions of Saddam Hussein in light of their memories of Hitler; or the Bosnians in light of their memories of Nazi racial cleansing? Importantly, what are the ethical implications of silencing German bioethical debate as too painful in light of German memories or of silencing "revisionist" efforts to deny the holocaust as too painful in light of Jewish memories? If we agree that we cannot confront and address claims that we will not allow to be heard, then acknowledgment of the narrative *topos* entails a closer look at how we negotiate the competing claims of memory in dialogue.²

**Pedagogical implications**

I began this examination by quoting Zarefsky's plea that we reexamine how we might teach prudence to students in cyberspace and bring it to a close by suggesting that as teachers we might ask instead how the postmodern space may have already changed their capacity to learn it, at least in classical forms. The most evident pedagogical challenge arising out of these tentative findings is to develop a range of strategies to prepare students
to deliberate vexed issues in increasingly diverse and complex contexts. When Zarefsky urged communication scholars to empower others with the deliberative skills necessary to contribute to a public discourse that achieved *phronesis*, he implied that the pagan art of deliberating well remained a model for citizen-deliberators today. Several circumstances of the public forum with respect to audiences' social and political expectations have suggested that Aristotelian and Ciceronian forms have already adapted, evident even among a group of voices eager to revive them. Character and experience have become more complex and more rhetorically sensitive, calling for more competence in listening and understanding prior to action. Zarefsky is right to say that communication scholars have much to offer students, but it is not at all clear that the intellectual virtues we have traditionally stressed in argumentation models equips students to take their place as deliberators in a complex, diverse, and interrelated world. In addition to those persuasive strategies we have preserved from the *Rhetoric, De Inventione,* and *De Oratore,* among others, today's students have an equal, if not greater, need to develop the capacity to confront their cherished beliefs as well as those of others with a critical eye and a caring disposition as a crucial precursor to their education into the fine points of argumentation.

It may be that as teachers we follow the ancients best by leaving some of their views behind. It is easy to imagine the ghost of Aristotle scowling at this suggestion but it is quite possible to envision Cicero smiling. Recalling his comments in *De Oratore* that good rhetoricians follow no one but themselves in responding to the needs of their audiences, we may follow Cicero best by leaving some of him behind in order to follow our students' needs. If contemporary students *qua* citizens require some divergence from classical prudence in order to take their place in postmodern cyberspace, then teachers of rhetoric may do well to take Cicero's advice to attend to the changed rhetorical demands of their audiences.
Suggestions for future research

This study has raised serious doubts about the advisability or possibility of an uncritical appropriation of classical models of prudence, a conclusion that led to several theoretical implications about a close relationship among rhetoric, ethics, and prudence in contemporary public moral discourse. I attempted to support this conclusion through a case study of conservative discourse on the belief that the case could stand on its own intellectual merits as a valuable contributor to an exploration of what public talk looked like when viewed from a framework of prudential reasoning. I noted that a fuller exploration of the form prudence might take in contemporary public reasoning would necessarily include an examination of a wide range of voices.

Other case studies might investigate the shape of liberal, radical, and feminist discourse to speculate on what it means to deliberate well today. An examination of the assumptions of these discourse communities, the affinities and departures from classical models expressed in their writings, would provide additional data for theoretical speculation on the prospects of a postmodern prudence. An alternative approach that might bear fruit is an examination of a paradigmatic case, explored from a range of intellectual standpoints, to capture crucial cultural beliefs and values that bear on the capacity to reason well. The case of pornography or "hate speech" are two that would offer an accessible and wide literature from many viewpoints expressing a stake in the outcome. Finally, future studies to synthesize diverse perspectives within a frame of prudential reasoning would serve practical and theoretical needs by refining our understanding of what it means to argue well collectively and by applying those refinements to practical issues in public life and in the classroom. Both play a role in the public business, that worthy endeavor called politics.
The growing literature on communitarian efforts includes a range of voices across the political spectrum. A recent journal, founded and edited by the sociologist, Amatai Etzioni, highlights the power of a perceived erosion in the public's sense of community to draw disparate views under the rubric of "The Responsive Community," the journal's title. A recurring problem the journal addresses is how to fashion a language that speaks to issues of community in ways that do no alienate liberals or conservatives. Needless to say, this editorial question remains open.

I am aware of the large literature on the narrative turn from Rorty in philosophy to Walter Fisher's work on the narrative paradigm in communication studies. I am merely suggesting that the theoretical issues are far from settled, as philosophers' response to Rorty and the exchange between Fisher and Barbara Warnick on the fidelity and coherence criteria reveal.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


---. "Skepticism, Meliorism, and The Public Interest." *Public Interest* Fall 1985: 31-41.

---. "'When Virtue Loses All Her Loveliness'--Some Reflections on Capitalism and 'the Free Society'." *Public Interest* Fall 1970: 3-15.


---. "Raising Consciousness in the Classroom." *Proceedings, Second National Communication Ethics Conference, June, 1992, Gull Lake, MI.*


