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From Meaningful Work to Good Work: Reexamining the Moral Foundation of the Calling Orientation

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From Meaningful Work to Good Work:
Reexamining the Moral Foundation of the Calling Orientation

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Philosophy
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Abstract

The calling orientation to work represents the seed that has germinated into the exponentially growing ‘work as a calling’ literature. It was first articulated by Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton within Habits of the Heart in the 1980s. The following critical analysis of the ‘work as a calling’ literature, and of the moral foundation of the calling orientation more specifically, is intended for two particular audiences.

The first audience broadly includes an interdisciplinary group of scholars working within business ethics, management, organizational psychology, and vocational psychology, among other fields of study. Amidst these scholars’ exponentially increasing interest in the idea of ‘work as a calling,’ the anatomical structure of their research remains remarkably similar. Their notions of ‘work as a calling’ stress that work should provide individuals with a deep sense of personal fulfillment. In particular, they suggest that work should be a therapeutic source of individual meaning. To secure this meaning, they exhibit an apparent centeredness on the self and an emphasis on the unconstrained pursuit of personal preferences. In most
cases, scholars within the ‘work as a calling’ literature tend to proffer notions of ‘meaningful work’ that are divorced from moral considerations about ‘good work.’

While this broad group of scholars copiously references the calling orientation within their research on ‘work as a calling,’ a deep-seated misunderstanding pervades the literature to the extent that notions of ‘meaningful work’ have been divorced from notions of ‘good work.’ To this broader audience, I demonstrate herein that they do not realize how antithetical their scholarly literature on ‘work as a calling’ is to the moral foundation of Bellah et al.’s calling orientation. Namely, I argue that the construal of calling as an orientation to work would not exist within the literature if Bellah et al. had not first articulated the calling orientation as a buffer against the unregulated pursuit of personal preferences. Therefore, I claim that this broader group of scholars either needs to abandon the notion of ‘work as a calling’ or engage with the appropriate virtue framework that undergirds the calling orientation.

I suspect, however, that several of these scholars will be hesitant to take up the virtue framework that is inextricably linked to the calling orientation. For this reason, much of the work following chapter 2 is devoted to a narrower audience of MacIntyrean business ethicists. It is also dedicated to a few scholars from the broader ‘work as a calling’ group whom I trust will not wish to remain accidental contributors to the language of individualism that pervades the literature once I have unmasked it. Perhaps, in time, they will even become MacIntyrean business ethicists.
Indeed, the appropriate moral framework that undergirds the ‘work as a calling’ literature is actively being worked out by a narrower group of MacIntyrean business ethicists, all of whom represent my primary audience for the research herein. To the MacIntyrean community, I hope not only to provide a complete list of tendencies within the ‘work as a calling’ literature that must be resisted, but also a picture of all of the ways that Bellah et al.’s calling orientation is wholly bound up with MacIntyre’s moral philosophy – particularly his theory of the virtues and the common goods that the virtues sustain. Bellah et al.’s calling orientation rests upon a vision of ‘good work,’ and this vision of ‘good work’ hinges on a MacIntyrean account of the virtues that is directed toward the achievement of three distinct types of common goods: (a) the good and worthy ends of workplace practices, (b) the goods of an individual life, and (c) the goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society.

Furthermore, it will be shown to the MacIntyrean community that visions of ‘good work,’ which are sustained by the calling orientation, are accompanied by a nuanced vision of pluralistic collaboration that MacIntyre and Bellah et al. share. (I anticipate that this will be surprising to many readers who are familiar with the typical and misleading characterization of MacIntyre as a sectarian). Bellah et al. as well as MacIntyre’s vision of pluralism matters for research on the calling orientation because these figures demonstrate that individuals within the late modern workplace are informed by a plurality of religious and humanistic traditions, all of which account for
ultimate meaning and goodness in different ways that ought to be recognized.

Distinctive religious and humanistic visions of ultimate meaning indeed impact the perceived goodness of one’s calling. Hence, we must attend to the polysemic and multivocal nature of accounting for the goodness of any one particular calling (i.e., a Buddhist doctor within the Western medical tradition is likely to articulate the goodness of his calling differently than a Jewish doctor working within the Western medical tradition). Still, however, Bellah et al. and MacIntyre’s account entails a hopefulness in the possibility of pluralistic, (or, what I shall call *inter-traditional*) striving for the achievement of common goods that are practical enough to agree upon.
The idea that work can provide a deep source of meaning for individuals is very prevalent in Western culture. Usually, notions of ‘meaningful work’ are couched within a conversation about the ‘pursuit,’ ‘finding,’ or ‘crafting’ of one’s calling. The ‘work as a calling’ discourse now spans a variety of academic disciplines. Discussions about ‘work as a calling,’ now as much as ever, thrive beyond the walls of universities, too. Since the early 2000s, an uptick in the number of self-help authors, counselors, coaches, popular news sources, and large consulting firms’ engagement in the conversation has been reported.¹ Some scholars speak of an “apparent tipping point” of burgeoning interest in the topic around 2007.² Others have recently published a graph indicating that “usage frequency nearly doubled between 1998 and 2008.”³ According to the same graph, however, “the steepest rise [in ‘work as a calling’ literature] appears to be in just the past decade” from 2009 to 2019, with usage frequency quadrupling.⁴ Indeed, as one

² Ibid.: 428.
³ Bunderson & Thompson (2019: 422).
⁴ Ibid.
prominent figure within the discourse claims, “callings have stolen center stage in our imaginations as offering some sort of special gateway to fulfillment and meaning in work.”

Amidst the exponentially increasing interest in the ‘work as a calling’ literature, the anatomical structure of these conversations remains remarkably similar. Contemporary notions of ‘work as a calling’ stress that work should provide individuals with a deep sense of meaning and personal fulfillment. Such notions stress that work should be a therapeutic source of individual happiness. There is an apparent centeredness on the self and personal preferences that characterizes much of the emerging literature on ‘work as a calling’ in recent decades.

Perhaps surprising to some who are not familiar with the literature is the way that notions of contributing to the ‘common good’ even tend to be individualistically motivated. Such notions often place primacy on the therapeutic rewards that stem from doing good - especially the way that doing good makes one feel. Hence, what I shall argue throughout is that, in many cases, the notion of ‘work as a calling’ tends to be construed as meaningful, and notions of ‘meaningful work’ are often divorced from moral considerations about (a) the good and worthy ends of practices, (b) the goods of an individual life, and

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5 Wrzesniewski (2011: 45).
(c) the goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society. The link between meaningfulness and the achievement of these three distinct types of common goods seems to have mostly dropped out of the literature since Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton (henceforth referred to as Bellah et al.) first emphasized the connection in their seminal account of the calling orientation within *Habits of the Heart*.

As we shall go on to see, the ‘work as a calling’ literature since Bellah et al. tends to explore notions of calling and ‘meaningful work’ *apart from* essential considerations about our profound dependence on others as well as our shared needs as individuals and as a good society.

Indeed, much of the literature is fundamentally beholden to narrative visions that prescribe a hyper-autonomous search for happiness and self-discovery through one’s work. Today finding oneself is a popular hobby that concerns many individuals in Western society. Such a project tends to be carried out by way of a thoroughly interior process of self-examination, which involves attending to one’s preferences.

It is often thought that one’s identity is either *constructed* or *discovered* through this process of acquainting oneself with what one prefers. Frequently, this search for the

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6 One of the principal sources of influence in my own work has been the MacIntyrean business ethicist, Ron Beadle. I am particularly grateful for his illumination of these three strands of common goods within MacIntyre’s work during one of our exchanges in 2018.

7 Bellah et al. (1996: 66).
self culminates in the pursuit of subjectively ‘meaningful work,’ (i.e., work that satisfies one’s preferences). In this way, the emerging literature on calling stresses the affective dimension of the worker. Hence, issues of subjective fulfillment now tend to overshadow the more prosocial dimensions of what having a calling historically entailed in earlier, tradition-constituted, conceptualizations of ‘work as a calling.’

Moreover, this has not happened without consequences that would seem somewhat ironic considering the very thing that the late modern search for the self is supposed to bring - *happiness*. Namely, this literature upholds an individualistic conceptualization of meaningfulness that is, ultimately, self-defeating. The self-defeating nature of this individualistic search for fulfillment is perhaps best captured by the words of one of the 20th century’s most influential psychologists, Viktor Frankl. In the opening pages of *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Frankl beseeches readers to consider the following:

Don’t aim at success-the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side-effect of one’s dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one’s surrender to a person other than oneself.8

All of Frankl’s work wrestles with the “existential vacuum” that is inculcated by the navel-gazing individualism of 20th century Western culture.9 This vacuum is

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representative of the void, or the crisis of meaning, that ensues when individualistic concerns become tantamount to happiness.

While the ‘work as a calling’ discourse and late modernity more generally are characterized by the double concern for success and happiness, Frankl’s theorizing about a flourishing human life is intended to replace the individualistic pursuit of happiness with a pursuit of the good life together within our communities and within our society more broadly. Frankl’s work intended to reconnect personal meaning to good and worthy ends that are worth pursuing. This connection between meaningfulness and good ends, Frankl argues, is foundational to human flourishing.

Frankl’s maintains that the perception of one’s life as meaningful or successful ‘ensues’ as a result of aiming at other ends beyond the self’s unregulated preferences. His account of logotherapy further argues that striving together with others for the achievement of good and worthy ends changes our desires as well as our very understanding of what it means to lead a successful and happy life. As we aim at good and worthy ends, understood together within our communities, notions of personal meaning become attached to our self-transcendent visions of the good, he argues. Frankl’s account of important goods worth pursuing and the flourishing human life is much closer to the

10 Ibid.
original account of the calling orientation provided by Bellah et al. than much of the ‘work as a calling’ discourse is today.

Specifically, Frankl’s research represents a stark contrast to narratives about the successful and happy life that is proffered by the emerging literature on ‘work as a calling.’ The emerging literature rests on a culturally dominant language of individualism and emphasizes the achievement of one’s preferences. This modern form of navel-gazing, as Frankl says, often causes people to feel like they have “missed” the happy and successful life that they so desperately yearn to find.\textsuperscript{11} What Frankl argues, and what will be argued herein, is that individuals’ notions of meaningfulness should not have become detached from good and worthy ends. Frankl seems to think that the divorce of meaning from notions of good and worthy ends, such as ‘good work,’ the life worth living, and the needs of a community, has resulted in the anxious culture of meaninglessness that impacts individuals young and old throughout the West today.

What if Frankl is right? While the late modern search for a personally satisfying life heavily emphasizes individualistic visions of success and happiness, could it be the case that many modern people prevent themselves from experiencing the fulfillment that they hope for by focusing so much on themselves? More specifically, could an individualistic construal of one’s calling be self-defeating?

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.: xiv-xv.
Interestingly, Andreas Hirschi offers some empirical validation that should cause us to take Frankl’s suggestion more seriously. His findings from a sampling of young professionals illuminated that those study participants who devoted themselves to a sense of ‘work as a calling’ primarily for their self-enhancement were, on the whole, much more likely to experience “negative views about themselves” than those who exhibited prosocial values in their pursuit of ‘work as a calling.’\(^\text{12}\) Hirschi’s words about the self-enhancement group capture a discovery that is similar to Frankl’s: “Apparently this calling group consists of *self-centered* and *insecure* students whose primary goals in work are gaining personal benefits. This indeed constitutes a peculiar type of calling.”\(^\text{13}\) Hirschi confirms that individualistically oriented conceptualizations of one’s calling are self-defeating by nature and that they constitute a ‘peculiar’ notion of ‘work as a calling.’

Without knowing it, Hirschi is actually suggesting the very point that Bellah et al. make within their seminal research on the calling orientation to work. We shall see later, that Bellah et al.’s notion of ‘work as a calling’ is an explicit refutation of this very strand of individualistic thinking, particularly in American life. However, such focus on the self and its preferences, as I shall show throughout this book, is far from peculiar within the emerging literature. In fact, the anatomy of the contemporary ‘work as a

\(^{12}\) Hirschi (2011: 70).

\(^{13}\) Ibid.: 71.
calling’ literature indicates that self-centered notions of ‘work as a calling’ tend to be the norm rather than the exception.

Later chapters will detail the language of individualism that the emerging literature on ‘work as a calling’ rests upon. At the same time, later chapters will also reintroduce a philosophical framework that seeks to explain the way that flourishing in one’s life, and in one’s calling, requires a pursuit of the good life and visions of ‘good work’ that unfold together in communities and living traditions. *Flourishing is not a project that we can undertake by ourselves.* Flourishing, as we shall see, requires resources that autonomous moral agents cannot achieve by way of an individualistic self-reflection about meaningfulness.

That being said, the accounts of calling and ‘meaningful work’ that we will examine are each fundamentally beholden one’s individual preferences. Such accounts tend to emphasize an individualistic process of self-reflection that is often detached from visions of good and worthy ends shared together within communities. Instead, one’s calling is often described in light of its therapeutic benefits, rather than its prosocial value. Even the individual’s ties and commitments within the workplace tend to be understood “as enhancements of the sense of individual well-being.”

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14 Bellah et al. (1996: 47).
One gets the sense that some scholars attempt to grasp for moral ends that transcend the self, but their efforts to reach beyond the self often collapse insofar as they tend to rely on notions of personal preference to support their claims. Most often, scholars within the emerging literature on calling recount how a calling allows workers to get what they want out of their working lives. To the extent that the calling literature remains beholden to this language of individualism, the discourse is self-defeating, and good and worthy ends hardly seem to be pursued as ends in themselves. We shall see in later chapters that this language of individualism ultimately must be replaced by other linguistic resources in American life that provide richer visions of the flourishing life as a life together and in support of common goods.

First, however, let us turn to the emerging literature on ‘work as a calling’ to examine how leading thinkers within the discourse exhibit this language of individualism within their research.
Chapter One:

The Anatomy of the ‘Work as a Calling’ Literature

In the introduction, it was argued that the anatomy of the ‘work as a calling’ literature is remarkably similar insofar as it exhibits a general language of individualism that roots the meaningfulness of one’s calling in one’s preferences, or in what one wants to get out of one’s work. This claim is far too important to go unsupported. To get a sense of the individualistically oriented nature of the emerging ‘work as a calling’ literature, we will examine a sampling of the literature that comes from several of the most heavily cited scholars across the academic disciplines of business ethics, management, organizational psychology, and vocational psychology. Many of these leading voices within the ‘work as a calling’ literature exhibit an analysis of calling that specifically emphasizes the therapeutic effectiveness of having a calling - namely, that it makes work subjectively pleasing, or preferable.
I. Key Thinkers Within the ‘Work as a Calling’ Literature

While the scholarly examples referenced herein range in academic expertise, they are all engaged in the same interdisciplinary conversation that attempts to extend Bellah et al.’s research. To the extent that they construe an account of ‘work as a calling’ that has the appearance of being rather individualistic, and which roots the meaningfulness of one’s work in one’s preferences, however, they do so problematically.

It is important to remain as fair and balanced in this analysis as possible. That being said, it needs to be noted that some of the scholars whom we shall analyze do indeed problematize the individualistically oriented nature of the emerging literature on ‘work as a calling.’ However, they tend to do so on shaky ground, and all too often they do so while employing language that is beholden to modern strands of individualism, as we shall see.

That being said, the scholars who do attempt to go beyond this language of individualism to speak of deeper dimensions of meaning that are associated with one’s work tend to do so by making reference to the way that one’s calling supports the ‘common good.’ Where references to supporting the ‘common good’ may be found, however, these scholars often construe that support as a means to the achievement of personally therapeutic benefits. It is sometimes implied and very often plainly stated that a worker’s contribution to the ‘common good’ is important because of the way that it makes one feel, for example. In many respects, much of this discourse tends to exhibit
a quasi-therapeutic form of individualism, meaning that the resources for gauging one’s sense of calling “are largely internal to the individual and the measure of effectiveness is the elusive criterion of personal satisfaction.”\textsuperscript{15} Let us see how this language of individualism appears within each of the following scholars’ research.

\textbf{Ia. Amy Wrzesniewski}

Undoubtedly, the most influential scholar within the contemporary discourse on callings is Amy Wrzesniewski, professor in the School of Management at Yale University. Wrzesniewski’s research on ‘work as a calling’ influences business ethicists, management and organizational scholars, as well as vocational psychologists. Wrzesniewski has also been featured in recent documentaries and popular news sources for her research. Many scholars turn to Wrzesniewski to frame their own accounts of ‘work as a calling’ and ‘meaningful work.’ Her influence cannot be overstated, and her work plays a crucial role in understanding the individualistically oriented nature of the contemporary ‘work as a calling’ literature.

Wrzesniewski’s most influential research is also her earliest work on the subject. In 1997, she led and published a group research project under the title, “Jobs, Careers, and Callings: People’s Relations to Their Work.”\textsuperscript{16} Scholars within the discourse

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{16} Wrzesniewski et al. (1997).
\end{flushleft}
consider this academic work a “seminal article in the calling literature.”17 Within this piece, Wrzesniewski et al.

present evidence suggesting that most people see their work as either a Job (focus on financial rewards and necessity rather than pleasure or fulfillment; not a major positive part of life), a Career (focus on advancement), or a Calling (focus on enjoyment of fulfilling, socially useful work).18

Some scholars mistakenly attribute these work orientations to Wrzesniewski and her colleagues, but she and her coauthors of the 1997 article admit the following: “The inspiration for our approach came from Habits of the Heart.”19 This is a significant fact to keep in mind because Wrzesniewski is attributing her construal of ‘work as a calling’ within her widely-read article to Bellah et al., who wrote Habits of the Heart in 1985.20 The implications of this claim are striking. However, they can only be explained after undergoing the present analysis of individualistic trends within the emerging literature on the subject. Then we shall return to the significance of Bellah et al.’s work.

Key to understanding Wrzesniewski’s account of calling as an orientation to work is understanding what sets it apart from the job and career orientations. Let us look at the job orientation next, and then the career orientation. The way that Wrzesniewski et al. explain what a job is not points to what a calling is for them. A job

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17 Bunderson & Thompson (2019: 423).

18 Wrzesniewski et al. (1997: 21).

19 Ibid.: 22.

20 Bellah et al. (1996).
does not offer “pleasure of fulfillment” and it is “not a major positive part of life.”\textsuperscript{21} A calling is also set apart from a career. While one may experience a sense of pleasure from successfully ‘climbing the ranks’ within the workplace, as is the case with the career orientation to work, this pleasure is not to be confused with the more therapeutically rewarding sense of deep fulfillment that Wrzesniewski et al. associate with having a calling. Individuals with a career orientation still often see work as “a waste of time,” but they know that they must do “sufficiently well…in order to move on.”\textsuperscript{22} Individuals with a calling do not tend to think of work as a waste of time nor do they hope to move beyond what they are presently doing for work. Instead, they view their activities within the workplace as a primary source of personal meaning and self-discovery. Individuals who view their ‘work as a calling’ tend to identify who they are by what they like to do in the workplace.

Within this early and important research, Wrzesniewski et al. provide a paragraph description of the calling orientation to work, which they intend for their survey participants to identify with should those same participants ascribe to a sense of calling themselves. Wrzesniewski et al.’s description epitomizes the way that the calling orientation, as it is articulated within their empirical research, is beholden to the modern project of finding oneself by attending to what one finds personally fulfilling:

\textsuperscript{21} Wrzesniewski et al. (1997: 22).

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.: 24
Mr. C’s work is one of the most important parts of his life. He is very pleased that he is in this line of work. Because what he does for a living is a vital part of who he is, it is one of the first things he tells people about himself. He tends to take his work home with him and on vacations, too. The majority of his friends are from his place of employment, and he belongs to several organizations and clubs relating to his work. Mr. C feels good about his work because he loves it, and because he thinks it makes the world a better place. He would encourage his friends and children to enter his line of work. Mr. C would be pretty upset if he were forced to stop working, and he is not particularly looking forward to retirement.\(^\text{23}\)

The resources for understanding what makes work a calling for Mr. C all hinge on the way that his work makes him feel. This notion is wholly centered upon the affective dimensions of the self that a therapist would likely attend to. Wrzesniewski et al.’s hypothetical character expresses a connection to his work that is best described as therapeutically rewarding. By participating in his calling, Mr. C builds meaning into his life and he experiences vitality from having found work that specifically suits his personal interests. Mr. C’s calling enhances his well-being because he loves what he does, and he feels good about how his work impacts the world. Speaking of the world, one gets the sense that Mr. C is rather overconfident about the number of people that his work impacts in a way that is borderline narcissistic. His romantic self-reflection leads one to believe that Mr. C is the hero of his own story. Believing that he effects global change through his work makes Mr. C feel good about himself. Moreover, Mr. C

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\(^{23}\) Ibid.: 24.
seems to need this work to continue feeling as good about himself as he currently does, which is why he is not particularly ready for retirement.

It seems rather clear, then, that the notion of calling proffered by Wrzesniewski and her colleagues speaks first of the self-enhancement of individual workers, or the self-serving nature of having a calling orientation to work. This, in turn, tends to carry some prosocial value. But even that prosocial value is recounted by Mr. C based on the way that it makes him feel. This is characteristic of Wrzesniewski’s notions about making a prosocial contribution in her research more broadly. Very often, the prosocial value that workers add through their callings tend to be one more way that they feel good about themselves. Might it be the case, however, that all of this emphasis on workers’ affective state could eventually deter them from civic engagement or even from caring much about the prosocial value of their work? It seems like the motivation to care for others is in the interest of making oneself feel better very often, and this seems like shaky ground upon which to found an expansion of prosocial concerns. To the extent that this 1997 article is considered ‘seminal’ within the contemporary literature on ‘work as a calling,’ this results in a deeply problematic misunderstanding that pervades the discourse, as we shall see.

Ironically, one of the most striking dimensions of Wrzesniewski’s later research is her own acknowledgement of the way that an emphasis on the language of self-enhancement tends to cloud out organizational members’ focus on civic engagement.
For example, in a 2014 book chapter, “In search of the self at work: Young adults’ experiences of a dual identity organization,” she notes that “in the past few decades, concerns about declining civic engagement have steadily risen around the globe.”

Speaking to youth service programs that spur participants to identify with the goals of (a) “helping others” and (b) “helping oneself,” Wrzesniewski and another colleague empirically demonstrate that “participants focus on one of the organization’s identities largely to the exclusion of the other.” Furthermore, they argue that “blending” these “distinct goals into a ‘unified’ identity might carry a risk of dampening members’ relation to that identity and, in turn, fail to positively influence their future [prosocial] behavior and career choices.” In other words, Wrzesniewski demonstrates that participants who identify more with the individualistically oriented goals of self-enhancement tend to identify less with prosocial values. Interestingly, such participants even seem to engage less with their fellow organizational participants who more highly prioritize prosocial values. The implications of this insight create problems for Wrzesniewski, especially considering her earlier description of Mr. C’s calling, which

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25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.: 43.
27 Ibid.
she and her colleagues defined by a near-total reliance on the language of self-enhancement.

Wrzesniewski’s more recent research on ‘work as a calling’ similarly prioritizes the ways that having a calling helps the worker. Much of her research on the self-enhancement of workers now grapples with the idea of job crafting, or altering “work meaning and work identity,” so that one’s work becomes more aligned with the calling orientation.28 We must only consider the basic motivations that Wrzesniewski presents for crafting a job into a calling to understand that much of her work on the subject remains individualistically oriented:

The motivation for job crafting arises from three individual needs. First, employees engage in job crafting to assert some control over their jobs in order to avoid alienation from the work. Second, employees are motivated to create a positive self-image in their work. Third, job crafting allows employees to fulfill a basic human need for connection to others.29

Here, Wrzesniewski plainly states that job crafting arises from the needs of the worker. She is not wrong about this. As I shall suggest in the following chapters, however, she and others who employ her job crafting model are too quick to assume that individuals possess requisite knowledge to meet their needs in the autonomous way that her job crafting model prescribes. Her model emphasizes liberal-individualistic notions pertaining to the freedom and agency of workers. It speaks of the possibility of greater


29 Ibid.: 181.
self-understanding and self-fulfillment which comes through an expression of workers’
skills and talents via their work. But important questions naturally arise. Here are just a
few: (a) ‘How can one become skilled without some form of apprenticeship?’ (b) ‘What
type of manager is involved in the process of an employee’s self-understanding?’ (c)
‘What kind of workplace practices are conducive to the benefits that job crafting
promises?’ (d) ‘What does a fulfillment of the basic need for human connection look
like? In other words, are there healthy versus unhealthy forms of connection that we
need to get clearer on?’ Wrzesniewski’s ideas about job crafting and her loose notion of
community appear to be devoid of many important qualifications. Hence, the notion of
job crafting is interesting, but without much further qualification, it is misleading.
Crafting work into a calling, in the cases that it may be possible, is a thoroughly
interdependent process, requiring the cultivation of certain virtues of character and also
requiring workers to look to a very specific kind of social community for support, as we
shall see in the coming chapters.

Wrzesniewski’s understanding of the calling orientation to work largely shirks
the theological picture of calling, which is defined as a “moral responsibility or duty to
serving a higher power or greater good.”30 By her own criteria, Wrzesniewski’s example
of Mr. C’s calling and her motivations for crafting work into a calling exhibit what she

30 Wrzesniewski, Dekas, & Rosso (2009: 3).
refers to as “secular treatments of calling.” She characterizes such treatments as being “more oriented around self-exploration and fulfillment.”

At the same time, however, Wrzesniewski also suggests that the field needs to eventually converge on an understanding of whether callings are a loose amalgamation of different experiences of work, or whether they have particular hallmarks that define them – for example, a sense of the work as being a critically important end in itself for the individual, as well as a belief that the work contributes to the greater good in a meaningful way.

Wrzesniewski still needs to sort out the tension between her own individualistically oriented examples of ‘work as a calling’ and her more recent belief that there are problems associated with “the increasingly individualistic” nature of the secular calling discourse that she advances.

While Wrzesniewski explains that the discourse she contributes to still understands “callings both as a source of intrinsic fulfillment and a way of making a contribution to the wider world,” her organization of this statement tends to parallel her commitment to these, self-admittedly, competing goals. Contribution to the wider world feels like an afterthought, or at least a second-order priority, in much of

\[\text{\^{31} Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\^{32} Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\^{33} Ibid.: 21.}\]
\[\text{\^{34} Ibid.: 2.}\]
\[\text{\^{35} Wrzesniewski (2011: 48).}\]
Wrzesniewski’s work. Nowhere in Wrzesniewski’s work does one get the sense that all individuals are after some common goal in their shared work, or in pursuit of the same journey toward seeking out and attempting to lead a good life. Finding one’s calling is about finding what one wants in one’s work, she seems to express. Moreover, one of the primary motivations for contributing to the wider world, as we have seen, is the way that prosocial contributions make the worker feel. Wrzesniewski’s recognition of the competing nature of the goals of (a) “helping others” and (b) “helping oneself” in other areas of her research is perhaps why she claims that “the connection between internally-directed fulfillment and work done in service of others is still unclear in the literature on callings.” Unfortunately, because Wrzesniewski’s examples of the calling orientation and her concomitant job crafting model tend to be individualistically oriented, she is unable to provide further clarity on this connection between the personal meaning of one’s calling and whether or not it is connected in some way to a vision of what she refers to as the ‘greater good’ (qua the ‘common good’).

Ib. Shoshana Dobrow Riza

Another very influential scholar within the ‘work as a calling’ and ‘meaningful work’ discourse is Shoshana Dobrow Riza, assistant professor of management at The London School of Economics and Political Science. Dobrow’s doctoral dissertation, which she wrote at Harvard University to obtain her PhD in Organizational Behavior, identified seven key elements of the calling orientation and applied them to a longitudinal study of musicians. Since her doctoral defense, Dobrow’s research remains focused on ‘meaningful work’ as well as the benefits and harms associated with having a sense of calling to work. Dobrow holds a master’s degree in Social Psychology, but she tends to exhibit a deeply subjective and quasi-therapeutic analysis of individuals with a calling. Her research is primarily concerned with the feelings and behaviors of people in the workplace. Dobrow’s analysis builds off Wreniewski’s, but it is even more oriented around the subjective preferences of workers. By her own admission, Dobrow’s research considers the calling concept as a purely “subjective orientation.”

Dobrow’s notion of ‘work as a calling’ functions as an umbrella under which seven elements that characterize the calling orientation are housed. Her research on the concept is limited by its subjective psychological analysis. A glance at these seven

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37 Dobrow (2006).

38 Dobrow (2004: 6).
elements demonstrates that her conceptualization of the calling orientation is wholly contingent upon the affective dimension of workers. First, Dobrow speaks of passion as it relates to one’s calling. By this, she means something like “deep enjoyment and absorption in a specific task.” Second, she speaks of identity, noting that one’s calling is often “the first thing people think about when they describe themselves to others.” Third, Dobrow points to the element of urgency, arguing that individuals with a calling have an emotional “need” to work or “a sense of destiny about engaging in a particular type of work.” Fourth, she considers “longevity,” suggesting that workers often immerse themselves in a calling for life. This fourth dimension epitomizes the romantic idea that there is a calling out there waiting for each person to find. Upon finding it, she almost seems to imply that some will live ‘happily ever after.’

The final three components of her account of ‘work as a calling’ are, by far, the most individualistically oriented and each deserve their own paragraph. Within Dobrow’s account of her fifth component, she notes that a calling tends to “engulf one’s consciousness,” making one’s work “continuously present,” or always held in mind.
Dobrow’s sixth element of ‘work as a calling’ is meaning. While she grants that there may be objective ways to explore this psychological component, she also makes it plainly clear that her own analysis of meaning does not seek to define the term using “any specific, externally prescribed types of meaningfulness, such as serving the community or achieving particular moral goals.”\(^{44}\) Rather, as Dobrow states, “my view of having a calling allows for a subjective, self-relevant view of meaning. As long as individuals perceive their activities to be meaningful or gratifying, then this work is meaningful for the purposes of my integrated calling construct.”\(^{45}\) Dobrow’s notion of perceptive gratification within her functional definition of meaning illuminates the individualistically oriented nature of her typology of ‘work as a calling.’ Meaning is always understood in light of workers’ preferences, and without reference to the needs of others in the community. Meaning simply refers to what workers perceive to be personally relevant or important. In this sense, her account of meaning is not informed by notions of moral goodness or the virtues, which earlier moral traditions thoroughly associate with leading the good life.

The seventh and final element that Dobrow includes as a part of her typology is self-esteem. By self-esteem, she refers to “people’s subjective perceptions about their

\(^{44}\) Ibid.

\(^{45}\) Ibid.
abilities.” Per this definition, her notion of self-esteem is as individualistically oriented as her notion of meaning. Dobrow does not speak of how workers’ self-esteem grows in reference to meeting objective standards of excellence in the performance of their craft. Instead self-esteem simply springs from how workers internalize their abilities.

These seven elements of her typology of ‘work as a calling’ are important contributions to the discourse. But without reference to any resources that transcend the subjective preferences of the worker, the analysis that she deploys to understand these elements is inherently limited by its extreme subjectivity. Each time Dobrow sees a path for transcending subjectivity in a discussion of her core elements of ‘work as a calling,’ she seems to deliberately avoid it.

Since Dobrow limits her notion of ‘work as a calling’ to these subjective elements, her research on the positive and negative effects of having a calling is also individualistically oriented. Like a good therapist, Dobrow concerns herself with ways that the individual personally benefits from having a calling. Having a calling, as she understands the term, should lead to physical and psychological wellness in life.47

In what may be considered a typical romanticist feature, however, Dobrow also speaks of the struggles associated with having a calling.48 The intensity of the feelings

46 Ibid.
47 Dobrow (2006).
48 Dobrow (2012).
associated with one’s calling can sometimes carry negative consequences for the worker. She argues that “the relationship between having a calling and subjective well-being may not be completely straightforward.” For example, Dobrow believes that having a strong sense of calling may create an unwarranted sense of grandiosity in one’s craft.

Let us presume for a moment that Dobrow’s survey participants possess a similarly subjectivist understanding of ‘work as a calling.’ Perhaps they were even influenced by Dobrow’s own subjective analysis of the concept. It is no surprise, then, that one of the perils of this romanticist understanding of ‘work as a calling’ is a worker’s false sense of excellence in his or her craft. For a calling to shape the excellence of practitioners in any objective way, workers must understand the need to grapple with objective standards pertaining to their craft – ones that transcend their subjective feelings about their abilities. The musician must attend to standards of harmony and rhythm that the band shares, for example. But what resources does Dobrow provide for workers to conduct an objective analysis? Given the purely subjectivist elements that she includes within her typology of calling, she provides no such resources.

In her more recent work, Dobrow attempts to “establish a definition of calling that attempts to reconcile differing perspectives in the literature concerning what does

49 Dobrow (2004: 5).

50 Dobrow & Heller (2012).
and does not constitute a calling.”

These differences largely pertain to questions about what a calling fundamentally is. “Calling can be an orientation toward work, the work itself, a place in the occupational division of labor, or an external pull to pursue a particular career path,” Dobrow says. Most recently, she understands calling as “a consuming, meaningful passion people experience toward a domain.”

She also presents a related “scale that advances research on calling and, more broadly, on the meaning of work by providing a reliable, valid, and flexible tool for use in empirical research.”

But the individualistically oriented character of her research hampers her definition and her attempt to create a universal scale measure.

If Dobrow hopes to provide a definition and a scale for measuring ‘work as a calling,’ - one that could be applied across the seemingly incompatible definitions across the discourse - then she cannot construe her notion of ‘work as a calling’ in purely subjectivist terms. In so doing, she omits other features, like a contribution to the ‘common good,’ which Wrzesniewski and other scholars at the very least identify as an important component of their definition of the calling orientation to work. But Dobrow’s latest research continues to emphasize the subjective feelings of the worker,

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51 Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas (2011: 1002).

52 Ibid.: 1004.

53 Ibid.: 1001.

54 Ibid.: 1002.
which has always been characteristic of her analysis of ‘work as a calling.’ This later research further illustrates her quasi-therapeutic analysis of the concept. For Dobrow, having a calling frees the worker from a more mundane way of living. One’s calling, if certain pitfalls are avoided, becomes a primary source of vitality and optimism in one’s life.

Without a doubt, the most ironic feature of Dobrow’s research has to do with her criticism of the subjectivity of the contemporary ‘work as a calling’ and ‘meaningful work’ discourse. In the earliest presentation of her seven elements of calling, Dobrow expresses the conviction that “work preferences conceptually capture only one portion of having a calling: the internal, personal satisfaction and interest components.”\(^{55}\) Within this paper, “Extreme Subjective Career Success: A new integrated view of having a calling,” Dobrow both problematizes the ‘work as a calling’ discourse because of its individualistically oriented nature and sketches her seven major elements of the calling orientation to work in a way that can only be described as extremely subjectivist and totally rooted in one’s preferences.\(^{56}\) Consequently, Dobrow raises important questions about non-subjective features of ‘work as a calling,’ but her research to date possesses no such resources for answering these questions.

\(^{55}\) Dobrow (2004: 2).

\(^{56}\) Ibid.
The individualistically oriented themes of Wrzesniewski and Dobrow are important to keep in mind as we examine the published research of two prominent vocational psychologists in the ‘work as a calling’ discourse, Bryan J. Dik and Ryan D. Duffy. Dik is an associate professor of psychology at Colorado State University, and Duffy is an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Florida. Most of their research on ‘work as a calling’ is published jointly and they are widely cited in the interdisciplinary discourse on the subject. Together, Dik and Duffy raise important questions regarding the need for a more comprehensive “investigation” of ‘work as a calling.’

In addition to their reliance on Wrzesniewski and Dobrow, their research builds on an earlier pioneer in the field of vocational psychology, Roy Baumeister, who believes that recent notions of ‘work as a calling’ exhibit “a somewhat degraded form of the concept.” Similarly, Dik and Duffy maintain that more recent definitions of ‘work as a calling’ tend to be rather “vague and confounded.” Following Baumeister, Dik and Duffy point to important disparities between Neoclassical notions of the calling concept that “originate from an external source and emphasize a social duty,” and Modern notions of the concept, or ones that “arise from within and emphasize individual

57 Dik & Duffy (2012: 229).

58 Dik & Duffy (2009, 427).
happiness.” Their work represents an attempt to salvage some personally useful and broad notion of the calling orientation to work in the wake of these two seemingly conflicting categories. In so doing, they argue that the notion ought to possess both a prosocial and a personally meaningful dimension.

In their widely read book, *Make Your Job a Calling*, Dik and Duffy articulate a few key components of the calling orientation to work. They rather proudly believe these components resemble characteristics of the earliest conceptualization of calling as a work orientation by Bellah et al. in the 1980s. Their work generally points to the calling orientation as a psychological construct for measuring the ways that individuals “can be (a) searching for a calling, (b) perceiving a calling, and (c) living out a calling.” They formally define calling as “a transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation.” Within this definition, Dik and Duffy identify (a) a transcendent summons to work, (b) a sense of personal meaning or fulfillment that

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60 Dik & Duffy (2009, 426).
63 Dik & Duffy (2012: 11).
arises from one’s work, and (c) prosocial work goals, or a contribution to the ‘common good’ through one’s work. Throughout their research on calling, they try to connect the meaningfulness that individuals perceive in their work to the prosocial contributions that their work is making.

Based on their definition, one may wonder, then, why Dik and Duffy are included in this review of the contemporary ‘work as a calling’ literature, which so often understands the meaningful and fulfilling nature of the calling orientation in light of individuals’ preferences. One gets the sense that Dik and Duffy prefer the neoclassical formulation of ‘work as a calling’ to the modern one based on the components that they associate with their definition. Certainly, Dik and Duffy point to the significance of the prosocial component more so than many scholars within the ‘work as a calling’ discourse. Moreover, their definition explicitly states that external sources, like God or a call from society, are important for understanding a worker’s calling. 64 They even make rather idiosyncratic attempts to distinguish calling from vocation by arguing that “only individuals with callings perceive the impetus to approach work in this [prosocial] manner as originating from a source external to the self.” 65 So, they separate the two terms and argue that the concept of calling is even more prosocial than the concept of vocation! On the face of it, their understanding of the

64 Ibid.: 11-12.
calling orientation to work appears to transcend personal preferences and self-fulfillment, relying on something other than subjective resources for understanding what ‘work as a calling’ entails. They point to both (a) dimensions of meaning that transcend the self (i.e. a transcendent summons) and to (c) prosocial concerns. Ultimately, however, Dik and Duffy’s motivation to extend the “personal application” of the calling orientation causes them to accept both neoclassical and modern construals as legitimate within the ‘work as a calling’ discourse. This, as we shall see, ends up making much of their practical advice about searching for, perceiving, and living out a calling beholden to modern notions of personal preferences and happiness, which tends to dilute notions of (a) transcendent meaning and (c) prosocial concerns within their research.

Dik and Duffy sense the need to broaden the notion of ‘work as a calling’ beyond the Christian tradition so that it is applicable “across a wide range of religious and nonreligious perspectives.”66 Their pluralism is admirable, however the wide range of perspectives that they choose to include winds up being self-defeating, especially when they include individualistically oriented notions of self-fulfillment and happiness within their research. Where Dik and Duffy identify modern notions of ‘work as a calling’ that conflict with their own definition, they are still generally supportive of

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these notions. They tend to support workers’ identification with the calling orientation even when components (a) and (c) of their definition of calling are either lacking or very loosely applicable. Ultimately, Dik and Duffy include such a broad range of perspectives that their articulation of the calling orientation often falls prey to understanding one’s calling by therapeutically resolving to satisfy one’s preferences through the discovery of personally ‘meaningful work.’ We shall look at the self-defeating nature of their broadly inclusive approach by examining how their attempts to expand the ‘work as a calling’ discourse wind up making each of their three components susceptible to more individualistically oriented resources for identifying, or ‘making,’ one’s work a calling.

The first component of their definition, (a) a transcendent summons to work, “represents the extent to which the individual perceives his or her motivation within a particular life role to come from an external source.”67 This definition sounds much like the way Martin Luther or John Calvin described one’s ‘station’ in life when they spoke of one’s calling in their theology. But Dik and Duffy wonder “whether a single culture or religious tradition (i.e. Christianity) can have an exclusive claim on a concept like calling” and they refer to Islamic as well as Buddhist spiritual leaders to indicate their approval that the “concept of calling could be sufficiently broad.”68 Without question,

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the component of calling requiring the most broadening if the term is to be understood apart from Christian theology is the notion of a transcendent summons. For this reason, their notion of a transcendent summons “intentionally leaves open the content of the perceived source or sources of callings, which may range from God to the needs of society to serendipitous fate.”69 But their attempt to leave open the content of a transcendent summons becomes self-defeating because they allow content that does not transcend an individual’s preferences to count here.

An example that points to the self-defeating nature of their widening of the content for (a) would be helpful. So, we may consider how their notion of serendipity epitomizes both the transcendentalist and the therapist’s protest against external commitments. To the extent that the very notion of serendipity is beholden to such characters, it is also thoroughly individualistic. Figures of the transcendentalist movement placed an emphasis on “nonconformity” and on being yourself “in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else.”70 The words of Emerson and Thoreau reverberate far and beyond the minds of individuals who formally consider themselves a part the movement, too. Today, the following words from Emerson are affirmed by popular Western culture perhaps more confidently than ever before: “the


70 Emerson (200: 132-153).
only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be.”\textsuperscript{71} This is strikingly similar to the culture of therapy today, which tends to tell the individual that it does not matter what others think of you, but only what you think of yourself. There is a sturdy sense of self-reliance amongst these romanticists, and this influences their notion of serendipity. *Serendipity, then, becomes a kind of stumbling into something that already resonates with what one prefers.* More often than not, it only causes individuals to turn back inward and explore more deeply their ‘core’ preferences. In other words, a serendipitous encounter tends to be characterized by a kind of self-reflexivity which causes individuals to search more deeply within themselves than they were already searching before. It encapsulates the language of desire in a silk blanket of introspection and imagination, making individuals feel as if the universe approves of the way that they see themselves. Serendipity should not count as a source of transcendence for Dik and Duffy because of its inherent self-reflexivity. Dik and Duffy need to draw a harder line between transcendent and non-transcendent sources of summons to actually avoid the individualistically oriented notions of ‘work as a calling’ - especially since they tend to caution their readers against such notions.

The second component of Dik and Duffy’s definition of the calling orientation to work - (b) a sense of personal meaning or fulfillment that arises from one’s work -

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
seems like the most essential of the three components. It is the only one that persists across their examples of ‘work as a calling.’ Importantly, their resources for understanding personal meaning tend to support an individualistically oriented process of examining one’s preferences. For example, within Make Your Job a Calling, Dik and Duffy recommend the following to “increase the odds of experiencing your work as meaningful:”

- Autonomy—that is, the freedom to try out your own ideas
- A chance to use your skills—not just one, but a variety of them
- A sense of how your work contributes to a tangible product or service you can identify
- A sense of how that tangible product or service matters to society
- Coworkers who enjoy and value their work, and with whom you get along well
- A [transformational] leader who can communicate a clear vision that you value, who lives out that vision in his or her own life, who expresses genuine concern about you, who encourages you to take risks and solve problems creatively, who gives you confidence, and who broadens your goals and aspirations
- An organizational mission that aligns well with your values and broader sense of purpose

While many of these recommendations might be supported by less individualistically oriented traditions - ones that are at odds with the culture of therapy (i.e., virtue ethics) - a common theme that persists across these recommendations would have to change for Dik and Duffy’s account of the calling orientation to align with less individualistic

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72 This is one of Wrzesniewski’s components of job crafting. In other places, Dik and Duffy also consider other features of Wrzesniewski’s job crafting model. In so doing, they face the same consequences as Wrzesniewski’s analysis of job crafting does.

73 Dik & Duffy (2012: 74).
moral traditions. The point of reference for what is personally meaningful across these recommendations is the workers’ ‘senses’ and ‘values’ as they are found to already exist within themselves. There is an underlying assumption that the worker’s preferences do not need to be regulated by some notion of goodness which habituates unregulated preferences. Instead, what one prefers is taken as what is good for the individual. Consequently, any virtue ethicist would be forced to reject these recommendations without further qualification. In fact, and as we shall see later, many of them do.\textsuperscript{74}

The third and final component related to Dik and Duffy’s notion of the calling orientation is (c) “a person’s career is prosocially oriented; that is, individuals with a calling use their career to directly or indirectly help others advance the greater good.”\textsuperscript{75} But they clarify that this component is not always present within the literature and within popular notions of ‘work as a calling.’ Here, they reference one of their recent studies, where a majority of participants identified most strongly “with the notion of finding a perfect fit.”\textsuperscript{76} Findings that parallel their own study, they explain, cause some scholars to argue that “internal source conceptualizations are a better fit for how the [calling] construct is viewed in the current culture.”\textit{But} Dik and Duffy maintain that

\textsuperscript{74} I have in mind here scholars whom we shall attend to in later chapters, such as Alasdair MacIntyre (2007) and Bellah et al. (1991 & 1996).

\textsuperscript{75} Duffy & Dik (2013: 429).

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. Also see Duffy et al. (2013).
such instruments for measuring calling are insufficient if they only conceptualize “calling as arising from an inner voice or sense of passion.” As stated earlier, Dik and Duffy mandate that any account of the calling orientation within the ‘work as a calling’ literature must entail this prosocial component, which pits them against other scholars, like Dobrow.

However, Dik and Duffy’s analysis of “other-oriented” motives tends to focus on how the worker benefits from having prosocial motivations, not how prosocial contributions are worthy ends in themselves. For example, Dik and Duffy encourage therapists to consider the implications that prosocial motives could have on the enhancement of “the eudaimonic well-being of clients in the workplace.” By this, however, they mean something like the therapeutic notion of “personal fulfillment,” requiring only a “distal” cognizance of “the social purpose and benefit of their work.” This, of course, differs very much from an Aristotelian account of eudaimonia, where one cannot flourish without right thinking about the purpose of one’s actions and the impact of said action on the polis. Like Wrzesniewski, however, Dik and Duffy tend to motivate their prosocial component not by some notion of the good that we must construe rightly, but rather by how perceptions of doing good make us feel. For example, in their book chapter,

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77 Ibid.: 429.
78 Dik et al. (2009: 629).
79 Ibid.
“Serving Others,” they point to research findings which indicate that “students who engaged in more meaningful and other-oriented daily activities were more likely to be happy and in a good mood during that day. Intriguingly, engaging in these types of activities even had a positive impact on how happy they felt the next day.”

We should not be surprised by their subjective appeals to more effectively satisfying individuals’ preferences, since two of the primary audiences that they write for are therapists and their patients. However, such appeals are ultimately self-defeating for Dik and Duffy, who ironically argue that “if your primary motivation for serving others is to benefit yourself, you are badly missing the point.” One wonders, then, why Dik and Duffy speak primarily about how helping others “makes you feel,” about how “helping others can impact your emotional state,” and about how “acts of service that benefit others cause us to change the way we think about ourselves.” As it turns out, Dik and Duffy’s prosocial component appears to be motivated by more navel-gazing motives than they seem to realize. Each of their foundational components of the calling orientation, then, as we have seen, turns out to be supportive of the individualistically oriented themes that characterize the dominant mode of thinking within the ‘work as a calling’ literature, and which they criticize.

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80 Dik & Duffy (2012: 93).

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.: 93-94.
Id. John Bunderson & Jeffery Thompson

Finally, we turn to the joint work of John Stuart Bunderson and Jeffery Thompson before concluding our investigation of key thinkers within the ‘work as a calling’ literature. Bunderson is an associate professor of organizational behavior within the John M. Olin Business School at Washington University in St Louis and Thompson is an associate professor of public service and ethics at BYU’s Marriott School of Business. Almost all of the two scholars’ research on ‘work as a calling’ is published jointly. Much of it is informed by their numerous interviews with zookeepers and, more recently, their mutually shared Mormon beliefs. Their research tends to focus on a “neoclassical,” or “transcendent,” notion of ‘work as a calling’ “that puts dual emphasis on the inner requiredness of passion and enjoyment and the outer requiredness of duty and destiny.”  

Consequently, Bunderson and Thompson are widely cited in the discourse for their “double-edged” analysis of the construct; they often indicate the ways that having a calling can be a source of both meaning (i.e. the passion component) and struggle (i.e. the duty component). As we shall see, further clarification is needed regarding the moral tradition that they rely upon to understand ‘meaningful work.’ In order to advance beyond the very individualistic notions of preference that they problematize, they will have to do more conceptual work to separate their sense of

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83 Bunderson & Thompson (2019: 421).

84 Bunderson & Thompson (2009a: 32).
meaning from the way that we have seen it more commonly understood across the
discourse.

Before articulating the conceptual work that they still must carry out, we should
analyze their illuminating critique of the ‘work as a calling’ discourse on two particular
fronts. In fact, their critique further demonstrates the individualistically oriented nature
of this literature, which might lead one to think that they more conscientiously avoid
the self-serving notions of ‘work as a calling.’ As of late, (a) they have begun to look
more critically at the individualistically oriented conceptualizations of ‘work as a
calling’ and ‘meaningful work,’ believing that these notions frequently cause
individuals to seek work first and foremost for personal happiness and self-expression.
Also, (b) they address the definitional disparity of ‘work as a calling.’

Interestingly, while the prosocial sense of duty associated with one’s calling is	en often a source of suffering or struggle for the zookeepers that they interview,
Bunderson and Thompson’s work is increasingly critical of the “peripheral…rather than
central” place that the prosocial component has in most scholars’ definitions of the
calling orientation today.85 They critique Wresniewski, Dobrow, Dik, and Duffy,
among others, for their predominantly self-seeking notions of ‘work as a calling.’ In the
following excerpt from their 2019 review of the literature, Bunderson and Thompson

85 Bunderson & Thompson (2019: 430).
expose the disparity between the thoroughly prosocial notion of calling proffered by Luther and Calvin and the way that scholars tend to describe the notion in terms of its personal utility today:

Whereas classical views of calling may have emphasized destiny, duty, and discovery, modern conceptualizations - in line with our modern emphasis on expressive individualism - reflect an emphasis on self-expression and self-fulfillment. Under this view, callings are expressions of internal passions and interests and are pursued for the enjoyment and fulfillment they can bring and not out of any sense of societal duty or obligation. A calling is therefore meaningful when and if it is significant to the individual and not necessarily because it benefits society in some way. Moreover, callings are chosen and enacted as a form of personal expression rather than something destined and awaiting discovery.86

In other words, they agree with the claim that I have been advancing so far, which is that the increasingly popular ‘work as a calling’ literature grounds the meaning of one’s calling in one’s passions and interests, or in one’s preferences. Consequently, meaning is not understood in light of some notion of ‘goodness’ or ‘doing good,’ but rather in light of what pleases workers, or in light of what workers think will make them happy. Bunderson and Thompson’s extensive analysis of the ‘work as a calling’ discourse (which spans well beyond the work of Wresniewski, Dobrow, Dik, and Duffy to include other, less published figures that also contribute to the literature) affirms that “the positive relationship between calling and various forms of satisfaction is easily the

86 Ibid.
best-established [and most discussed] finding in the calling literature.”\textsuperscript{87} They repeatedly find that the calling orientation to work is first and foremost discussed as a therapeutic means of expression, or self-identification. Consequently, their more recent research problematizes a slide away from discussions about contributing to the ‘common good’ through one’s calling. Within the contemporary discourse, talk about the way that one’s calling impacts the ‘common good’ is of marginal concern, they argue.

In addition to the mere peripheral concern for the prosocial component that is apparent within the contemporary discourse on ‘work as a calling,’ Bunderson and Thompson identify another significant problem within the literature that has to do with the definitional disparity of the concept of calling. This, subsequently, leads to differences in measuring calling within research as well. In their latest analysis, they state the following:

\begin{quote}
We found no standard definition of calling across studies. In fact, across eighty-four studies in our review, we found 14 distinct formal definitions statements, most of them appearing in just one or two papers...Given this diversity of calling definitions, it should not be surprising that we also observed a wide range of calling measures [including Wrzesniewski et al.’s “seminal” “Work Orientation Scale,” Steger & Dik’s 2006 “Brief Calling Scale,” Duffy et al.’s “Living One’s Calling Scale,” Dobrow & Totsi-Kharas’ “Calling Scale,” Dik et al.’s “Calling and Vocation Questionnaire, Bunderson and Thompson’s own “Neoclassical Calling Scale,” and Duffy et al.’s “Calling Motivation Scale”].\textsuperscript{88}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.: 426.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.: 425.
Because of this disparity in the ‘work as a calling’ literature, one of their primary missions entails a diligent attempt to weave these definitions and measurement scales together. In an effort “to ensure that calling research matters, or put differently, that it realizes its potential to provide important insights into the meaning of work,” they dichotomize two general sides within the ‘work as a calling’ literature and then attempt to resolve the “stalemate” that exists between them.89 Like Baumeister and Dik and Duffy, Bunderson and Thompson also observe a general tension between modern (i.e. more self-interested) notions of calling on the one hand and neoclassical notions of calling that more strongly emphasize a prosocial component, on the other. As such, Bunderson and Thompson suggest that “calling conceptualizations should be arrayed on a continuum ranging from neoclassical to modern...with two orthogonal dimensions along which calling conceptualizations vary.”90 Ultimately, and quite problematically, their proposal for overcoming this dichotomy is marked by an attempt to sandwich everything that both sides prioritize together into one robust conceptualization of calling. They hope “that a definition of calling that integrates outer requiredness (as per neoclassical definitions) with inner requiredness (as per modern definitions) may promise a solution to the definitional stalemate in the calling literature.”91

89 Ibid.: 422, 429.

90 Ibid.: 431.

91 Ibid.: 432.
However, their solution lacks the means to achieve the reconciliation that they set out to accomplish because these two sides of the discourse rely on incompatible resources from rival traditions. Bunderson and Thompson believe they can push the priorities of both sides together. They argue that their understanding of the calling orientation as “transcendent...puts dual emphasis on the inner requiredness of passion and enjoyment and the outer requiredness of duty and destiny.” But they fail to clearly see the way that contemporary conceptualizations of meaning and happiness differ very much from their own understanding of the good life, which they articulate at length in their 2018 book, The Zookeeper’s Secret: Finding Your Calling in Life. Insofar as modern notions of passion tend to root a sense of meaning in the therapeutic fulfillment of one’s preferences, these notions are antithetical to Bunderson and Thompson’s transcendent vision of meaning. Their own sense of the term is grounded in a virtue-based account of goodness and human flourishing. It appears that Bunderson and Thompson have not fully integrated their virtue-informed account of meaning into their academic work. This causes them to employ terminology from the late modern (and individualistic) moral tradition of expressivism, which conflicts with their virtue-based account of goodness and human flourishing. They cannot support a

92 Ibid.: 421.
93 Bunderson & Thompson (2018).
94 Bunderson & Thompson (2019: 421).
late modern understanding of meaningful “core passions” and a virtue-based notion of ‘work as a calling’ at the same time.95

For an example of the virtue-based nature of their transcendent notion of meaning, we can look to Bunderson and Thompson’s personal and shared conceptualization of discovering meaning in life. It is thoroughly contextualized within the Mormon tradition, which calls for virtuous living and points to Christ as a moral exemplar who illuminates all human beings’ shared nature and shared ultimate end, or goal in life (knowledge of and union with God). This, of course, does not compute for the late modern worker who seeks meaning by attending to ‘core passions.’ For Bunderson and Thompson, meaning comes from being habituated into a life that models Christ’s teachings. While this is not explicit in much of their academic work, it is most evident in their recent book, The Zookeeper’s Secret: Finding Your Calling in Life. Therein, they speak of the way that their understanding of ‘work as a calling’ and ‘meaningful work’ is a product of our study of scriptural teachings and gospel principles as they relate to work and its place in a disciple’s life. We have found that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ has a great deal to teach about finding your calling in life. In fact, just as we believe that the greatest wellsprings of family happiness flow through those who center their lives on the Savior’s teachings, we testify that the greatest fulfillment from work is only available when you build your career path on Jesus Christ’s gospel.96

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95 Ibid.: 435.

96 Bunderson & Thompson (2018: loc. 127).
Such an account of living one’s calling and experiencing ‘meaningful work’ entails a spiritual transformation of the preferences of late modern workers. Bunderson and Thompson speak of a source of objective goodness, Christ, who regulates individual preferences. Workers would have to learn to see as Christ sees in order to experience the kind of meaning that they articulate.

On reflection, while Bunderson and Thompson demonstrate an impressive understanding of the individualistically oriented nature of the contemporary ‘work as a calling’ literature, they fail to see how their sandwich method fails on account of its attempt to push unsynthesized notions from two rival traditions together. Ultimately, they will have to pick one side and come to terms with the fact that the language of expressivism and the virtue-based language of ‘work as a calling’ are, in fact, incompatible. While their academic research tends to mask their personal convictions, their more spiritual book on ‘work as a calling’ makes it clear that they have indeed already chosen a side. What Bunderson and Thompson still need to do, then, is refine their terminology so that it more closely relates to their virtue-informed account of ‘work as a calling’ that binds notions of ‘meaningful work’ to visions of ‘good work.’ Otherwise, they will continue to be accidental contributors to the individualistically oriented nature of the contemporary literature by relying on late modern terminology to speak of one’s ‘work as a calling.’ Bunderson and Thompson need to part from a late modern and individualistic way of understanding happiness, preferences, inner
passions, etc. Importantly, the cultural situation of this terminology, as we shall see, dispenses with notions of objective goodness that would otherwise call for the regulation of preferences along one’s quest for the good in and beyond the workplace.

II. Chapter One Summary

A few common themes have emerged in our analysis of these key thinkers within the ‘work as a calling’ literature. This is not surprising since the scholars mentioned above express a mutual dependence on one another’s research. Most frequently, they entertain questions about how a calling orientation to work builds deeper meaning into workers’ lives. This meaning results in a therapeutic sense of reward, ultimately making workers happier and making them feel like they have become more intimately acquainted with who they are at their ‘core.’ As we have seen, these scholars often discuss meaning and identity in light of personal preferences of workers. Their notions of meaning often disregard more objective standards of goodness (i.e., becoming excellent in one’s craft, growing in the virtues as a moral agent by way of one’s calling, etc.). When more self-transcendent resources for understanding ‘meaningful work’ are acknowledged, such resources are either dismissed without consideration or attempts to include them often fail to be fully separated from preferences, and subjective perceptions of meaningfulness. As we have seen, the latter is the case for Dik and Duffy as well as Bunderson and Thompson. None of the scholars
adequately recognize the disparity between notions of ‘work as a calling’ and ‘meaningful work’ that (a) are construed in light of personal preferences and (b) virtue-informed accounts entailing some notion of good and worthy ends that regulate personal preferences.

Like contemporary therapists, the scholars that we have analyzed grapple most with workers’ preferences, or their inner passions. All of them tend to encapsulate notions of ‘work as a calling’ in romanticist language which pits sentimentalism against melancholy and pits subjectively ‘meaningful work’ against the drudgery of a wage-earning occupation. It is their sentimental description of the personal effects of having a calling that often leads to an individualistically oriented conceptualization of the notion. Sometimes, this sentimentalism includes the belief that workers’ zeal for their calling creates a form of tension. This tension is usually characterized as an inner struggle which leads to suffering. Still, however, like therapists of the workplace, these scholars wish to know how to minimize this suffering for workers by helping them to more effectively maximize their pursuit of pleasurable working conditions.

One gets the sense that there is a utilitarian calculus constantly at work in the background of their notions of ‘work as a calling.’ These scholars tend to place primacy on late modern ‘moral’ calculations of preference maximization. Such calculations often dispose of fuller accounts of human agency. An example of one such account is Utilitarianism’s Greatest Happiness Principle, which involves the maximization of
pleasure and the minimization of suffering. This very calculation appears to characterize the measurement for happiness that emerges within much of the ‘work as a calling’ literature (especially Wrzesniewski and Dobrow’s research).
Chapter Two: Bellah et al.’s Seminal Account of the Calling Orientation

While the thinkers analyzed within the previous chapter all proffer different definitions and scale measures, they also all suggest that ‘work as a calling’ entails a meaningful orientation toward some domain (usually within the workplace). Moreover, they all understand one’s calling in contrast to some activity that is done principally for money, prestige, or career advancement. Importantly, these commonalities are not accidental. All of the key thinkers in the ‘work as a calling’ literature that concern us were significantly inspired by Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton’s articulation of calling as an orientation to work. Importantly, Bellah et al. play a foundational role in the ‘work as a calling’ literature that we have been analyzing. Turning now to Bellah et al.’s foundational account of ‘work as a calling,’ we shall see that the aforementioned thinkers’ research within the previous chapter is beholden to Bellah et al.’s seminal account of the calling orientation. Albeit, all of the thinkers mentioned within the previous chapter could greatly benefit from a closer contextualized reading of Bellah et al.’s account of the calling orientation – particularly its philosophical framework - since they often and very poorly misconstrue
Bellah et al.’s work orientation. This is an important point to mention and more must be said about the ways that thinkers from the previous chapter misconstrue the calling orientation. First, however, these researchers’ dependence on Bellah et al. must be clearly demonstrated. Importantly, these scholars all imply that they are both retaining the original sense of Bellah et al.’s notion of calling as a work orientation. Moreover, they believe that they are carrying it forward by advancing research and increasing its practical application. So, any disparities that are illuminated herein create severe problems for all of the scholars that we analyzed within the last chapter – problems that they must engage with should they choose to continue ‘extending’ the ‘relevance’ of Bellah et al.’s calling orientation.

I. Wrzesniewski, Dobrow, Dik, Duffy, Bunderson, & Thompson’s Reliance on Bellah et al.

This research aims to qualify Robert Bellah and his colleagues’ understanding of the calling orientation to work, which is regularly referenced in the business ethics, management, organizational, and vocational psychology discourse, not to mention more than a few popular conversations. Certainly, any serious study of the calling concept must recognize the significance of thinkers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Max Weber, but Bellah et al. are often credited with providing the foundational definition of the calling orientation that inspires the contemporary, or post-Bellah,
'work as a calling' discourse. Robert Bellah and his colleagues’ account of the calling orientation is situated within the social sciences, specifically within their research on individualism and commitment in American life, which they illustrated in their widely-read work, Habits of the Heart. After Bellah et al.’s 1985 publication of this book, the construal of ‘work as a calling’ became foundational to conversations about ‘meaningful work.’ Much to the credit of Amy Wrzesniewski, Bellah et al.’s research on the calling orientation has been widely applied. Directly or indirectly, almost all research on ‘work as a calling’ in the fields mentioned above remains influenced by Bellah et al.’s account. As Wrzesniewski claims, Bellah et al.’s articulation of the calling orientation within Habits of the Heart has become “emblematic of the largely secular and individually-based view of ‘work as a calling’ that has dominated the organizational literature.”97

Ia. Wrzesniewski’s Reliance on Bellah et al.

Of all people, Wrzesniewski should know just how emblematic and dominant Bellah et al.’s definition is. As stated earlier, the calling orientation was not the brainchild of Wrzesniewski and her colleagues, who developed the earliest scale measure of the calling orientation in 1997. In fact, much of Wrzesniewski’s research since that time is built on the backs of Bellah et al.’s job, career, and calling orientations

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97 Wrzesniewski (2011: 46).
to work. For example, recall the paragraph descriptions of Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr. C’s job, career, and calling orientations to work, provided by Wrzesniewski and her colleagues within their 1997 article.98 Now compare their descriptions to Bellah et al.’s earlier account of each work orientation within Habits of the Heart:

In the sense of a ‘job,’ work is a way of making money and making a living. It supports a self defined by economic success, security, and all that money can buy. In the sense of a ‘career,’ work traces one’s progress through life by achievement and advancement in an occupation. It yields a self defined by a broader sort of success, which takes in social standing and prestige, and by a sense of expanding power and competency that renders work itself a source of self-esteem. In the strongest sense of a ‘calling,’ work constitutes a practical ideal of activity and character that makes a person’s work morally inseparable from his or her life. It subsumes the self into a community of disciplined practice and sound judgment whose activity has meaning and value in itself, not just in the output or profit that results from it. But the calling not only links a person to his or her fellow workers. A Calling links a person to the larger community, a whole in which the calling of each is a contribution to the good of all.99

This excerpt from Habits of the Heart is the cornerstone of Wrzesniewski’s research on ‘work as a calling.’ All or some portion of it is also repeatedly quoted by Dobrow, Dik and Duffy, Bunderson and Thompson, and countless others within the post-Bellah literature as well. But why has it become so important? As Wrzesniewski says, these “three categories [job, career, and calling] represent three different work orientations, which guide individuals’ basic goals for working, capture beliefs about the role of work

98 See p. 14 herein.

In other words, the three orientations point to Bellah et al.’s important suggestion that there are measurable distinctions in workers’ primary reasons for working. Most of the research on ‘work as a calling’ since Habits of the Heart is merely an extrapolation of these workplace orientations, usually for the purpose of getting clearer on what a calling is and for measuring workplace motivations. Wrzesniewski cites Bellah et al.’s Habits of the Heart in every one of her publications on ‘work as a calling.’ To this day, her research has not strayed from an analysis of calling as an orientation to work, which she continues to contrast with the job and career orientations.

**Ib. Dobrow’s Reliance on Bellah et al.**

Like Wrzesniewski, Dobrow’s conceptualization of ‘work as a calling’ is beholden to Bellah et al. To broaden the application of the calling orientation beyond just the workplace, Dobrow often speaks of calling as an orientation toward a particular “domain” rather than just a particular line of work. Nonetheless, her organizational research, as we have seen, grapples with the personal effects of having a calling - either within the workplace or outside of it. Moreover, she credits Bellah et al. with first imagining calling as an orientation to some domain construed as “intrinsically

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100 Wrzesniewski (2011: 47).

rewarding, personally fulfilling, and central to identity.”

Virtually all of her research marks an attempt to unpack this idea further, but as we have seen, she does so from a profoundly subjectivist point of view.

Moreover, Dobrow speaks in many places of the considerable influence that Wrzeniewski’s work has had on her organizational research. In other words, Dobrow looks to Wrzeniewski as a pioneer of the organizational research on ‘work as a calling.’ This further supports Dobrow’s dependence on Bellah et al. because of the ways that she understands Wrzeniewski to have “built on [Bellah et al.’s] research to present work orientations, including calling orientation, as a construct for use in organizational psychology literature.”

Both, directly and indirectly, therefore, Bellah et al. inspired Dobrow’s conceptualization of calling as a subjectively meaningful and deeply fulfilling orientation to a particular domain.

**Ic. Dik & Duffy’s Reliance on Bellah et al.**

It should not be surprising, then, that Dik and Duffy’s scholarship is also beholden to Bellah et al.’s calling orientation. On the one hand, they expand on Wrzeniewski and Dobrow’s organizational research, which, as we have just seen, is inspired by Bellah et al.’s seminal account of the calling orientation. On the other hand,

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102 Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas (2011: 1004).

103 Ibid.
Dik and Duffy also speak frankly about the ways that Bellah et al. have directly influenced their calling construct. They state that the “three types [job, career, and calling] have provided a very useful way of thinking about different work attitudes since they were introduced [by Bellah et al.] in the mid-1980s. Three decades later, the types are every bit as relevant.”\textsuperscript{104}

Indeed, the very title of Dik and Duffy’s widely read book, as well as the primary aims therein, expose the significance of Bellah et al.’s influence. Because of the way that Bellah et al. characterize the work attitudes of those with jobs, Dik and Duffy attempt to provide a model for transforming workers attitudes from job-related ones to calling-related ones. Hence, they title their book \textit{Make Your Job a Calling}.\textsuperscript{105} Within the book, Dik and Duffy make every effort to increase the relevance and applicability of the calling orientation by equipping readers with the tools necessary to either (a) orient themselves to ‘work as a calling,’ or (b) identify something else as their primary calling in life. So, their whole book is an attempt to advance readers from what they perceive to be the least meaningful and personally fulfilling of Bellah et al.’s work orientations - the job orientation - to the most meaningful and personally fulfilling of Bellah et al.’s three work orientations - the calling orientation.

\textsuperscript{104} Dik & Duffy (2012: 27).
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
Furthermore, and as stated earlier, Dik and Duffy believe so much in the personal benefits of Bellah et al.’s calling orientation that they encourage therapists to help their patients reap the rewards of discovering and living out their callings.\footnote{See p. 38 herein.} Speaking of the ways that the calling orientation has been understood by “a number of scholars” in the post-Bellah literature, Dik and Duffy tend to prioritize “the importance of reestablishing the constructs of calling and vocation as pathways for infusing meaningfulness into work and other life roles.”\footnote{Dik & Duffy (2009: 426).} Thus, they believe that Bellah et al.’s calling orientation is a handy tool that professional counselors can use to support the late modern goal of therapeutic self-fulfillment. They devote full academic journal articles to this project.\footnote{See, for example, Dik et al. (2009), Dik et al. (2012), & Dik & Duffy (2013).}

That said, however, Dik and Duffy also cite Bellah et al. to support the idea that ‘work as a calling’ does not merely entail “a segmental, self-interested activity.”\footnote{Bellah et al. (1996: 66). As cited in: Dik & Duffy (2009: 426).} Therefore, even Dik and Duffy’s attempt to move away from more individualistically oriented notions of ‘work as a calling’ marks Bellah et al.’s influence. We saw earlier how their attempt to do so fails to transcend personal preferences about what individual workers perceive as meaningful. Furthermore, we saw that the way workers
feel when they give back tends to be prioritized by Dik and Duffy over the actual prosocial contribution that they are making. Nonetheless, the very attempt to regulate notions of meaning with prosocial concerns marks the influence of Bellah et al. Throughout Dik and Duffy’s work, Bellah et al.’s job, career, and calling orientations are always in the background of their argument. Dik and Duffy remain very supportive of Bellah et al.’s qualifications of the calling orientation. Their work marks an attempt to clarify it further and increase its relevance.

Id. Bunderson & Thompson’s Reliance on Bellah et al.

Lastly, we turn to Bunderson and Thompson for an examination of the ways that they exhibit a dependence on Bellah et al.’s calling orientation. Like the other scholars, Bellah et al.’s influence appears in their research both directly and indirectly. First, we will look at the indirect influencers. Among many of the scholars that Bunderson and Thompson have “benefitted immeasurably from” is Wrzesniewski and Dobrow, who share their interest in the ‘work as a calling’ discourse and their “passion for studying ‘meaningful work.’”110 Dik and Duffy are also cited heavily within their research.

Of all the indirect influencers, however, Amy Wrzesniewski again appears to be the most significant. For example, their latest book, The Zookeeper’s Secret: Finding Your

\[110\text{ Bunderson & Thompson (2018: loc. 127).}\]
Calling In Life, credits Wrzesniewski with demonstrating the legitimacy of Bellah et al.’s three work orientations:

Wrzesniewski and her colleagues have shown that people do tend to fall into one of these three categories. Some people work just to make a living. Scholars call that a *job orientation*. Others work because it gives them an opportunity to move up in the world and build a reputation. That is called a *career orientation*. Still others work because of a deep sense of purpose – a desire to serve a cause they are passionate about. Scholars refer to that as a *calling orientation*.

After establishing the legitimacy of Bellah et al.’s calling orientation by appealing to Wrzesniewski’s research on the subject, they encourage readers to find work that they too can construe as a calling, instead of a job or a career. Their support of Wrzesniewski’s research on Bellah et al.’s three work orientations demonstrates that Bunderson and Thompson are thoroughly beholden to the account of the calling orientation within *Habits of the Heart*.

Furthermore, Bunderson and Thompson generally tend to exhibit the most contextualized reading of Bellah et al. As a result, they tend to construe Bellah et al.’s calling orientation to work correctly in many places. The only real error in their work, as we have seen, is that they have not fully settled on terminology to describe the significance of one’s calling orientation to work. Sometimes Bunderson and Thompson mimic the subjectively meaningful language that is common in the post-Bellah literature without noticing that this language is beholden to the very strands of

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111 Ibid.: loc. 185.
individualism that they heavily critique in other places throughout their work.\textsuperscript{112} Much of the time, however, they do make a concerted effort to correct misconceptions about Bellah et al.’s calling orientation by critiquing the very same strands of individualism that we shall see Bellah et al. critique. To explain how the calling orientation has “mutated” into an individualistic construct, for example, they point to Bellah et al.’s claim that the calling orientation is liable to further misunderstanding “‘as our society has become more complex and utilitarian and expressive individualism more dominant.’”\textsuperscript{113} Their general awareness of Bellah et al.’s reservations about these two strands of individualism, which are thought to hamper commitment to others in American life, is one of the primary ways that Bunderson and Thompson exhibit a more contextualized reading of Habits of the Heart than others in the post-Bellah literature.

Moreover, Bunderson and Thompson attempt to build in morally self-transcendent dimensions of goodness for the calling orientation and they do this by referencing Bellah et al. In their work on zookeepers, for example, they speak of the way that zookeepers commit themselves to learn the craft of zookeeping, establishing a “basis for identification with the occupation of zookeeping.”\textsuperscript{114} Here they explain that

\textsuperscript{112} For a thorough critique of the individualistic nature of the emerging ‘work as a calling’ literature provided by these authors, see, for example, Bunderson & Thompson (2019).

\textsuperscript{113} Bellah et al. (1996: 66). As cited in: Bunderson & Thompson (2009b: 4). Emphasis added. These two terms will become very important in later chapters.

\textsuperscript{114} Bunderson & Thompson (2009a: 39).
this is the very process of habituation that Bellah et al. speak of when they point to how the “‘craftsman...anchors the self within a community practicing [the craft]’” to learn the goods intrinsic to the craft.\textsuperscript{115}

More recently, their research marks a continued attempt to recapture the characteristic dimensions of the calling orientation that Bellah et al. will be shown to emphasize, such as a shared conceptualization of excellence within particular crafts like zookeeping, for example.

Related to this vision of excellence, Bunderson and Thompson also attempt to restore notions of the good that are shared within communities, which Bellah et al. do, as we shall later see. In their latest review of the ‘work as a calling’ literature, they emphasize how Bellah et al. “observed that every legitimate calling is perceived as ‘a contribution to the good of all’” and call for a return to this way of thinking about ‘work as a calling.’\textsuperscript{116} Thus, Bunderson and Thompson’s very attempts to push the post-Bellah literature on ‘work as a calling’ beyond its individualistically oriented state point to the influence of Bellah et al.


\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.: 66. As cited in: Bunderson & Thompson (2019: 430).
II. The Irony of Bellah et al.’s Influence

Bunderson and Thompson’s comparatively better attempt to construe Bellah et al.’s conceptualization of the calling orientation correctly helps to expose the irony of Bellah et al.’s influence within the ‘work as a calling’ literature. Namely, the construal of calling as an orientation to work would not exist within the literature if Bellah et al. had not first articulated the notion as a buffer against the “radical individualism” that they observed in the American workplace, and within American life more generally.\(^{117}\) Bellah et al. argue extensively in *Habits of the Heart* and in their sequel, *The Good Society*, that these linguistic “cultural resources [that Americans] have for making sense of their society and their lives” represent “a language of individualistic achievement and self-fulfillment that often seems to make it difficult for people to sustain their commitments to others, either in intimate relationships or in the public sphere.”\(^{118}\) Ironically, however, and as we have seen, the post-Bellah ‘work as a calling’ literature tends to describe the calling orientation in reference to individualistically oriented resources. The post-Bellah literature often calls individuals to an autonomous examination of their ‘core’ preferences, emphasizing the way that work makes individuals feel.

Rather than relying on individualistic resources, which Bellah et al. believe speak of illusory forms of self-fulfillment and an unrealistic form of autonomy, they advocate

\(^{117}\) Ibid.: 154-155.

\(^{118}\) Bellah et al. (1991: 5).
a pluralistic striving for common goods that is rooted in linguistic resources provided 
by the more prosocial languages of civic republicanism and the biblical tradition (in 
chapter 4, the common goods that Bellah et al. strive for will be explained in detail). 
Civic republicanism provides a thread of reasoning about goods in common while the 
biblical tradition calls us to subject our individual preferences to the deeper, self-
transcendent purposes of human life, inspiring us further to envision the goods that we 
share in common. For these reasons, Bellah et al. argue that, as ‘ideal types,’ civic 
republicanism and the biblical tradition “are in many ways preferable” to the various 
strands of individualism that they problematize.119 This combination of civic reason and 
self-transcendence, as we shall see in later chapters, can expand Americans’ prosocial 
concerns by helping us to strive for the good life together as a good society, across 
national and traditional boundaries. Bellah et al. rely on these languages for the purpose 
of bringing members of disparate traditions together, despite their differences, to 
deliberate about common goods. During such deliberations, as we shall see, it is 
important for groups to not lose sight of their own distinctive visions of the good life 
and the good society. Equally important, however, is that these groups recognize and 
respect the polysemic and multivocal nature of these inter-traditional conversations. We 
shall see in later chapters that these gatherings are marked by a hopeful and highly 

119 Bellah et al. (1996: xi).
nuanced vision of pluralism that grapples with the realities of our increasingly globalized world.

Bellah et al.’s vision of the good life and the good society, stemming from the two key traditions that they draw upon, is purposefully articulated as part of their effort to curb the consequences of the culture of American individualism. Bellah and his colleagues’ vision to strive for the good life together as a good society leads them to conclude that there are two primary reasons “individualism is inadequate, though it operates in many ways as the central American value system.” Bellah et al.’s reasons for believing that American individualism is an inadequate ‘first’ language are already apparent in the argument above, but we should tease out these two primary reasons further. This ‘first language’ in American life tends to (a) minimize American’s prosocial concerns and (b) results in an individualistic and arbitrary language of the good life for the individual that is rooted in appeals to personal preferences rather than appeals to goods that all human beings require. Let us briefly sketch each of these points in turn (and then we shall see how Bellah et al. expound on these ideas significantly in chapter 4).

First, Bellah et al. argue that (a) American individualism minimizes Americans’ prosocial concerns by hyper-emphasizing autonomy at the expense of visions of interdependence.

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120 Ibid., 288. Within this work, they specify that they use ‘radical,’ ‘Lockean,’ and ‘American’ individualism interchangeably.
In their updated introduction to the 1996 edition of *Habits of the Heart*, they illustrate this by arguing that the ‘first’ language of American individualism rests upon the autonomous values of independence and self-reliance:

Individualism, the first language in which Americans tend to think about their lives, values independence and self-reliance above all else… American individualism, then, demands personal effort and stimulates great energy to achieve, yet it provides little encouragement for nurturance, taking a sink-or-swim approach to moral development as well as to economic success. It admires toughness and strength and fears softness and weakness. It adulates winners while showing contempt for losers, a contempt that can descend with crushing weight on those considered, either by others or by themselves, to be moral or social failures.  

Such individualism places an unrealistic emphasis on autonomy over and against important civic concerns, such as responsibility and care for others in our interdependent communities. It praises a false narrative - the self-made-American.

Seeking to dismantle this false narrative, Bellah et al. point out how “the illusion that we are autonomous is becoming increasingly implausible as we experience more directly our dependence on collective forces…even to maintain the middle-class way of life that makes us feel that only our private concerns are significant.” Here, they imply that the achievement of the ‘American Dream’ of freedom and prosperity is incompatible with the very notion of autonomy that it tends to praise in late modernity.

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121 Bellah et al. (1996: viii).

122 Bellah et al. (1991: 12).

123 Ibid.: 112-113.
So, Bellah et al. demand that this individualistic American way of thinking, rooted in “the old [American] meaning of freedom,” which has to do with autonomy and “the right to be left alone,” must be replaced with other languages that more realistically reflect humans’ interdependent nature.\textsuperscript{124} Throughout \textit{Habits of the Heart} and \textit{The Good Society}, they dismantle radical American individualism by arguing that “freedom cannot simply mean getting away from other people.”\textsuperscript{125} Instead, they maintain that the interior logic of American individualism is contradictory and, therefore, inadequate. For, it proffers a radical notion of autonomy, minimizing American’s prosocial concerns, without recognizing the reality of the human situation. Virtuous individuals who remain committed to one another in practice are necessary for the flourishing of individuals, institutions, and a good society, they argue.\textsuperscript{126}

In addition to the way that this radical American individualism (a) minimizes Americans’ prosocial concerns by hyper-emphasizing autonomy at the expense of visions of interdependence, Bellah et al. also argue that it (b) \textit{results in an individualistic and arbitrary language of the good life for the individual, which is rooted in appeals to personal preferences rather than appeals to goods that all human beings require}.\textsuperscript{127} "For most of us, it is

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.: 7.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.: 9.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Bellah et al. (1996: 21).
easier to think about how to get what we want than to know what exactly we should want,” they argue. The authors of Habits of the Heart support this claim by presenting the results of several interviews with middle-class Americans from various towns across the country. During these interviews, they discovered that these citizens “all to some degree share a common moral vocabulary…the ‘first language’ of American individualism.” What this language encourages is a competitive struggle to effectively achieve one’s preferences in public and private life. The pursuit of these preferences, whether materialistic wants or individualistic modes of self-expression, tend to consume Americans, minimizing their prosocial concerns and their active commitment to one another in the practices of daily life. Particularly, the pursuit of preferences and the ‘wants’ of a meaningful life have become divorced from considerations about goods that are necessary for flourishing humans and a flourishing society.

Bellah et al. find that the pursuit of preferences has become ends agnostic, in many respects – or perhaps more accurately, very flippant. This is represented by the common belief held by many Americans that they interview, who tend to express “that there is something arbitrary about the goals of a good life.” Americans’ tendency to bind their notions of the good life to their personal preferences means that their visions

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128 Ibid.

of the good life change as frequently and as whimsically as their preferences so often do.\textsuperscript{130}

For example, there is Brian, a businessman who implies the following: “If one’s preferences change, so does the nature of the good. Even the deepest ethical virtues are justified as matters of personal preference.”\textsuperscript{131} Brian’s “injunctions against” things that he considers “absolutely wrong,” such as “killing, stealing, and lying,” even “exist detached from any social or cultural base that could give them broader meaning,” Bellah et al. argue.\textsuperscript{132}

But why do Bellah et al. care about this fluid form of ethics that characterizes Brian’s life? Many have wondered: ‘Are they calling us back to foundationalism?’ This, however, is not the central purpose of the argument of \textit{Habits of the Heart} and \textit{The Good Society}. Moreover, to say that Brian is without a foundation would be incorrect. He expresses very clearly foundationalist language drawn from liberal principles, such as property rights and a ‘do your own thing’ mantra. In response to constructive criticism from Jefferey Stout, Bellah clarifies the position of the authors in an essay shortly following the publication of \textit{Habits of the Heart}:

Our point about Brian Palmer is not that he lacks a foundation or even that he is inarticulate. Indeed, he is highly articulate about his ethical views. He expresses

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.: 6.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.: 7.
himself with vigor and humor in what we call the ‘first language’ of individualism. He falters, however, when that language proves inadequate to express the non-individualistic practices in which he is also engaged. We wish he had a more adequate language to think and speak about the practices in which he actually engages not because we think he needs a philosophical foundation but because we think language and action should be mutually reflective and supportive in a good life; also because we think that when language fails, practice too may be imperiled.  

Bellah et al. are concerned with the active commitment of Americans to one another in practices that yield common goods – practices that the dominant ‘first language’ of individualism in American life seems to be corroding. Moreover, the authors are concerned about the disparity between this language of individualism and the reality of the human situation as thoroughly interdependent. It is very clear in Brian’s life that he needs another language to speak of the interdependent practices within which he finds himself, such as his commitments to his wife and his children. So, “rooted in Brian’s experience of a public world structured by procedurally fair competitive relationships and to pay-your-own-way marketplace,” Bellah continues, “this framework dramatically bears out Habits’ argument about the overgeneralization of individualism, its institutional grounding, and its power to obscure our vision of practical virtue.”

Moreover, to think that those like Brian, who have ‘given up on religion,’ are the only ones who embody the impoverished ‘first language’ of individualism would be

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134 Ibid.: 273.
incorrect. Many of the devoutly religious suffer from this same individualistic morality too, Bellah et al. find. The vast majority of interviewees struggle “to find a language that will transcend their radical individualism.”\textsuperscript{135} So, Bellah et al. seek resources from traditions beyond the dominant ‘first language’ of American individualism to overcome arbitrary visions of the good life and to establish a more collective vision of “what is worth seeking in life,” and together as a good society.\textsuperscript{136} In many respects, Bellah et al. believe that Americans are “struggling” for other languages that will help them bind their sense of meaningfulness to something that transcends their preferences.\textsuperscript{137}

Specifically, they believe that Americans are struggling for the ‘second languages’ of civic republicanism and the biblical tradition. With all of its emphasis on the freely-choosing individual, guided by personal preferences, the ‘first language’ of American individualism is a stark “contrast to alternative [and more prosocial] ‘second languages,’ which most of us also have,” Bellah et al. argue.\textsuperscript{138}

At our particular moment in history, however, they see how, from moment to moment, “what is good is what one finds rewarding.”\textsuperscript{139} Purpose hardly seems to

\textsuperscript{135} Bellah et al. (1996: 21).
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.: 80.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.: 21.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.: 20.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.: 6.
transcend preference and this is corroding our commitment to the envisioning and achieving of common goods as an interdependent society. It is persuasively argued throughout their work that even the historical figures who contributed to this ‘first language’ of American individualism can, in many cases, be shown to do so in such a way that they did not fully let go of prosocial concerns, which stemmed from their ‘second languages.’

That being said, Bellah et al. do not maintain that these ‘second languages’ have ever been perfectly embodied in any particular moment of American history. In this sense, their work is not a nostalgic longing for a past that ‘once was.’ That being said, however, they do find that these ‘second languages,’ historically speaking, offered social mores that have better shaped Americans’ ‘habits of the heart’ in light of common goods. In this respect, these languages contributed to some of America’s more shining moments. In America’s better moments, these languages bring the forces of civic reason together with considerations about self-transcendent purposes to strive for deliberation about the achievement of common goods, both within and beyond American borders, and wherever agreement may be found. The ‘first language’ of American individualism, on the other hand, tends to be corrosive to intra-traditional and inter-traditional deliberation about the good life and the good society, as their work illustrates.

In summary, then, Bellah et al. are not interested in attending to the preferences of individuals as they exist in some untutored state. Rather, they seek resources from
‘second languages’ in American life that can provide a healthier and interdependent pattern of formation. Specifically, they are interested in the formation of good people via practices within tradition-bound communities of memory, which subject the individual to shared visions of the good. This is precisely the focus of their two major works, *Habits of the Heart* and *The Good Society*. An understanding of and participation in practices of moral formation that habituate individuals, Bellah et al. argue, creates “possibilities for an immense enhancement of our lives, individual and collective, an enhancement based on a significant moral advance.” In what appears to be a stark contrast to the post-Bellah ‘work as a calling’ literature, this process of formation, at the individual and the societal level, requires that we address the shortcomings of the more culturally dominant language of American individualism.

### III. Bellah et al.’s Turn to Practices

With both (a) the minimization of Americans’ prosocial concerns, and (b) Americans’ arbitrary language about the good life in mind, Bellah et al. discuss in *Habits of the Heart* and *The Good Society* the formation of good people within “patterns of institutionally directed action,” or “practices.” Bellah et al. define practices as follows:

> Practices are shared activities that are not undertaken as a means to an end but are ethically good in themselves (thus close to *praxis* in Aristotle’s sense). A

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140 Bellah et al. (1991: 5).

141 Ibid.: xvii.
genuine community – whether a marriage, a university, or a whole society – is constituted by such practices. Genuine practices are almost always practices of commitment, since they involve activities that are ethically good.\textsuperscript{142}

So, practices situate individuals within a community that possesses a “historically constituted good form of life.”\textsuperscript{143} In part, practices provide individuals with “the means to a good life” by situating the individual within a collective that is directed by teleological, or goal-oriented, reasoning about tradition-constituted visions of the good life.\textsuperscript{144} But practices also \textit{regulate notions of the good} to promote common goods at three distinct levels, as we shall see in chapter 4. Practices provide three distinct types of common goods, which the ‘work as a calling’ discourse must attend to.

What Bellah et al.‘s account of practices illustrates, as we shall see later in more detail, is that overcoming “problems of emptiness and meaninglessness in our personal lives” is not accomplished by attending to unregulated and individualistically oriented notions of preference. Practices call individuals to transcend what they find subjectively meaningful in the interest of achieving common goods.\textsuperscript{145} For this reason, Bellah et al. argue that “a significant moral advance” can only come by understanding the role of

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.: 335.
\textsuperscript{143} Bellah et al. (1991: 290).
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.: 5.
practices and institutions, “how we form them and how they in turn form us.”  

Individuals’ shared commitment to one another and to the common goods discovered through practices regulates subjective preferences. Practices connect subjective visions of meaningfulness to (a) the good and worthy ends of practices, (b) the goods of an individual life, and (c) the goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society.

Because practices remain committed to three distinct types of common goods, Bellah et al. often refer to practices as practices of commitment. To the extent that practices provide narrative visions of common goods, they regulate preferences in light of shared accounts of goodness. Moreover, they expand prosocial concerns as a result of their participatory nature.

Commitment takes another form within practices as well. Individuals situated within practices remain committed to one another in their pursuit of both individual and collective goals. Thus, “in the strict sense, practices of separation is a contradiction in terms, since such activities are undertaken in the interest of the self at the expense of commitments to others,” they argue.  

Importantly, while their articulation of practices of commitment is altogether left out by the figures within the ‘work as a calling’ discourse that we have surveyed so far,

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146 Ibid.

147 Bellah et al. (1996: 335).
practices are a foundational component of Bellah et al.’s calling orientation. Moreover, the individualistically oriented misunderstandings that pervade the ‘work as a calling’ discourse can only be overcome through a comprehension of their notion of practices. To understand their notion of practices, however, requires additional linguistic terminology that is associated with the biblical and civic republican traditions, as we shall see.

In summary, Bellah et al. qualify the calling orientation by arguing that it must be housed within democratic practices and institutions which prioritize “the pursuit of the good in common.”148 Rather than the picture that one gets within the post-Bellah ‘work as a calling’ literature of individuals pursuing their unregulated preferences in an attempt to shore up meaning, Bellah et al. stipulate that the goods of the individual life are sought in common and by participation in practices with others. These practices, which regulate preferences, Bellah et al. argue, better enable workers to carry out commitments to others in both the public and the private spheres.

In this respect, the way that practices regulate preferences not only provides three distinct types of common goods but also the virtues that are necessary to achieve all three distinct types of common goods. Specifically, the practice-based nature of callings instills workers with virtues that are necessary for achieving (a) the good and

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worthy ends of practices, (b) the goods of an individual life, and (c) the goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society.\textsuperscript{149}

**IV. The Significance of Alasdair MacIntyre’s Influence on Bellah et al.**

The last couple of subsections have hinted at a patient wait for chapter 4 to get a clearer picture of Bellah et al.’s moral framework that is associated with the calling orientation. One rightfully should wonder, then, why we cannot simply just skip ahead to chapter 4. This is because, to understand practices and the terminology related to Bellah et al.’s account of practices, we cannot merely rely on Bellah et al.’s account of practices of commitment. Their vision of practices is tradition-constituted and we must understand its history to read their account properly.

Bellah et al.’s tradition-constituted account within \textit{Habits of the Heart} and \textit{The Good Society} is “located in a longstanding discussion of the relationship between character and society,” dating back to Plato’s \textit{Republic} and Aristotle’s virtue ethics.\textsuperscript{150}

More specifically, however, Bellah et al. rely on one contemporary thinker who continues this line of thinking by extending a historically-informed theory of virtue ethics into late modernity. Within their research, Bellah and his colleagues depend heavily on the philosophical framework of Alasdair MacIntyre. In fact, \textit{they inherited}

\textsuperscript{149} Bellah et al. (1996: 66).

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.: xli. Also see Plato (1997: 971-1223) & Aristotle (2000).
their notion of practices and their terminology related to practices from him. Ultimately, as Bellah et al. forcefully argue in their sequel to *Habits of the Heart*, becoming a good person is a process of formation that takes place through “patterns of institutionally directed action that are, in Alasdair MacIntyre’s sense, ‘practices,’ both means to a good life and also aspects of a historically constituted good form of life.”

Although Bellah et al. rely on MacIntyre throughout *Habits of the Heart*, one of the clearest instances of their dependence on MacIntyre’s philosophy is located within their articulation of the calling orientation. Building on MacIntyre, Bellah et al. detail an account of work that is practice-based, and which inculcates the virtues necessary for doing ‘good work,’ leading a good life, and being a good citizen.

In their short description of the calling orientation, they provide a very illuminating footnote about MacIntyre’s influence, which exposes their reliance on MacIntyre for additional terminology that is closely associated with practices. For example, they situate work practices inside of a MacIntyrean vision of virtuous ‘institutions,’ “within which we citizens can better discern what we really want and what we ought to want to sustain a good life on this planet for ourselves and the generations to come.”

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152 See footnote 10 on p. 315 of Bellah et al. (1996).

So, one’s calling in life cannot be grounded in individualistically oriented pursuits that are driven by unregulated preferences. Bellah et al.’s calling orientation also cannot be understood via any old definition of practices, of which there are many that pervade the business and management literature. *The calling orientation must be contextualized within Bellah et al.’s precise understanding of MacIntyrean practices,* which form individuals by regulating their preferences through habituation in the virtues.

Additionally, they employ MacIntyre’s language of ‘narratives,’ ‘traditions,’ and ‘moral communities’ to further detail their normative vision of the calling orientation.\(^{154}\) Relying on this additional terminology, Bellah et al. also agree with MacIntyre that the process of ‘habituation’ and ‘character formation’ within practices spills over into other areas of their lives, sustaining individuals along their *quest* for the good life and along their journey to becoming better citizens within their respective communities. Hence, the notion of practices, as we shall see, is merely one of MacIntyre’s many notions that we will have to grasp to understand the calling orientation as well as the common goods that one’s calling can achieve.

Bellah et al.’s dependence on MacIntyre cannot be overstated. They rely on MacIntyre so heavily that some scholars have criticized them for not more explicitly stating the influence MacIntyre had on their work.\(^{155}\) For example, Robert Bellah

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\(^{154}\) Bellah et al. (1996: 66).

\(^{155}\) Bellah et al. (1986: 5).
recounts that one of his critics “said they give lots of footnotes to MacIntyre [in Habits of
the Heart], but they don’t really quite admit how much they depend on MacIntyre.”156

Ultimately, Bellah et al. have gone above and beyond what is necessary to give
MacIntyre the recognition that he is due. In a dialogue shortly after the first publication
of Habits of the Heart, for example, Bellah stated the following: “I thought, just to open
the discussion this morning, I would review one of the principal sources of the
argument of Habits as a whole, namely, some of the thinking of Alasdair Macintyre,
particularly as it’s expressed in his book, After Virtue.”157

Hence, Bellah and his colleagues do not shy away from admitting “a lot of
dependence on MacIntyre.”158 This dependence is not merely philosophical. During the
composition of the book, it was also interpersonal. MacIntyre was present for multiple
“research meetings” with the authors and offered many “suggestions” during these
meetings.159 Interestingly for our purposes herein, several of these meetings happened
while MacIntyre wrote and published his own seminal work, After Virtue.

Therefore, we must thoroughly examine After Virtue as it relates to Bellah et al.’s
calling orientation. MacIntyre’s work following After Virtue, which expounds on a line

156 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
158 Ibid.
159 Bellah et al. (1996: xlvi).
of thinking that he begins within *After Virtue*, will also be essential insofar as it clarifies certain ideas within *After Virtue* that Bellah et al. already appear to have dialogued about with MacIntyre in person. So, as Bellah later claimed about the work carried out together with his colleagues, MacIntyre is the ‘principal’ source of the arguments within *Habits of the Heart*; moreover, his influence remains very apparent within their sequel, *The Good Society*.

V. Chapter Two Summary & Thesis Statement

This chapter demonstrated that all of the thinkers within the previous chapter are beholden to Bellah et al. in their research on ‘work as a calling.’ Moreover, other scholars who have been left out of the literature review remain equally indebted to Bellah et al. in their research on ‘work as a calling.’ In fact, the very notion of ‘work as a calling’ within the fields of business ethics, management, organizational psychology, and vocational psychology is inextricably linked to Bellah et al.’s calling orientation.

Within this chapter, we also keyed in on Bellah et al.’s concerns about the ‘first language’ of American individualism. Ironically, we have seen that this important point is mostly overlooked by the more individualistically oriented post-Bellah ‘work as a calling’ literature. It was argued, and it will be illustrated more clearly in chapter 4, that Bellah et al. rely on the more prosocial ‘second languages’ of American life to construct their vision of the calling orientation. Bellah et al.’s account of the calling orientation is
intended to provide a way of curbing American individualism and regulating preferences in light of a shared deliberation about common goods. Toward this end, Bellah et al. rely heavily on MacIntyre’s work. Consequently, in what follows, it will be my goal to show just how critical a grasp of MacIntyre’s philosophy is for a proper understanding of Bellah et al.’s calling orientation. This move that Bellah et al. make from preferences to regulated notions of the good is grounded in a MacIntyrean philosophical framework that we must analyze thoroughly.

Therefore, a primary goal of mine will be to shape the future discourse on the calling orientation by showing how MacIntyre pushes beyond individualistic preferences and therapeutic accounts of ‘work as a calling.’ MacIntyre provides resources for understanding one’s calling as practice-based work, or work that regulates individuals’ vision of the good in light of MacIntyre’s historically-informed theory of the virtues, which is rooted in practices, narratives, and living traditions. Moreover, a secondary goal of mine involves a close parallel of Bellah et al. and MacIntyre’s accounts to show that many MacIntyrean scholars stand to gain much from Bellah et al.’s sociological analysis. In many respects, Bellah et al.’s analysis bolsters MacIntyre’s theory of the virtues, and their calling orientation makes his pluralistic vision of achieving common goods more practical within the workplace.
Bellah et al.’s way of thinking about work and the virtues that are required to do ‘good work’ situates individuals within tradition-based workplace communities, providing them with the virtues necessary to achieve (a) the good and worthy ends of practices, (b) the goods of an individual life, and (c) the goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society. So, I argue herein that the post-Bellah ‘work as a calling’ literature must either move beyond notions of subjective preferences and therapeutic rewards to describe the meaningfulness of ‘work as a calling’ or abandon the notion altogether. Bellah et al.’s account of meaning as it pertains to the calling orientation rests upon a vision of ‘good work.’ ‘Good work,’ I argue, hinges on an account of the virtues that is directed toward the achievement of three distinct types of common goods: (a), (b), and (c).

Furthermore, it will be shown to the MacIntyrean community that visions of ‘good work,’ which are sustained by the calling orientation, are accompanied by a nuanced vision of pluralistic collaboration that MacIntyre and Bellah et al. share. (I anticipate that this will be surprising to many readers who are familiar with the typical and misleading characterization of MacIntyre as a sectarian). Bellah et al. as well as MacIntyre’s vision of pluralism matters for research on the calling orientation because these figures demonstrate that individuals within the late modern workplace are informed by a plurality of religious and humanistic traditions, all of which account for ultimate meaning and goodness in different ways that ought to be recognized.
Distinctive religious and humanistic visions of ultimate meaning indeed impact the perceived goodness of one’s calling. Hence, we must attend to the polysemic and multivocal nature of accounting for the goodness of any one particular calling (i.e., a Buddhist doctor within the Western medical tradition is likely to articulate the goodness of his calling differently than a Jewish doctor working within the Western medical tradition). Still, however, Bellah et al. and MacIntyre’s account entails a hopefulness in the possibility of pluralistic, (or, what I shall call *inter-traditional*) striving for the achievement of common goods that are practical enough to agree upon.
Chapter Three:

Alasdair MacIntyre’s Framework & His Account of the Good

This chapter takes a closer look at some of the key aspects of MacIntyre’s philosophy, especially insofar as those aspects are relevant to Bellah et al.’s calling orientation. In the previous chapter, I suggested that the normative values that Bellah et al. bring to bear on the calling orientation are almost entirely absent from the ‘work as a calling’ discourse. The broader picture provided within the previous chapter helped to specify the radical individualism that concerns Bellah and his colleagues. It also pointed to Bellah et al.’s “principal” philosophical “source” of inspiration, Alasdair MacIntyre.\(^\text{160}\) As a consequence, the previous chapter made the case that the ‘work as a calling’ discourse must attend to MacIntyre’s account of practice-based work, which is directed by a vision of the good that regulates preferences and enhances one’s prosocial concerns, directing them toward the achievement of common goods.

In addition to attending to MacIntyrean notions of practices, however, the calling discourse must also attend to related themes within MacIntyre’s work, especially within

\(^{160}\) Bellah et al. (1986: 5).
After Virtue, which Bellah et al. draw on more than any other book to fully frame their moral vision of the calling orientation. What Bellah et al. stand to gain from MacIntyre’s virtue theory involves a vision of common goods that MacIntyre situates within practices, narratives, and traditions.

This contextualization of the virtues and common goods also provides a way of understanding how individualistic preferences are regulated. As we shall see, traditions prescribe narrative visions of the achievement of common goods as well as the practices that are necessary for their achievement. Practices, MacIntyre argues, habituate individuals in the virtues necessary to achieve (a) the good and worthy ends of practices, (b) the goods of an individual life, and (c) the goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society.

Clearly, this pushes the idea of ‘work as a calling’ well beyond subjective preferences and therapeutic rewards. To understand this, however, we need to first get a handle on MacIntyre’s framework. Toward that end, this chapter shall proceed in the following four stages. First, we shall analyze three characters that MacIntyre finds in late modernity – the manager, the aesthete, and the therapist. 161 These are significant to attend to because MacIntyre associates each one of them with a hallmark of the self-serving individualism that Bellah et al. also problematize. Second, we shall examine

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161 In the latest edition of After Virtue, MacIntyre has added a fourth figure, ‘the conservative moralist.’ This, however, is not relevant for Bellah et al.’s research. So, I have chosen to set this interesting and important character aside within this research. For more on this fourth figure, see: MacIntyre (2007: xv).
how MacIntyre’s problematization of these three figures is accompanied by a call to teleological, or goal-oriented reasoning, and a historically-informed theory of the virtues. As we shall see, teleological reasoning is MacIntyre’s solution for transcending subjective preferences and regulating notions of the good in light of the virtues, qua the objective conditions for human excellence. Third, we will see how MacIntyre grounds his goal-oriented theory of the virtues within his account of practices, narratives, and traditions. Within these core components, we will find distinct strands of common goods that are discovered by human beings within practice-based communities: (a) the good and worthy ends of practices, (b) the goods of an individual life, and (c) the goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society. In the next chapter, we shall see how this goal-oriented virtue theory also inspires Bellah et al.’s return to goal-oriented reasoning about common goods at the levels of practices, individual lives, and living traditions. Fourth, and finally, we shall briefly consider the classical republicanism of Aristotle and the Thomistic resources provided by the Christian tradition, both of which MacIntyre relies upon to complete the social theory of the virtues that he begins within After Virtue. Importantly, in the next chapter, we shall see how Bellah et al. draw similarly upon what they refer to as the civic republican and the biblical tradition to restore an account of ‘good work’ that is rooted in a teleological
theory of the virtues, and which supports the achievement of common goods at three distinct levels.\textsuperscript{162}

\textbf{I. The Manager, the Aesthete, & the Therapist}\textsuperscript{163}

Turning now to the three characters of late modernity that MacIntyre problematizes, the manager, the aesthete, and the therapist, we shall see that he takes issue with the nature of contemporary morality by exposing issues pertaining to the characters within late modernity. In \textit{After Virtue}, MacIntyre refers to this morality as emotivism and he expresses concern about the way that it “entails the obliteration of any genuine distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations.”\textsuperscript{164} In fact, MacIntyre argues that “morality in late modernity informs a great deal of contemporary moral utterance and practice and more specifically that the central \textit{characters} of modern society…embody such emotivist modes in their

\textsuperscript{162} Within this chapter and the following, I have chosen to examine the traditions that MacIntyre and Bellah et al. draw upon \textit{last}. I have chosen to do this because, while this is a subject of great importance, I can only provide a 30,000-foot view of the implications of these traditions as it relates to their work. Ultimately, this will have to be given more careful attention in my next book, but a connection must be made herein pertaining to the resources from Aristotelian republicanism and Christianity, which these figures collectively draw upon. As we shall see, MacIntyre does this in a narrower way. Bellah et al.’s scope of civic republicanism and the biblical tradition is far wider than MacIntyre’s argument from within the scope of his Thomistic-NeoAristotelianism.

\textsuperscript{163} I am conscious of the fact that MacIntyre’s earlier works are not gender inclusive. Rather than demarcate in brackets every area where he should have used gender inclusive language, I shall make attempts throughout to point to both males and females within my examples.

\textsuperscript{164} MacIntyre (2007: 23).
behavior.”165 In other words, MacIntyre argues that the manager, the aesthete, and the therapist are representative of “the social characters” of ‘emotivism.’166 They represent what “the social world would look like if seen with emotivist eyes.”167

Referring to the work of William Gass, MacIntyre implies that emotivism causes some to be a manipulative “consumer of persons” and others to embody the self-seeking behaviors of “a person consumed” by their aesthetic delights.168 At times, he argues, “these two characters [the manager and the aesthete] may even on occasion be found in one and the same person who partitions his life between them.”169

Still another character goes about the business of making both (a) consumers of persons, and (b) persons consumed by their preferences, feel better about themselves by effectively helping them attain more of whatever it is that they want. MacIntyre maintains that this is the work of (c) the therapist. He argues that the dominant mode of therapy today is conducted without the ability “to engage in moral debate” about whether or not a patient’s preferences are in fact worth wanting.170

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165 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 73.
166 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid.: 27.
170 Ibid.: 30
With these characters in mind, MacIntyre exposes “the manipulative mode of moral instrumentalism” and the loss of a moral distinction “between characters who entertain themselves by willing the good of others and those who pursue the fulfillment of their desires without concern for any good but their own.”\textsuperscript{171} So emotivism, according to MacIntyre, obliterates prosocial concerns related to shared visions of common goods. It also blurs the morality of the social characters within late modernity, either tabling moral concerns altogether or reducing moral concerns to mere notions of personal preferences.

Emotivism, MacIntyre argues, receives support from the tenets of “modern liberal individualism.”\textsuperscript{172} It should be noted that the emotivism MacIntyre speaks of in After Virtue evolves into “expressivism” within his later work.\textsuperscript{173} Expressivism, as an evolved form of emotivism, is representative of the contemporary moral beliefs of social characters residing within a modern liberal-individualistic culture. In Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity, MacIntyre most recently refers to these expressivist beliefs, which both guide and pervade late modernity, as the framework of modern “Morality.”\textsuperscript{174}

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Whether he speaks of ‘emotivism,’ ‘expressivism,’ ‘modern liberal individualism,’ or ‘Morality,’ he is essentially speaking of one and the same thing.¹⁷⁵

MacIntyre’s philosophical claims about the insufficiencies of this individualistic ‘Morality’ are best illuminated by his critique of the manager, the aesthete, and the therapist. So, by attending to the characters of ‘Morality,’ we can get a clearer picture of the hallmarks of the individualistic and impoverished moral thinking that he problematizes. Per MacIntyre, these characters are “the moral representatives of their culture and they are so because of the way in which moral and metaphysical ideas and theories assume through them an embodied existence in the social world. [These] Characters are the masks worn by [modern] moral philosophies.”¹⁷⁶ Because MacIntyre rejects the modern moral philosophies that these social roles embody, it is important to detail the way that MacIntyre describes the commitments of each one of these social figures. Doing so gives us a picture of what MacIntyre finds so impoverishing about the ways that ‘Morality’ functions in late modernity. First, we shall take a closer look at the bureaucrat of late modernity, the manager.

¹⁷⁵ MacIntyre also uses the term ‘bureaucratic individualism’ in reference to the manager and the therapist. I have tabled a discussion of this term until the next chapter, where we shall see how Bellah et al. engage with it. See, for example, MacIntyre (2007) & Bellah et al. (1986).

Ia. The Manager

The manager “represents in his character the obliteration of the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations.”\textsuperscript{177} He places primacy on “effectiveness in transforming raw materials into products, unskilled labor into skilled labor, investment into profits.”\textsuperscript{178} The fact that the manager concerns himself with these institutional demands is not what makes the manager manipulative. After all, MacIntyre is sympathetic to the idiom that ‘money does not grow on trees.’ Institutions must be sustainable to provide a place for workers to grow within workplace practices, for products to be made, and for communities to flourish within or beyond the workplace. However, the manager’s effectiveness does not necessarily entail consideration of such good and worthy ends. Rather, the manager “treats ends as given, as outside his scope.”\textsuperscript{179} In other words, it is not the business of the manager to consider how his work results in good products or how it contributes to the flourishing of workers and communities. It is not the manager’s task to have prosocial concerns or to concern himself with any moral convictions, even moral convictions that he may exhibit in other areas of his life.\textsuperscript{180} While he is at work, the manager’s task can be summed up in

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid.: 30.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
one word – ‘effectiveness.’ Effectiveness most often means maximizing production and profit. Without concern for good and worthy ends, this maximization principle often gets exercised in a manipulative way that tends to be at the expense of excellent products, the flourishing of workers, and the health of communities and society.

Moreover, the bureaucratic manager is an embodiment of manipulative social relations because of the way that he attributes his effectiveness to an illusory kind of science, which MacIntyre claims is asserted rather than rationally grounded.\(^{181}\) This quasi-science legitimizes his authority within the workplace. However, the manager’s authority exists only insofar as he can retain power and maintain an illusion of secret brilliance, so he must always keep up the act of possessing some mysterious kind of expertise in order to protect his power. In a way that is far more authoritarian and unscientific than it is democratic and rational, MacIntyre’s bureaucratic manager is primarily motivated by the prescribed goals that his institution demands of him and he especially concerns himself with the manipulative means necessary to both persuade the managed of his expertise and to achieve whatever ends he receives from the ‘top of the food chain.’

The way that MacIntyre’s manager places primacy on goods like profit and production, over and frequently against common goods, impedes the manager’s ability

\(^{181}\) One gets the sense that MacIntyre, clearly not a proponent of scientific theories of management, has them in mind here.
to be virtuous. (This will become more apparent when MacIntyre’s account of virtue
cultivation and the balance of what MacIntyre refers to as internal and external goods
within practices is discussed later).

Furthermore, placing primacy on production and maximization creates a similar
character imbalance in the lives of workers who report to the manager. Like the
manager, workers reporting to him do not learn essential virtues that habituate their
desire for collective goals and a prosocial contribution via their work. The managed do
not get to participate in a democratic discussion about good ends within the workplace,
causing their own critical thinking about good and worthy ends to atrophy.

Indeed, MacIntyre thinks that democratic discussions of ends would provide
resources for the manager and other workers to practice goal-oriented reasoning about
common goods in other areas of their lives (this will become more apparent when we
take a closer look at MacIntyre’s account of practices). All too often, however, workers
understand that their job is secure only insofar as they can meet the manager’s ever-
increasing demands for effectiveness and maximization, usually concerning production
and profit. This, in turn, creates a kind of character imbalance. Workers begin to assume
similar private and greedy ways of behaving that exhibit a detachment from moral
considerations about the goods they ought to pursue within other areas of their public
and private lives. Hence, MacIntyre’s discussion of the manager naturally leads him to
a discussion of the aesthete, who becomes consumed by his preferences. As a
consequence of not considering ends in the workplace, both the manager and his workers are less inclined to consider good and worthy ends in their private lives as well.

**Ib. The Aesthete**

The authoritarian influence of the manager in the public sphere tends to minimize workers’ democratic deliberation about good and worthy ends altogether, which is consequential to their private lives in addition to their public lives. To the extent that workers receive money that can provide them with a lifestyle of material comfort, or to the extent that managers make enough money to create “some social distance from the necessity of work,” individuals increasingly attend to their personal preferences as a way of funding (or dreaming about funding) a lavish and comfortable private lifestyle.\(^{182}\) So, rather than consider good and collective ends, or wants that are ‘worth wanting,’ the rich exercise their financial freedom by executing a utilitarian calculation of pleasure maximization. And, MacIntyre claims, this happens while “the rest of us often share the attitudes of the rich in fantasy and aspiration.”\(^{183}\)

Hence, like the manager, working men and women, even the unwealthy, become accustomed to means-thinking and aesthetic dreaming at home. This is partly because

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\(^{182}\) Ibid.: 25.

\(^{183}\) Ibid.
of the authoritarian institutions that they are engaged in within their public lives, many of which limit a collective deliberation about moral ends. Anything that is collectively discussed generally turns out to be a discussion of means rather than a deliberation about ends. Workers do not deliberate about common goods in public life, and this subsequently impedes their deliberation about common goods in private life.

So, instead of considering ends that are worth wanting, the aesthete often prioritizes a consideration of the means necessary to secure whatever he fancies – and what he fancies is usually material goods or fulfilling life experiences. MacIntyre claims that the private lives of many late modern people epitomize the social role of the aesthete who, having “means searches restlessly for ends on which he may employ them.”184 Lacking a collective deliberation about good and worthy ends that are worth pursuing, the aesthete tends to focus on the means necessary to secure what he wants “without a concern for any good but his own.”185

MacIntyre also associates his characterization of the aesthete with “a long tradition of moral commentary,” running from Diderot and Kierkegaard all the way through figures like Henry James.186 More recent figures like James concern themselves

184 Ibid.

185 Ibid.: 24.

186 Ibid. The literary figures that MacIntyre discusses within After Virtue became sources of inspiration for Bellah et al.’s commentary on individualism and the need for collective, or institutional, deliberation. Consequently, I have chosen to focus on the literary figures within After Virtue instead of other figures that also epitomize the aesthete
with self-centered individuals, like the fictional characters, Ralph Touchett and Gilbert Osmond, in James’ book, *The Portrait of a Lady*. James’ characters are representative of “rich aesthetes whose interest is to fend off the kind of boredom that is so characteristic of modern leisure by contriving behavior in others that will be responsive to their wishes, that will feed their sated appetites.”\(^{187}\) While James’ characters are fictional and situated within a “carefully identified social milieu,” MacIntyre believes that James’ literary characters illuminate a broader social reality.\(^{188}\)

Indeed, such literary figures illuminate the manipulative social role of the aesthete for MacIntyre. So, the aesthete, like the manager, is also engaged in manipulative social relations by which he has full license to attain only the material goods and personal experiences that are of interest to himself. Even when an aesthete is possessing of more social graces, like Touchett in comparison to Osmond within James’ novel, the primary motivation tends to entail a drive for self-fulfillment and an escape from boredom.

Placing primacy on these personal preferences is all too often morally blinding for the aesthete, leading to certain actions that are at the expense of others and the

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\(^{187}\) Ibid.

\(^{188}\) Ibid.: 25.
collective good, even if they are not deliberately ‘vicious’ actions. MacIntyre finds that, while often lacking civic virtue, this self-interested search for pleasure by way of the fulfillment of one’s preferences appears to be the red thread within the moral commentary running all the way from Diderot’s literary characters to James’:

The unifying preoccupation of that tradition is the condition of those who see in the social world nothing but a meeting place for individual wills, each with its own set of attitudes and preferences and who understand that world solely as an arena for the achievement of their own satisfaction, who interpret reality as a series of opportunities for their enjoyment and for whom the last enemy is boredom.¹⁸⁹

So, the life of the aesthete is characterized by a restless search for satisfaction and a flee from a much lesser stimulating state of boredom. This tireless search places primacy on means-thinking for the maximization of personal pleasure and the achievement of personal preferences.

Very often, the aesthete’s preferences are considered innate and unchangeable. This parallels the ‘work as a calling’ literature’s romantic emphasis on ‘core’ preferences that constitute each individual’s identity. For the aesthete, this means that the ends worth pursuing are simply whatever one prefers at his or her ‘core.’ While the aesthete’s behavior is partially a consequence of the absence of ends-discussions within the workplace, as we have seen, it is also the consequence of the literary and philosophical movement that MacIntyre believes reinforces these emotivist patterns of

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.: 24-25.
behavior. In MacIntyre’s view, the aesthete is, partially, a product of bad social narratives.

Unfortunately, MacIntyre thinks, such behavior is strongly reinforced by another social role – the therapist.

**Ic. The Therapist**

MacIntyre’s characterization of the therapist is particularly striking because of the ways that the therapist reinforces the attitudes and preferences of the other social roles. The primary function of the therapist involves maximizing the means-thinking of individuals so that they are better equipped to carry out their goals in private. In MacIntyre’s view, therapists assist patients in their struggle to get whatever it is that patients want. Hence, the therapist does not prescribe goals for the patient. To illustrate this point, MacIntyre mentions two works published by Philip Rieff in the decades leading up to *After Virtue*, entitled *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* and *Fellow Teachers*, wherein he argues that “Rieff has documented with devastating insight a number of the ways in which truth has been displaced as a value and replaced by psychological effectiveness.”\(^{190}\) Affirming Rieff’s conclusion, MacIntyre argues that the therapist, much like the manager, treats ends as given (in this case by the patient rather than the

\(^{190}\) Ibid.: 30-31. Also see Rieff (1966) & (1975).
institutionally asserted ends that the manager treats as given). “Neither manager nor therapist, in their roles as manager and therapist, do or are able to engage in moral debate,” MacIntyre claims. Instead, “the therapist also treats ends as given, as outside his scope; his concern is also with technique, with effectiveness in transforming neurotic symptoms into directed energy, maladjusted individuals into well-adjusted ones.”

Not deliberating about ends with the patient, the therapist focuses on the means necessary to more effectively achieve the ends that the patient brings to the table – ends that are rooted in personal preferences.

While MacIntyre notes that there are some theorists who push against this trend, he maintains that the particular “mode” of therapy that informs his conceptualization of the therapist “is of far greater social significance” than alternative ways of understanding the function of therapy in late modernity. MacIntyre is right to lend credit to certain therapists who attempt to reclaim moral resources that have been mostly abandoned in late modernity, however. Figures such as Paul L. Homer and Robert C. Roberts, whose work attempts to redirect the goals of modern therapy by attending to resources from the field of virtue ethics, are figures that MacIntyre now

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191 Ibid.: 30.
192 Ibid.
supports.\textsuperscript{194} So, his critique of the therapist is not a critique of all forms of therapy and of all scholars who write about therapy.\textsuperscript{195} Rather, his critique of the therapist represents a critique of the dominant modes of means-thinking and effectiveness that pervade within the public and the private sphere. In particular, MacIntyre critiques the dominance of this kind of means-thinking because it takes the place of therapy as a practice, or therapy that would entail a rational deliberation about common goods between the patient and the therapist. Therapy as a practice, MacIntyre argues, would require habituation in the virtues that regulate our desire for good and worthy ends.

\textbf{Id. What the Three Social Roles Teach Us}

What all three of these social roles exhibit is the embodiment of an impoverished individualistic morality that MacIntyre refers to initially as emotivism, and later as expressivism. In public and private, ends-thinking has been obliterated and means-thinking dominates in its place.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{194} In particular, see Roberts (2007), whose work builds on Homer’s research.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{195} The same should also be stated regarding MacIntyre’s critique of the manager. Although he does not lend similar credit to scholars who attempt to curb the dominant modes of scientific theories of management within \textit{After Virtue}, he has extended his support to Virtue Ethicists working within the field of MacIntyrean Business Ethics much more recently. See, for example, MacIntyre’s discussion of automobile manufacturing as a practice: MacIntyre (2017: 170).}
Chris Lutz, an important interpreter of *After Virtue* whose analysis is widely praised, even by MacIntyre himself, summarizes the implications of these characters’ adherence to the tenets of emotivism in the following way:

What these characters have in common is that they never truly engage in shared practical deliberation or moral debate with others. They do not question what they do, they merely do it, and they judge their success by the measurable effectiveness of their efforts to join other to the projects that they manage. The rich aesthete manipulates others for entertainment. The manager drives the bureaucracy to achieve its ends without questioning those ends. The therapist helps the patient to become more effective in doing whatever the patient chooses to do, without questioning the patient’s goals and purposes.  

Lutz’s words precisely mirror the characterizations of each of the three social roles that MacIntyre articulates within *After Virtue*. Based on MacIntyre’s beliefs about the role of the manager, the aesthete, and the therapist, Lutz concludes that the desire to share collective projects and viewpoints still exists, “but there is nothing objective that we modern agents can point to that might require anyone else to join in our personal preferences and opinions; so if we align others to ourselves, manipulation seems to be the only means to do so.” In other words, manipulation seems to take the place of objective ends-thinking amongst these characters. Convincing other people that what we want is what they should want becomes the dominant way of making sense of morality in late modernity.

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197 Ibid.: 66.
Moreover, an additional problem accompanies this means-thinking, and it, too, greatly impoverishes late modern individuals. MacIntyre argues that regardless of the predominant role that the self embodies within late modernity, “the self is thought of as lacking any necessary social identity, because the kind of social identity that it once enjoyed is no longer available.”198 Lacking collective deliberation within “a variety of social groups” by which “the individual identifies himself or herself and is identified by others,” the individual has no resources that transcend mere preferences to make sense of his or her identity.199 Hence, MacIntyre concludes his discussion of these social roles by arguing that “the self is now thought of as criterionless, because the kind of telos [qua function] in terms of which it once judged and acted is no longer thought to be credible.”200 Ironically, the very project of identity formation, which is so prioritized by the late modern self, turns out to be hampered by the self’s inability to rely on any other force besides a manipulative and self-serving morality that is rooted in means-thinking. Hence, the self becomes a ghostly shadow. Manipulation turns out to be the only resource, and it operates in such a way that yearns to make others see the world and oneself the way that one wants the world and oneself to be seen.

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198 MacIntyre (2007: 33).
199 Ibid.
200 Ibid.
Without any objective foundation for understanding the *telos*, or the function, of the human being, MacIntyre believes that such a ‘Morality’ is arbitrary and such a self-identity is radically impoverished. It is precisely for these reasons that he calls readers to teleological reasoning *immediately after* exposing the impoverished ‘Morality’ of late modernity and these impoverished social roles.

II. MacIntyre’s Call to Teleological Reasoning

MacIntyre’s *After Virtue* and the social roles that he exposes within the text should be read as a call to teleological, or goal-oriented reasoning. While the rest of his corpus expands on this account in crucial ways, the MacIntyre of *After Virtue* explicitly *calls for a turn away from emotivism*. MacIntyre turns away from emotivism and the social characters within liberal-individualistic society due to their rejection of teleological reasoning. As we have seen within the social roles that MacIntyre critiques, all discussions of moral ends (i.e., ends of particular workplace practices, ends of therapy, other ends of civic life, ends of the good human life, etc.) are replaced with the different forms of manipulative means-thinking that the social roles of the manager, aesthete, and therapist all embody.

In place of this emotivist pattern of manipulation, MacIntyre proposes a NeoAristotelian form of teleological deliberation that he grounds in Aristotle’s ethics. While late modernity praises the autonomy that leads to the individual’s free thinking
about moral agency, MacIntyre does not maintain that rejecting a human *telos* is cause for celebration; rather, as Lutz paraphrases, it represents “the turn that led to the culture of emotivism.”

MacIntyre, as we shall see, turns to Aristotle to turn away from emotivism. Before we look at this turn toward Aristotle, however, we should get clearer on the turn that MacIntyre believes led to the culture of emotivism in the first place.

IIa. The Turn That Led to the Culture of Emotivism

The turn that led to the culture of emotivism and a denial of teleology can be very briefly detailed as follows. The ‘Morality’ of late modernity shirks the idea that there is any final end toward which the good human life is directed. Having no account of objective goodness that should regulate our preferences, ‘Morality’ can no longer support any kind of collective deliberation about common goods more generally. As a consequence, there is no way for this liberal-individualistic ‘Morality’ to account for any rational construal of *telos* via some objective notion of goodness. This is because the denial of a *telos* in late modernity means that no such notion of objective goodness is any longer said to exist.

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201 Lutz (2012: 57).
Any notion of moral objectivity - the foundation of teleological deliberation - is seen as a social constraint that inhibits the self’s expression of preferences. So, the very idea of a human telos, then, which supposes that there is some objective account of the good life for humans, now epitomizes social constraint in late modernity. Such an account has become antithetical to one of the highest values in the culture of emotivism – autonomy. Believing that any objective account of goodness is both indefensible and morally constraining for the free-thinking, willing, and desiring agent, emotivist culture instead attempts to free moral agents from all objective notions of goodness. In pursuit of this “old meaning of freedom,” in Bellah et al.’s words, the human telos became one of the first things to go.202

Any objective moral foundation grounded in a shared human telos and a theory of the virtues got thrown out, MacIntyre argues, when theological and philosophical schools emphasized only one aspect of the human being at the expense of fuller notions of character that come to us from the traditions such as Aristotelianism, Augustinianism, and Thomism. Character, once historically constituted via a shared human telos, became grounded in a quasi-Christian morality apart from that telos. This happened in successive stages, MacIntyre argues. Kierkegaard emphasized the will, or

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an ethical choice beyond reason, Kant emphasized reason and rational universal maxims, and then Diderot and Hume emphasized an ethic of human desire. 203

A hyper-emphasis on any one of these aspects of human agency (will, reason, or desire) over and against the other two marks a critical turn in this story for MacIntyre. Each successive system builds on the failure of earlier systems, and it does so in an attempt to found morality on one aspect of human agency not yet tried. In so doing, however, all of these thinkers reject historically-constituted notions of teleology and fuller accounts of human agency.

Consequently, any appeals to objectivity within emotivist culture become “moral fictions” that are practically useful in the hands of manipulative “bureaucrats” who steer others in the direction of their wills, MacIntyre argues. 204 In a climate where the unhabituated preferences of free-thinking individuals win the day, this means that even treacherous political ideologies such as Stalinism cannot be morally rejected - a problem that began haunting MacIntyre long before his publication of After Virtue. 205 Preferences become the most common rational justification for human action, and the skill of

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203 MacIntyre (2007: 47). There is obviously a metanarrative within this paragraph that warrants a book itself, but I shall not be the one to write it.

204 Ibid.

205 Ibid.: xvii.
effective manipulation ends up replacing earlier accounts of the virtues that once were construed via a shared human telos.

MacIntyre abbreviates the culture of emotivism, the way that treacherous political ideologies can come about, and the turn away from teleological deliberation, by pointing to the philosophy of Nietzsche, who sees all claims to objectivity as a mask of the will to power.\textsuperscript{206} Nietzsche represents the concomitant failure of morality since the Enlightenment, which ushered in the culture of emotivism. However, MacIntyre wonders whether emotivist culture was right to follow the Nietzschean rejection of teleology. After all, the consequences of rejecting an end for human agency entail an utterly capricious morality that creates the moral vacuum of relativism and can ultimately lead to treacherous political ideologies such as Stalinism.

MacIntyre finds this moral relativism problematic for the very reasons that Nietzsche captures within his famous ‘will to power’ argument. Interestingly, MacIntyre believes that Nietzsche’s critical argument about morality since the Enlightenment is strikingly similar to MacIntyre’s own critical analysis of emotivist culture. MacIntyre explains Nietzsche’s position in the following way:

For it was Nietzsche’s historic achievement to understand more clearly than any other philosopher – certainly more clearly than his counterparts in Anglo-Saxon emotivism and continental existentialism – not only that what purported to be appeals to objectivity were in fact expressions of subjective will, but also the nature of the problems that this posed for moral philosophy... The underlying

\textsuperscript{206} Ibid.: 109-120.
structure of his [critical] argument is as follows: if there is nothing to morality but expressions of will, my morality can only be what my will creates. There can be no place for such fictions as natural rights, utility, and the greatest happiness of the greatest number. I myself must now bring into existence ‘new tables of what is good.’

Nietzsche’s finding means that the claims of objectivity that still exist within emotivist culture, such as natural rights and the Greatest Happiness Principle, are indefensible and criterionless. They point to a relic of moral objectivity that mostly got buried with an older age. Earlier ages looked to moral traditions to conceptualize a shared human telos. Now, the manipulative characters of late modernity still employ the language of objectivity that is associated with earlier ages, but they tend to do so for capricious ends, especially when it is politically convenient, MacIntyre argues. Because a telos is mostly denied by emotivist culture, except for when it serves as a means for manipulative ends, MacIntyre argues that now all we have to draw on for ‘Morality’ is human preferences. This, he and Nietzsche agree, grants the will the authority to ‘do what it wants.’

Sharing Nietzsche’s criticism about the way that emotivism masks the will to power, MacIntyre finds that the self utterly lacks resources for making sense of moral agency in any way that transcends Nietzsche’s individualistic ‘tables of goodness.’ Because the modern self is not encouraged to deliberate about the good life for humans,

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207 Ibid.: 113-114.
the self lacks direction toward any particular goals, or ends, beyond mere preferences. Moreover, the self lacks any socially constituted form that would shape its identity and expand its prosocial concerns.

To the extent that the self remains social, the self merely encounters others to get what it wants from them. So, in late modernity, MacIntyre argues, even other selves become mere means for getting what the willing-self wants. Hence, relationships become manipulative. Moreover, late modern moral agents, who are all too keenly aware of the ways that their preferences can change on a whim, like the aesthete’s so often do, become frustrated. So, they go to see therapists, who make them ‘feel better’ by increasing the effectiveness of their means-thinking and by helping them get clearer about whatever it is that their ‘core’ self truly wants. Alas, MacIntyre would argue, upon leaving the therapist’s office, the relativistic and self-serving cycle of the willing agent starts all over again.

An early and interesting account of this is depicted by Wolff (1968: 172), who argues the following: “Classical liberalism makes the mistake of conceiving the relationship among men as purely instrumental or accidental rather than as intrinsic and essential...Indeed, classical liberalism, insofar as it assumes that all values are private values, portrays society as an aggregation of Robinson Crusoes who have left their island of private value merely for the instrumental benefit of increasing their enjoyment through mutually beneficial exchange.”
IIb. MacIntyre’s Turn to a Partially NeoAristotelian Teleology

MacIntyre’s assessment of emotivist culture is certainly not representative of all individuals within late modernity. His assessment of ‘Morality’ in late modernity is indeed a scathing review. It is one that I have not made any attempts to exaggerate. The lack of any moral coherence that he finds in modernity is precisely the reason that he makes a strong call to return teleological reasoning. To the extent that that civic virtue and historically-constituted ideas about the good life remain, MacIntyre argues that this is not attributable to the values of emotivism, but rather to a waning Aristotelianism that must be salvaged before the mere fragments of it that are left become completely buried.209 Ultimately, MacIntyre returns to Aristotle in place of Nietzsche for a teleological landscape that he hopes to reclaim. He rejects Nietzsche’s constructive argument, which accepts the will to power as the only viable way of understanding morality in modernity. The way that Nietzsche lets “will replace reason” leads to a “slave-morality” that “may be the prophetic precursor of a new era,” MacIntyre argues.210 Recognizing the danger of accepting Nietzsche’s Übermensch, the moral exemplar of Nietzsche’s constructive argument, MacIntyre argues in After Virtue that

209 MacIntyre (2007: 1-5) provides an illustration of the problem of ‘Morality’ in late modernity by way of an analogy, wherein he imagines the loss of science and the need for late modern individuals to pick up the pieces of it that are left, trying to reclaim what has been forgotten. In a similar way, he maintains that this is what has happened to tradition-constituted accounts of the virtues in a late modernity.

210 Ibid.: 114.
disagreement over an objective human *telos* is not sufficient grounds for an outright dismissal of the possibility that an objective human *telos* might exist. Seeking one’s identity and gaining intellectual clarity about a universally shared human *telos*, MacIntyre thinks, is the only way to escape the Nietzschean position of extreme relativism and to restore a teleological root to morality in late modernity.

That ‘Morality’ has lost its teleological root, an idea first proposed by Elizabeth Anscombe within her seminal paper, “Modern Moral Philosophy,” is the very source of inspiration behind MacIntyre’s call to teleological reasoning.\(^{211}\) Anscombe is a large part of the reason that MacIntyre turns to Aristotle. She famously called moral theorists during the 20\(^{th}\) century to restore a teleological root to contemporary moral discourse. Influenced by Anscombe, MacIntyre shares her conviction that moral “concepts of ‘obligation,’ of being bound or required as by a law, should remain though they had lost their root.”\(^{212}\)

What this means is that modern moral theories, such as Deontology and Utilitarianism, for example, attempt to provide rule-based notions of what individuals ‘ought’ to do in any given instance. However, these ‘ought’ claims are incoherent because the agential root for which humans ‘ought’ to follow the rules of either Deontology or

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\(^{211}\) Anscombe (1958).

\(^{212}\) Ibid.: 5.
Utilitarianism has disappeared with the disposal of a shared human telos, or with the disposal of what the end of human life ‘is.’

Anscombe and MacIntyre speak of this disappearance of teleology as the burial of a more total notion of human agency that had been passed down for centuries, in different narrative forms, by various heroic societies and, eventually, the Christian tradition. MacIntyre’s narrative accounts for this loss around the time of the Enlightenment. Philosophers today popularly speak of this problem as the divorce of ‘ought’ claims from ‘is’ claims.

Not having a telos that speaks to what the human function ‘is,’ however means that modern moral theories can no longer account for what humans ‘ought’ to do in any way that is rooted, in good human agency. But late modern moral theories attempt to make ‘ought’ claims apart from ‘is’ claims anyway, Anscombe and MacIntyre find. In other words, theories such as Deontology and Utilitarianism uproot the very teleological notion of the good human life and proceed anyway to discuss the rules that excellent human beings ‘ought’ to follow. Virtue ethicists today argue that they do so with a problematically limited conception of human agency.

This divorce of ‘ought’ from ‘is’ prompts MacIntyre’s return to a NeoAristotelian teleology. However, reclaiming Aristotle’s teleological root is not an easy task for MacIntyre, who had to grant the scientific achievements of the 19th and 20th century. These achievements refuted Aristotle’s metaphysical claims about the shared telos of
humans. Importantly, the shared ‘form’ of human nature provided part of Aristotle’s metaphysical foundation for teleological reasoning within his biology. MacIntyre is forced to reject Aristotle’s metaphysics and his biology, seeing how contemporary science illustrates that Aristotle’s biology is, quite frankly, outdated.213 By rejecting Aristotle’s “metaphysical biology,” MacIntyre must dispense with Aristotle’s account of human nature, or Aristotle’s account of what a human being ‘is’ at the biological level, until he can properly revise Aristotle’s metaphysical biology.214

While *After Virtue* does not objectively provide a metaphysical biology that accounts for human nature in any way that replaces Aristotle’s, MacIntyre does imply throughout that, whatever the human *telos* ‘is,’ Aristotle provides additional resources for understanding it outside of his metaphysical biology. MacIntyre sidesteps questions of metaphysics and biology until later works, which exhibit his ever-increasing realization of the significance of a metaphysical biology for a fuller account of human nature and human agency.215

In the meantime, however, and as we shall see, MacIntyre finds that there are certain insights gained from Aristotle that can be employed right away to restore a teleological account of ethics. In the next section, we shall see how he situates his return


214 Ibid.

215 See, for example, MacIntyre (1988) & (1999a).
to teleological reasoning within an account of the virtues that speaks to patterns of human excellence as they are reflected within practices, narratives, and traditions.

III. How MacIntyre Situates His Call to Teleological Reasoning Within a Tripartite Conception of the Virtues & Common Goods

Rather than accept the relativism of morality, which leads to the Nietzschean ‘tables of goodness,’ MacIntyre’s work represents his attempt to carry moral philosophy forward. He does so by heeding Anscombe’s call for a return to Virtue Ethics via the way that the NeoAristotelian tradition thinks about moral agency (taking into account not one, but all three aspects of human agency – the will, reason, and desire).

Turning to Aristotle, MacIntyre sees that he can either proceed with a teleology that rests on Aristotle’s biology, Thomas Aquinas’ theological reworking of Aristotle, or the social grounds that can be found within the continuously unfolding tradition of NeoAristotelianism more broadly. With the help of Anscombe, the MacIntyre of After Virtue, still finding his way through the “moral wilderness” of emotivism and not yet decided on a metaphysical biology, realizes that developing a NeoAristotelian account of human excellence, beginning with social practices, provides an opportunity to partially rediscover a teleological root for human action.216

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216 Anscombe (1958: 5).
Because MacIntyre’s return to teleology within *After Virtue* begins with practices rather than a metaphysical biology, it is often thought of as a *partial reconstruction of Aristotle’s teleology*, or “an entirely social account of teleology.”\(^{217}\) So, “for MacIntyre, the standpoint of social practice is the road not taken that leads through the study of human action to the discovery of objective conditions for excellence in human agency.”\(^{218}\)

Although MacIntyre begins with practices, as we shall see, he must further explore the objective conditions for excellence in human agency by attending to the broader narratives and traditions that are associated with practices. These narratives and traditions provide the moral content for understanding excellence in human agency within practices. Moreover, they provide the moral content for envisioning the good life of the individual and the community. Provided with this moral content from tradition-constituted narratives, as we shall see, MacIntyre’s social teleology is able to deliberate about the achievement of common goods.

It is important to emphasize here that MacIntyre’s attempt to restore a social teleology in late modernity that deliberates about the achievement of common goods requires that he also attend to a tradition-constituted conceptualization of the virtues. *Importantly, the achievement of common goods requires the virtues. It is the job of the virtues to sustain all of the distinct types of common goods.* So then, for something to be a virtue,

\(^{217}\) Lutz (2012: 139).

\(^{218}\) Lutz. (2012: 34). Herein, I am building on Lutz’s argument when I employ the phrase, ‘objective conditions.’
MacIntyre argues that it must sustain humans in their achievement of common goods at the three distinct levels were mentioned earlier. The virtues support (a) the good and worthy ends of practices, (b) the goods of an individual life, and (c) the goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society. Therefore, MacIntyre’s restoration of teleology entails a tripartite contextualization of the virtues and the common goods that they sustain.

The next several pages will sketch MacIntyre’s restoration of teleology through a tripartite contextualization of the virtues and the common goods that they sustain. This process takes place in three distinct steps. MacIntyre’s first move is to contextualize the virtues within practices, attending to the goods of excellence that specific forms of practical activities uniquely provide. Practices, he argues, acquaint individuals with the virtues that are required to achieve excellence in a whole range of other activities that humans engage in as well. This opens the door to MacIntyre’s second step. Next, MacIntyre contextualizes virtues within narratives of human life. Here, he is concerned with how the virtues that support the internal goods of practices also sustain individuals along their narrative quest for the good life, as we shall see. Third, and finally, we shall see how MacIntyre contextualizes the virtues within traditions with shared histories of the goods that sustain communities. In what follows, I shall examine MacIntyre’s successive contextualization of the virtues within (a) practices, (b) narratives, and (c)
traditions, spelling out the common goods that these dimensions of his theory of the virtues provide.

IIIa. Virtues & Practices

As we have just seen, MacIntyre argues that restoring a human telos in modernity requires us to attend first to the objective conditions for excellence within practices. Then, in the next subsections, we can examine how achieving excellence within practices habituates individuals in the virtues that are required to set out on a “quest” for the good human life, and also how these objective conditions for human excellence result in healthy individuals who are prosocial contributors within their tradition-guided communities and in their intra-traditional settings (i.e., the workplace, among other settings where individuals from a plurality of traditions must work together while respecting the polysemic and multivocal nature of visions of the good in these secular spheres).

Understanding excellence within practices requires that we first attend to MacIntyre’s very distinct definition of practices, and the two types of ‘goods’ that are associated with all practices. He defines practices as:

Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate

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to, and partially definitive of that form of activity, with the result that human
powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions to the ends and goods
involved, are systematically extended.\textsuperscript{220}

Within this definition, it becomes clear that the process of restoring teleology happens,
in part, by attending to goods \textit{internal} to social practices. Each social practice provides
certain “goods of excellence,” or “internal goods,” MacIntyre argues.\textsuperscript{221} Similar to the
way that MacIntyre maintains humans have a shared \textit{telos}, practices are oriented
around a shared \textit{telos} or a final end for which they exist.

Knowledge about internal goods comes by way of the individuals’ participation
within a community that continuously advances a conception of what doing a shared
activity \textit{well} looks like. Hence, achieving goods internal to any given practice means that
individuals must \textit{deliberate} about the ends for which specific social practices exist and
\textit{submit} to the best standards of excellence that have been made available so far to
achieve those ends.\textsuperscript{222}

MacIntyre’s account of restoring ends-thinking through attending to the internal
goods of practices hinges on the words of Aristotle in the \textit{Nichomachean Ethics}. One key
passage is 1.7, where Aristotle states the following:

\begin{quote}
Ibid.: 187.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{220} Ibid.: 187.

\textsuperscript{221} MacIntyre (2007) uses the language of ‘internal goods’ within \textit{After Virtue}. In later works, he speaks of these
goods as ‘goods of excellence.’ See, for example, MacIntyre (2017). Across his work, these terms can be used
interchangeably.

\textsuperscript{222} MacIntyre (2007: 187).
Let us again return to the good we are seeking and ask what it can be. It seems different in different actions and arts; it is different in medicine, in strategy, and in the other arts likewise. What then is the [internal] good of each? Surely that for whose sake everything else is done. In medicine this is health, in strategy victory, in architecture a house, in any other sphere something else, and in every action and pursuit the end [or the telos]; for it is for the sake of this that all men do whatever else they do.\footnote{Aristotle (2000: 1.7).}

Here, Aristotle maintains, and MacIntyre agrees, that the telos of a practice is reached by the successful completion of a given practice. The successful completion of a practice involves achieving the goods of excellence that a practice provides. The goods of excellence, as MacIntyre refers to them, are those goods that a practice can offer which are ends in themselves, rather than means to some other end. As Aristotle states within his ethics, one kind of good internal to architecture is a well-built house, for example. Providing another example, Aristotle argues that one kind of good internal to medicine is the health that the practice of medicine brings to the patient. In this way, each practice offers specific goods of excellence, (i.e., a good product or an excellent service) that may only be achieved within that particular practice.

But the situation, both in Aristotle’s historical context and in MacIntyre’s historical context, is much more complicated than a mere deliberation over the internal goods of practices. There are other goods associated with practices as well, ones which
tend to distract people from teleological deliberation altogether if pursued over and against goods internal to practices. Many tasks, as Aristotle suggests, have evidently more than one end, and we choose some of these (e.g. wealth, flutes, and in general instruments) for the sake of something else...Now we call that which is in itself worthy of pursuit more final than that which is worthy of pursuit for the sake of something else.\textsuperscript{224}

The practice of architecture, in addition to the internal good of a well-built house, also leads to the acquisition of wealth. The acquisition of wealth within a practice such as architecture is something that MacIntyre, like Aristotle, considers a good that is not sought for its own sake, but rather \textit{for the sake of something else}. MacIntyre refers to these goods as “external goods,” or “goods of effectiveness.”\textsuperscript{225} Importantly, these goods are not to be considered ‘more final’ than goods internal to practices.

That being said, however, the argument and social roles that MacIntyre traces force us to admit that external goods indeed are very often pursued by late modern managers and unvirtuous institutions \textit{at the expense of internal goods and at the expense of teleological deliberation}. MacIntyre’s articulation of the obliteration of ends-thinking and his illumination of means-thinking for product and profit maximization is intended to illustrate ways that these goods often are misprioritized. MacIntyre’s account makes it

\textsuperscript{224} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{225} MacIntyre (2007) uses the language of ‘external goods’ within \textit{After Virtue}. In later works, he speaks of these goods as ‘goods of effectiveness.’ See, for example, MacIntyre (2017). Across his work, these terms can be used interchangeably.
very clear, however, that external goods always ought to be subservient to the ‘more final’ ends of practices, or the goods internal to practices.

What has happened in modernity, MacIntyre claims, is that “the concept of a practice with goods internal to itself” tends to be “removed to the margins of our lives.” So, instead of engaging in practical deliberation about the telos of practices by attending to the goods internal to practices such as architecture and medicine - goods that have been identified by communities working within the relevant fields for thousands of years - such work “is put to the service of impersonal capital.” As a consequence, MacIntyre argues, “the realm of work tends to become separated from everything but the service of biological survival and the reproduction of the labor force, on the one hand, and that of institutionalized acquisitiveness, on the other.” When this happens, it is always at the expense of goods internal to work and in primary pursuit of external goods, serving the late modern capitalist principle of product and profit maximization.

Let us think of this economic maximization principle, which prioritizes external goods over goods internal to practices, in a different way. While the MacIntyre of After Virtue has long since parted from his Marxist political position, he does believe that Marx still has something to teach us with respect to his critical claims about “surplus

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227 Ibid.
value” in his early work on *Capitalism.* This notion of surplus value is another way of thinking about the exploitation that MacIntyre claims capitalism is subjected to when goods of effectiveness are sought above goods of excellence. Surplus value is a consequence of products being sold at too high of a price while, at the same time, wages are not justly distributed. In other words, the actual value of the labor is ‘worth more’ than the laborers’ compensation. In such cases, owners ‘pocket’ the surplus value instead of investing the capital back into the good and worthy ends for which practices exist (including the good life of practitioners). Hence, MacIntyre maintains that when the priorities of managers and institutions become disordered in this way, it is detrimental to practices and the achievement of internal goods within practices.

We should at this point qualify that, for MacIntyre, a practice is only a practice if we place primacy on the internal goods, or the teloses, that specific practices uniquely deliver. In other words, when extrinsic motivation overrides intrinsic motivation, then a practical activity stops functioning as a practice.

Unfortunately, as MacIntyre illustrates by way of the social role of the manager, who receives his ends from greedy institutions, means-thinking and extrinsic motivation tend to dominate the workplace today. Modern managers within these fields tend to accept the institutional demand to cheapen once-excellent products,

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services, and wages. MacIntyre believes that workplaces have become dominated by the authoritarian manager-type, who acts as a puppet, or an “actor,” in the service of corporate owners that profit from effectively maximizing surplus value (the manager may be an ‘actor’ for an individual owner of a corporation or a group of owners, such as private equity groups, shareholders, venture capitalist firms, etc.).

This problem that MacIntyre finds within the late modern working world creates a tension between practice-based work and workers on the one hand and the institution and its managers and owners on the other. Many institutions are driven today by leaders who consider the vice of pleonexia (qua an insatiable appetite for the acquisition of wealth) a virtue that is preferable to a more modest vision of corporate growth and sustainability. Hence, they often do not recognize the ordinary limits that must be placed on the principle of maximization for the internal goods of a practice to be achieved. The primacy placed on effectiveness and means-thinking makes many practical activities that could once be considered practices into a money-making machine wherein many human beings find themselves to be ‘cogs.’

So, MacIntyre, reflecting on the vice that Aristotle identifies as pleonexia, believes that this very vice has become “the driving force of modern productive work.”

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229 MacIntyre (2007).

230 Ibid.: 155.
measure of effectiveness for the modern manager and the managed often ends up being
the ever-increasing acquisition of more and more external goods.\textsuperscript{231}

Let us consider only a few examples of the kind of consequences that \textit{pleonexia}
produces. The result in architectural work is lower quality homes, built cheaply and
quickly so that (a) more homes can be built (production motive) and (b) more margin
on each house can be retained (profit motive). The result is the loss of a sense of
craftsmanship for the practitioners who find themselves simply throwing together
‘prefab’ homes. The result in medicinal work tends to be shortened time spent with
patients in a clinical setting so that (a) more appointments can be scheduled (production
motive) at (b) the same cost, or more, for the patient (profit motive). In this case, the
consequences are much higher, as less time spent with patients can result in
misdiagnosis, thereby threatening the very internal good which the practice of medicine
intends to promote.

Indeed, one can readily recall the ways that goods of excellence are sacrificed in
many other industries today, and several MacIntyrean business ethicists certainly
have.\textsuperscript{232} To the extent that they have, MacIntyre’s latest work supports their effort to
restore a notion of practices in the workplace, which prioritizes intrinsic motivation

\textsuperscript{231} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{232} In particular, see Moore (2017). Moore reflects much deeper on the consequences related to prioritizing
external goods over internal goods than I do within this section. That said, however, I shall delve more deeply into
this issue in the next chapter.
over extrinsic motivation.\footnote{MacIntyre (2017: 130, 170).} Still, however, MacIntyre maintains that “the kind of work done by the vast majority of the inhabitants of the late modern world cannot be understood in terms of the nature of a practice with goods internal to itself.”\footnote{MacIntyre (2007: 227).} This is because internal goods are all too often sacrificed for a means-way-of-thinking that leads to the vice of pleonexia, among other vices.

That being said, MacIntyre’s account teaches us that, within practices, we must cultivate particular virtues to avoid the vices that foster a prioritization of extrinsic motivation over intrinsic motivation. So then, our vision of excellence within practices must transcend our emphasis on goods of effectiveness, or external goods. We must attend to the objective conditions for human excellence within practices, (qua the virtues), which facilitate the achievement of goods internal to practices, among other important common goods that we will go on to examine more closely in the following two sections.

As it turns out, then, another distinct strand of internal goods emerges within MacIntyre’s account of practices. The internal goods of practices are things like the excellent product or the good service, on the one hand, as we have seen. However, the internal goods of practices also entail the habituation of practitioners in the virtues that are necessary to sustain practices. MacIntyre explains these two distinct types of internal goods in the following way:
The aim internal to such productive crafts, when they are in good order, is never only to catch fish, or to produce beef or milk, or to build houses. It is to do so in a manner consonant with the excellences of the craft, so that there is not only a good product, but the craftsperson is perfected through and in her or his activity.\footnote{MacIntyre (1994: 284) & (2007 189-190).}

So, another type of internal good that emerges has to do with the way that individuals are ‘perfected’ through the practices within which they engage. Importantly this process of perfection, an internal good itself, comes by way of individuals’ habituation in the virtues. Through this habituation, individuals are perfected in such a way that they may better achieve excellence in providing a service or designing a product. (Later we shall see that the virtues learned within a practice not only sustain the internal goods of practices but also other common goods as well).

Hence, we have reached MacIntyre’s first contextualization of the virtues within practices. MacIntyre argues that “a virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.”\footnote{MacIntyre (2007: 191).} The virtues become “those goods by reference to which, whether we like it or not, we define our relationships to those other people with whom we share the kind of purposes and standards which inform practices.”\footnote{Ibid.}

\footnote{235 MacIntyre (1994: 284) & (2007 189-190).}
\footnote{236 MacIntyre (2007: 191).}
\footnote{237 Ibid.}
What MacIntyre’s first definition of the virtues teaches us is that individuals learn to achieve excellence within practices by “subordinating” their desires to the objective conditions, or the virtues, required to achieve the internal goods of a practice. It is important to emphasize that these internal goods are identified by the practice-based community, and that individuals subordinate themselves to the moral vision that this community provides. MacIntyre speaks of this process of subordination in the following way:

It belongs to the concept of a practice as I have outlined it – and as we are all familiar with it already in our actual lives, whether we are painters or physicists or quarterbacks or indeed just lovers of good painting or first-rate experiments or a well-thrown pass – that its goods can only be achieved by subordinating ourselves within the practice in our relationship to other practitioners. We have to learn what is due to whom; we have to be prepared to take whatever self-endangering risks are demanding along the way; and we have to listen carefully to what we are told about our own inadequacies and to reply with the same carefulness for the facts. In other words, we have to accept as necessary components of any practice with internal goods and standards of excellence the virtues of justice, courage, and honesty. For not to accept these…so far bars us from achieving the standards of excellence or the goods internal to the practice that it renders the practice pointless except as a device for achieving external goods.

So, then, this process of subordination affords individuals the opportunity to achieve both intellectual virtues and virtues of character, both of which sustain the achievement of the
excellent product or service. Briefly, we ought to reflect on this connection by examining just a few of the virtues that MacIntyre mentions above.

Let us first consider the role of the intellectual virtues in relation to their contribution to the achievement of goods internal to practices. Technical wisdom (techne) is important for any practice. It constitutes the practitioner’s cultivation of the very skills that are necessary to demonstrate craftsmanship or to execute the technical expertise that is required to design an excellent product. The architect, for example, must exhibit the technical ‘know-how’ that is required to build an excellent house.

Without technical wisdom, one cannot exhibit craftsmanship.

But techne alone is insufficient. The intellectual virtue of practical wisdom (phronesis) will also be required. This virtue equips them with a means for course-correcting based on their “history of past mistakes and failures” within a practice.\textsuperscript{241} The architect’s history of past successes and failures, which he draws upon to build houses, for example, is what allows him to exhibit a level of craftsmanship in his work today that took years of ‘getting things wrong’ to finally achieve. Both learning from our past mistakes and attending to the errors that others point out within our work is necessary for us to understand our failures and to exhibit better craftsmanship in the future.

\textsuperscript{241} MacIntyre further clarifies this in (2017: 208).
Finally, the intellectual virtue of theoretical wisdom (episteme) combines, as Aristotle says, “scientific knowledge” with “intuitive reason,” which allows new and revised standards of excellence within a practice to emerge. Episteme applies the knowledge provided by phronesis to a reflection of our technical know-how. This kind of thinking allows us to see ways that our past mistakes and failures can inspire new and creative patterns of technical thinking and execution. Episteme, then, helps us to ‘raise the bar’ of excellence in our crafts.

Next, we should look at a few of the character virtues that will also be necessary to achieve the internal goods of practices. Let us consider only a few of the important ones here, which is, indeed, at the expense of many others that are worthy of our consideration. We should begin with justice (dikaiosune), which is relevant for most any practice. Justice is the mean between the vices of acquisitiveness and profligacy. Justice requires that we give to others what they are ‘rightly due.’ In other words, to be just, it may be the role of a practitioner to avoid the temptation to give in to pleonexia by shoring up ‘surplus value’ (this would probably be the responsibility of a virtuous manager or the owners of an organization). Justice for an architect, on the other hand, in at least one respect, requires that he does not extort clients by overcharging when he has ‘more than enough work.’

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243 Ibid.: v.
Other character virtues, such as courage (*andreia*), helps individuals boldly curb the emphasis on profit and production at the expense of goods internal to practices. One can think of many examples today where, as MacIntyre suggests, taking a courageous stand may in fact be ‘self-endangering,’ particularly if one’s courage causes individuals to take a stand against a manager or institution that places primacy on goods of effectiveness. Indeed, many of us can and do get into ‘hot water’ for taking such a moral stand - particularly since institutions often exercise their ‘freedom’ to prioritize external goods over the flourishing of workers and over other goods internal to practices.

Finally, let us reflect on the virtue of honesty or truthfulness (*aletheia*), which MacIntyre also considers within the aforementioned excerpt. The manifestation and exercise of this virtue, like the others, can take on many forms. To *truly* engage in a practice with excellence is for one to do excellent work, rather than to make it appear as if one has done excellent work. Let us again consider the architect in this case. Perhaps he has acquired a home that he wishes to renovate. For the architect to exhibit honesty in his home renovation project, he must not merely ‘put lipstick on a pig,’ so to speak. The architect must use the best materials to ‘get the job done.’ He must not skip steps or cut corners in the interest of profit if he thinks that no one will know the difference. Perhaps the architect knows that a home needs new pipes, for example, but he thinks that no one will notice. In such a case, the virtuous architect would replace the pipes even though it comes at a cost to his profit in the end.
Many other virtues are important as well. The aforementioned intellectual and character virtues only provide a mere sketch of the relationship between virtues and obtaining goods internal to practices. Very easily, an entire book or journal article could focus on the significance of any one of these virtues as it relates to the pursuit of goods internal to practices.

What the above sketch intended to demonstrate is that subjecting ourselves to the standards of excellence within a craft demands the project of virtue-cultivation. In this respect, practices strengthen our character by habituating our emotional and intellectual preferences in light of the virtues, which direct us toward good and worthy ends. This is precisely the role of the second kind of good internal to practices. Practices shape the habitual nature of human beings, which earns them a key position in the MacIntyrean schema. For this reason, Matthew Sinnicks states that practices operate as “the bedrock” of MacIntyre’s moral philosophy.244 The process of regulating human preferences in light of the virtues, for MacIntyre, begins within practices. We have seen how MacIntyre argues along NeoAristotelian lines that individuals’ preferences are distilled through practices and in light of the virtues that are necessary to sustain practices. This means that his teleological account reopens the possibility of asking whether an individual’s or an institution’s preferences are appropriate in the first place.

\[244\] Sinnicks (2016: 107).
So, while the ‘Morality’ that he criticizes often attends to the “untutored desires” of workers and workplace practices, the tradition that MacIntyre writes within calls for a proper “schooling” of our desires “in the virtues.”

Within the virtue tradition, it is believed that only such a schooling in the virtues can lead to the perfection of practitioners and the achievement of excellent products or services. One MacIntyrean scholar, Ron Beadle, articulates this in the following way:

A virtue-based account argues that our preferences must be educated if they are to make a contribution to our [rational] deliberations. Our ability to reason, individually and with others, about goods, is itself imperiled if we have not been introduced to teleological reasoning and to the virtues through which the conclusions of that reasoning might be enacted. Without such an education, our preferences will be ill-formed.

In this sense, practices lead to the cultivation of virtues, which are necessary for us to desire the good, even after we have construed the good rightly. Active participation within practices spurs a process of habituation, thereby transforming our character. This ultimate transformation of our character is what leads to the achievement of both kinds of goods internal to practices.

Never perfectly, but at various points throughout Western history, workplace practices tended to prioritize internal goods above external goods, which fostered excellent products and a cultivation of virtues within the workplace. One may think of

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245 Beadle (2019: 84).

246 Ibid.
the earlier accounts of work proffered by Luther and Calvin, who maintained that all
individuals have a ‘station’ in life, with certain goods internal to it. Such figures saw the
need to pursue excellence within one’s craft. However, they also saw that identifying
with one’s ‘station’ promoted a socially constituted vision of what pursuing the good
life looked like more broadly.

In a similar vein, MacIntyre believes that other important common goods are
achieved through our habituation within practices. This also means that he believes
other important common goods are lost when individuals cease participating in
practices, or when practices become ‘money-making machines.’ He mourns the primacy
that has been placed on extrinsic motivation over and against intrinsic motivation for
more reasons than the prevalence of shoddy manufactured homes, quick visits with the
doctor, and the general loss of shared visions of excellence within other practices. Many
activities, within the workplace and beyond it, appear to have lost a principal emphasis
on their telos, he argues. And, as we have seen already in the analysis of MacIntyre’s
social roles, the loss of deliberation about the telos of public social practices leads to a loss of
deliberation about individuals’ private goals as well.

It was suggested earlier that the very vices embodied by greedy institutions and
managers, such as pleonexia, not only destroy practices. These vices also become the bad
habits of the manager and the managed in private. The kind of means-thinking that so
often happens within the workplace is not compartmentalized. Instead, it bleeds into
the private life of the manager and the managed, causing them to be consumed by their unregulated preferences outside of work and within other practices as well, MacIntyre argues. 247 Important to recognize is that this inhibits both the manager and the managed from becoming virtuous. However, the manager and the managed need to be sustained by the virtues in their private lives because a regulation of desire by way of the virtues is also necessary for humans to properly envision their narrative quest for the good life.

IIIB. Virtues & Narratives

Discovering goods internal to practices, MacIntyre argues, leads to individuals’ deliberation about the final end of human life or, the “chief good” that explains “whatever else they do,” in the words of Aristotle.248 Practices, per the MacIntyrean schema, tend to move individuals from means-thinking to ends-thinking. In addition to considering the telos of particular practices, individuals also cultivate the ability to consider their human telos. In this way, teleological reasoning within practices spills over into reasoning about the final end of human life. Hence, attending to an ends-way-of-thinking about the internal goods of practices allows individuals to become acquainted with what teleological reasoning entails in their personal quest for a


248 Ibid.
flourishing human life. So then, practices become one fundamental component of an individual’s quest for the good life – that is, when a practice remains a practice.

Indeed, MacIntyre argues that teleological thinking may be “extended” by a social deliberation about the goods internal to various forms of “cooperative” activities, or practices.249 We have already seen how teleological thinking within practices is sustained by the virtues, and how this promotes the common goods that are internal to practices. Moreover, the virtues sustain teleological thinking in other areas of an individual’s life outside of practices, which points to the second strand of common goods that the virtues provide – “goods of individual lives.”250 To understand this second strand of common goods, we must analyze MacIntyre’s second definition of the virtues:

The virtues therefore are to be understood as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good.251

So, the same virtues that perfect individuals within practices also sustain individuals in their quest for the good life, enabling individuals to overcome all of the intellectual, emotional, and volitional distractions which might deter us from our quest for the flourishing human life.

249 Ibid.: 187.

250 Ibid.: 190-203.

MacIntyre initially locates teleological deliberation within practices, in part, to provide individuals with an opportunity to develop practical reasoning, technical reasoning, and theoretical reasoning, all of which will be necessary along their quest for the chief good that all share in common. A rational deliberation about the good human life must begin within practices, where individuals’ preferences become habituated in light of the conditions for human excellence that practices reveal. Intellectual virtues learned within practices educate our preferences and call to mind what the good life for humans looks like. Such virtues cause us to pause and reflect within our practices and our daily lives, deliberating over any particular ladder that we climb, before “having climbed the ladder, without particularly asking which ladder and what the point was.”

The moral actions, or ladders, that we should climb in life, however, are not seen clearly through a crystal ball, MacIntyre argues. The very nature of this quest is such that individuals’ vision of their goals and their final purpose in life is ever-developing. So, the intellectual virtues act as a continual herpa along this quest for the good life.

In addition to the intellectual virtues, this quest demands habituation in the character virtues, lest individuals get distracted by the all-consuming preferences of the aesthete. Earlier we saw how poor habituation in the workplace or some other practical

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activity causes us to become extrinsically motivated. This kind of extrinsic motivation, as one scholar argues, may cause us to put too much emphasis on “earning enough to do interesting things in the other parts of our lives, or in retirement, in pursuing a career and taking satisfaction, and achieving status,” for example.²⁵⁴

Instead of cultivating vices such as acquisitiveness or profligacy, repetitive action in good moral practices leads to a collection of virtuous habits which results in sound moral character and the desire of ends in private that are, in fact, ‘worth wanting.’ The character virtues, such as justice, courage, and honesty, habituate us in such a way that we ‘do the right thing’ in life even when the journey becomes difficult and the temptation to ‘turn back,’ ‘take a shortcut,’ or ‘give in’ to the consuming lifestyle of the aesthete threatens to distract us from this quest.

Working together, the intellectual virtues and the character virtues facilitate “the education of the passions into conformity with the pursuit of what theoretical reasoning identifies as the telos and practical reasoning as the right action to do in each particular time and place.”²⁵⁵ So, practices provide a locus for individuals to gather the intellectual, emotional, and volitional resources that will be necessary to understand the conditions

for excellence in all areas of their lives. This is important, considering that all areas of life are associated with one’s quest for “the good life.”

MacIntyre maintains that a narrative understanding of our quest must take into account the many different social roles that we occupy, the many different practices that we participate in, and the many different people that we engage with throughout our lives. In this sense, a quest for the good life necessarily requires “narrative unity” or a coherent moral story about what it is that we are seeking in all areas of our lives. But such unity is not easily achieved today. MacIntyre claims that we tend to live our lives in rather “compartmentalizing” ways, exhibiting patterns of behavior and “intentions” that vary greatly from one social role to the next. This, he argues, precludes consistent habituation in the virtues as well as a unified conception of our ultimate goals in life.

Let us consider how narrative disunity could create problems in an individual’s life. For example, a person who plays the social role of the manager could be an active participant in the vices of a ‘dog eat dog’ business culture, maximizing profit and dismissing concerns about employee burnout or specific quality control issues which stem from a strained emphasis on production. Then, when 5 o’clock strikes, this person very well may try to take off his manager cap for the day and head home, where he puts

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257 Ibid.: 204-225.
258 Ibid.: 264.
on his ‘family man’ cap and attempts to participate virtuously in the practices of family life. This, of course, causes his wife and children to get another, and probably better, version of him than those who encounter the very same person between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday to Friday. But it also creates an identity problem as well as an integrity problem for the individual who plays both the role of the manager and the family man. Given the nature of these incompatible roles, who is this person exactly and what are his true values in life? We can all too easily recall those who struggle to shift from ‘work mode’ to ‘family mode,’ among other ‘modes,’ sensing the disparity between the character expected of them from one social sphere to the next. By acting out these various and disparate social roles, individuals very well may struggle to determine who they are and what is ultimately worth wanting in life, since their identity and their values seem to shift considerably across their various social roles.

When MacIntyre considers the consequences of narrative disunity, similar to the example provided above, he makes a move that initially appears to be rather disjointed and, for that reason, it has been overlooked by many scholars. However, what he says within After Virtue shortly following his statement about the need for narrative unity in one’s life is very important. Virtue ethicists today would be wise to attend to his claims that follow shortly after his discussion of narrative unity within After Virtue. The incompatibility of measures of effectiveness within various social roles today leads MacIntyre to argue that virtues must be set apart from skills and skills ought to remain
subservient to the virtues.\textsuperscript{259} Today, however, skills are either conflated with virtues or divorced entirely from the virtues that they ought to remain subservient to. The ever-growing body of ‘virtue as a skill’ literature reflects this misunderstanding.\textsuperscript{260} One clue that something is a virtue, and not simply a skill, MacIntyre argues, is that it promotes the flourishing human life across all practices, social roles, and relationships.

In contrast to the virtues, however, MacIntyre’s characterization of skills suggests that they tend to promote the very means-thinking and fragmentation of the self that concerns him about morality in late modernity. So, as MacIntyre argues, it is imperative that we conceptually distinguish virtues and skills and that we prioritize the virtues over the skills in our \textit{quest} for the good life:

The liquidation of the self into a set of demarcated areas of role-playing allows no scope for the exercise of dispositions which could genuinely be accounted virtues in any sense remotely Aristotelian. For a virtue is not a disposition that makes for success only in some one particular type of situation. What are spoken of as the virtues of a good committee man or of a good administrator or of a gambler or a pool hustler are professional skills professionally deployed in those situations where they can be effective, not virtues. Someone who genuinely possesses a virtue can be expected to manifest it in very different types of situation, many of them situations where the practice of a virtue cannot be expected to be effective in the way that we expect a professional skill to be…And the unity of a virtue in someone’s life is intelligible only as a characteristic of a unitary life, a life that can be conceived and evaluated as a whole. Hence just as in the discussion of the changes in and fragmentation of morality which accompanied the rise of modernity in the earlier parts of this book, each stage in the emergence of the characteristically modern views of the moral judgment was accompanied by a

\textsuperscript{259} Many thanks to my wife, Ashley Potts, for sharing with me the need to more carefully qualify the virtues in ways that are often missed within the ‘virtue as a skill’ literature.

\textsuperscript{260} For example, see Stichter (2007: 183-194).
corresponding stage in the emergence of the characteristically modern conceptions of selfhood; so now, in defining the particular pre-modern concept of the virtues with which I have been preoccupied, it has become necessary to say something of the concomitant concept of selfhood, a concept of a self whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end.” 261

Modern social roles, relying on disparate skills of effectiveness, cause individuals to remain torn between rival goods and rival ways of behaving. Consequently, MacIntyre argues, this is disruptive to “the unity of a narrative embodied in a single life.” 262 Every social role has an account of skills that are necessary for effectiveness within that role. However, MacIntyre argues that learning the useful skills of a particular social role does not equip us to set out on a quest for the good life. Often, they may even disrupt our ability to craft a unified narrative toward any particular vision of the good life.

Only the virtues provide resources for achieving goods of excellence within practices and for carrying out a narratively coherent quest for the good life. Hence, we must prioritize a consistent mode of excellent human behavior that is informed by our journey toward a final human telos. This quest is sustained by the virtues which are to be prioritized across our social roles and over the skills related to any one kind of social role that we embody throughout our lives.

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262 Ibid.: 218.
Sometimes this means that we must reflect on what the virtues have taught us and choose not to exercise a certain skill of effectiveness, since such skills are often oriented around means-thinking and in service of the principle of maximization – qua an unbridled pursuit of external goods. Such thinking, whether at work or in our private lives, as MacIntyre consistently argues, distracts us from any narratively coherent quest that exhibits directedness and a unity of purpose in our lives.

Conflating skills with virtues often leads to a split identity which blurs our conception of what virtuous human behavior entails in the path that we have chosen. Like morality in modernity, the self also experiences a kind of ‘fragmentation’ across social roles, leading to a crisis of integrity. Prioritizing integrity over effectiveness, however, we must remain true to our quest for our human telos. It is the virtues, not the skills of social roles, that sustain us along this quest, MacIntyre argues.

So, we have seen how MacIntyre’s theory of the virtues both serves the common goods of practices and of the individual’s quest for a final human telos. One MacIntyrean scholar paints a realistic portrait of the project that we have been tracing so far, claiming that it is “both realistic and attractive,” but it forces us “to acknowledge that it is also rather challenging.” Ultimately, I think of this quest as an adventure that spans the course of one’s lifetime. Whether you would like to think of this journey as an adventure

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or a *quest*, the MacIntyrean business ethicist, Geoff Moore, summarizes the boldness of this journey in the following way:

> It asks of us which practices we have chosen to engage with, what projects and purposes we have in our lives, how the pursuit of both internal and external goods and the various practices in our lives are ordered, and what part these play within the structure of our lives as a whole. It therefore asks about the unity of our lives and the key virtue of integrity in enabling us not to live compartmentalized lives, but to be the same person in the wide range of practices in which we are engaged, and which make up our lives. It also asks of us to be able to give reasons for our actions which we can link to our *telos*, and indeed it asks whether we can give an account of what we think our *telos*, our own particular *raison d’être*, might be. And it asks us occasionally to reflect and to ask questions such as, ‘To what conception of my overall good have I so far committed myself? And do I now have reason to put it in question?’ And it therefore always asks of us ‘what more and what else’ the good life for us consists of.\(^\text{264}\)

Success in this adventure entails ever-increasing clarity about the end toward which human life is directed. But the vision never becomes clearly seen through a crystal ball. Instead, as we gain clarity, we must continually rethink our priorities and continually put our *telos* to the rational test, in light of our continued failures, successes, and revelations along this adventure that spans the course of a lifetime.

Already, we have come a long way toward restoring a positive vision of teleological deliberation in late modernity. However, the complete set of resources that we will require for such an adventure remains incomplete without a third conceptualization of the virtues. Throughout MacIntyre’s theorization of the flourishing

\(^\text{264}\) Ibid.
human life, one thing has become very apparent. The *narrative quest* for a human *telos* is something that cannot be worked out fully in isolation, as the tenets of ‘Morality’ suggest. Beginning this process of construing the good, and becoming habituated to desire the good, happens within communal practices, as we have seen. Practices situate us in moral communities. And, because MacIntyre says that human beings are “story-telling animals,” he argues that we need to understand our life’s purpose by discussing it in relation to others within our respective communities.\(^\text{265}\) In so doing, we discover that “my good as a [hu]man is one and the same good as the good of others with whom I am bound up in human community.”\(^\text{266}\) *This shared conception of a human telos rests upon historically constituted and ever-evolving traditions that provide us with the necessary content for our narrative understanding of the flourishing human life.* In this way, MacIntyre argues that “the story of my life is always inherited” from traditions.\(^\text{267}\) The stories of human lives are tradition-constituted.

\(^{265}\) MacIntyre (2007: 216).

\(^{266}\) Ibid.: 229.

\(^{267}\) Ibid.: 221.
IIIc. Virtues & Living Traditions

So far, we have seen that social engagement within practices habituates individuals in the virtues. These individuals are situated within practice-based communities of insiders, all of whom deliberate about the goods internal to their relevant practices. Importantly, shared deliberation within practices regularly leads to one’s conceptualization of the good life, as we have seen in the previous section. But MacIntyre also speaks of a third and final strand of the good that completes his tripartite conception of common goods sustained by the virtues. This third strand of goods is what the term ‘common good’ typically points to today – the good of particular communities.268 As Christopher Lutz argues, MacIntyre’s theory about the virtues “in terms of practices and whole human lives is only complete when those practices and whole human lives are considered in relation to their social setting in the histories of the communities to which human agents belong.”269 By adding the tradition component to his account of practices and narratives, MacIntyre’s complete theory of the virtues provides an account of common goods at the level of (a) practices, (b) individual lives, and (c) communities – and, more broadly, the interests of a good society. What the third component of MacIntyre’s virtue theory suggests is that goods of practices and goods of individual lives and communities are connected to broader “living traditions” that have been passed down and continue to be

268 Ibid.: 127-164.

nuanced and strengthened by contemporary moral agents.\textsuperscript{270} These agents both deliberate about the traditions within which they find themselves and reflect on their longstanding histories.

So, this leads us to MacIntyre’s third and final conceptualization of the virtues, which historically situates practices and narratives within \textit{living traditions}:

\begin{quote}
The virtues find their point and purpose not only in sustaining those relationships necessary if a variety of goods internal to practices are to be achieved and not only in sustaining the form of an individual life in which that individual may seek out his or her good as the good of his or her whole life, but also in sustaining those traditions which provide both practices and individual lives with their necessary historical context.\textsuperscript{271}
\end{quote}

What MacIntyre’s account suggests is that each practice is housed within a broader tradition that continuously sharpens its rational vision of human excellence within practices. This means that the \textit{teloses} of practices are constantly reexamined. In this way, MacIntyre’s notion of a tradition is not stable. It is ever-evolving. He argues that “a tradition is an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined.”\textsuperscript{272} So, traditions constantly evolve in dialogue with living and historical members of a moral community. In this respect, MacIntyre maintains that every tradition is a “living tradition.”\textsuperscript{273}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{270} Ibid. (2007: 221-222).

\textsuperscript{271} Ibid.: 223. Emphasis added.

\textsuperscript{272} MacIntyre (1988: 12).

\textsuperscript{273} MacIntyre (2007: 221-222).
\end{footnotesize}
To clarify what a *living tradition* looks like for MacIntyre, and how it evolves, consider, for example, the Western medical tradition and its ever-evolving narrative about the promotion of patient health. Let us begin with the history of this tradition within Ancient Greek culture. The living tradition of medicine possesses a long history about excellence in the practice of surgery that has been continuously ‘defined’ and ‘redefined’ since the Trojan War in the 13th or 12th century BC. Some of the earliest Western records of excellence in surgical procedures resulted from the Trojan War. They spell out processes for conducting amputations, making incisions to separate living and dead tissue, and supplying “medicinal plants in the form of powder,” during and after surgery. Later surgical procedures were redefined by Hippocrates and Galen in the 5th and 4th century BC. Medical experts today indicate that “Hippocrates and Galen had an influence on surgical care practices of injuries and wounds until the Middle Ages.”

Since the Middle Ages, those standards of excellence, of course, have been subjected to continuous revision. Even now, active participants within the living medical tradition deliberate together about nuancing long-discussed methods of disinfection, incision, amputation, etc. They also continue to develop new procedures

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274 Kleisiaris et al. (2014: 2).

275 Ibid.
that had not yet been realized by Athens in the 5th and 4th century or Rome in the Middle Ages.

What the tradition of medicine does not do, however, is “reject the past and start over.” In fact, the living medical tradition retains much of the original Hippocratic Oath taken by surgeons in the 5th and 4th centuries.

That said, however, continuous advancement within traditions such as medicine means that living traditions “never have a goal or goals fixed for all time,” MacIntyre argues. Instead, the goals shift as new standards of excellence emerge and new surgical procedures are developed. Hence, the goods internal to the practice of surgery have been continuously sharpened and redefined by advancements in surgical knowledge – the result of an evolving technical wisdom that has been passed down from generation to generation within the medical tradition for over 3,500 years.

A surgeon’s understanding of excellence in her craft today looks quite different than it did during the Trojan War. Still, however, it is informed by a communal backdrop that contains values and visions of the good and healthy life which date back to some of the earliest recorded moments in Western history, making it one of the most long-standing traditions in the late modern working world.

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By historically contextualizing practice-based communities within living traditions, Christopher Lutz, who commentates extensively on the role of tradition in MacIntyre’s work, rightly argues that “MacIntyre holds that the life of one’s [tradition-based] community, its historic debts toward others along with its responsibilities, and the debts owed to it, make up an ineliminable part of the setting for human agency.” And “these debts are real,” Lutz argues; “consider only the US example. African Americans suffered slavery and then second-class citizenship.”

Lutz is right to emphasize that, within MacIntyre’s work, we find that every tradition provides the individual with a unique history of past successes and great moral failures. These stories of success and failure become communal narratives that individuals within a tradition receive. Individuals also understand themselves through these stories – they are always situated within traditions that provide them with tradition-constituted narratives of good and bad, of success and failure.

Lutz’s example of the moral failings of the US national tradition naturally leads us to an important point of qualification about MacIntyre’s account of traditions. Important to realize is that workers today are likely to be situated in a plurality of traditions. For example, let us return to the example of the Western medical tradition and consider the way that an American surgeon is situated within a plurality of other traditions besides


the one that occupies most of her time in the workplace – and probably also constitutes much of her identity as well as her calling.

IIIci. The Tradition- Constituted Surgeon

While the long and demanding hours of work as a surgeon are likely to leave practitioners within the surgical tradition with little time for additional practical activities outside of their calling, this American surgeon is still a part of a local community, a national society, and a religious body of worship, for example. These moral communities each situate the surgeon within distinct traditions in addition to the one which constitutes her calling in the workplace.

Commingled together in the surgeon’s life, these traditions each possess unique narratives that impact the very content that she uses to craft her narrative quest for the good life. This surgeon is a wife, a mother, a national and a local citizen, as well as a member of a faith tradition. She must conduct a kind of synthesis of the moral stories and lessons that she has learned from within the practices and traditions that make up her life. Moreover, the traditions that she is situated in beyond her calling also contain values that spill into her calling, such as her religious value on the promotion of health and human dignity, for example. She blends the values of her traditions together to make sense of her own life story. Synthesizing these narratives is necessary for her to lead a unified quest and for her to live a life of integrity.
What this surgeon must do is precisely the project of unification that MacIntyre calls for within his theory of the virtues. He implies that it is the job of the individual to conduct this process of synthesizing in order to understand the good life in a unified way:

Within a tradition, the pursuit of goods extends through generations, sometimes through many generations. Hence, the individual’s search for his or her good is generally and characteristically conducted within a context defined by those traditions of which the individual’s life is a part, and this is true both of those goods which are internal to practices and of the goods of a single life.\(^{280}\)

Implied here is that our narrative \textit{quest}, like the surgeon’s, is formed through the resources that we are accorded from within the \textit{many} tradition-based communities that make up our lives.

Importantly, MacIntyre maintains that virtues and common goods are all achieved through the resources of traditions. Although MacIntyre begins his teleological theory of the virtues within practices, it becomes apparent as his thinking progresses that his vision of common goods goes well beyond (a) goods internal to practices. As we have seen, practices also (b) sustain individuals along their \textit{quest} for the good human life. Moreover, his theory of the virtues (c) supports the good of tradition-based communities – and, more broadly, the interests of a good society.

\(^{280}\) MacIntyre (2007: 222).
So, it must be emphasized again that MacIntyre’s vision of the good needs to be parsed into three distinct common goods. Importantly, all of these common goods are achieved through the virtues and within traditions, which shed light on goods internal to practices, provide resources for the individual’s narrative *quest* for the good life, and cast a vision of the good for the many tradition-based communities that individuals participate in (via their work life, family life, religious life, recreational life, their life as a local and national citizens, etc.).

Having now completed this exploration of MacIntyre’s theory, we should take a moment to consider his own tradition-constituted life-story. Much of the narrative resources by which MacIntyre understands his own life, and by which he conducts his philosophy are related to NeoAristotelainism and Thomism. MacIntyre relies on both of these traditions as a way of overcoming the ‘Morality’ of late modernity.

IV. The Role of Aristotelian Republicanism & the Thomistic Tradition in MacIntyre’s Thinking

No two figures have influenced MacIntyre’s thinking more than Aristotle and Aquinas. Together, these two figures provide MacIntyre with a complete teleological theory of the virtues. This theory provides a stark contrast to the ‘Morality’ of late modernity that he problematizes. That said, however, many scholars within the secular discourse prefer to read MacIntyre in a way that engages with his NeoAristotelianism
but not with his Thomism. Following arguments from MacIntyre, I maintain that such a reading of his work presents, at best, an incomplete account of the philosophical picture that he provides, especially in his work since *After Virtue*. Importantly, MacIntyre understands the nature and substance of the human person, common goods, and the virtues in light of his turn toward Thomism. In what follows, we shall examine this development in MacIntyre’s thinking and the implications that it has had on his philosophy.

MacIntyre’s dependence upon Aristotle is widely known. Within this chapter, we have seen already at some length the way that he builds on Aristotle’s ethics. We also reviewed MacIntyre’s concerted departure from Aristotle’s *metaphysical biology*. This created a conceptual hole in his philosophical project, which he admits shortly following his publication of *After Virtue*.\(^{281}\) However, we have not yet seen how exactly he fills that conceptual hole. While some scholars, such as Kelvin Knight, have attempted to show that MacIntyre’s theory within *After Virtue* can be made complete without a revised metaphysical biology, this is not a path that MacIntyre pursues, as we shall see.\(^{282}\) Instead, MacIntyre turns to Thomism in the 1980s, which shores up the metaphysical foundation of his theory of the virtues. This turn supplements his

\(^{281}\) MacIntyre (1988: 12).

\(^{282}\) Knight (2007).
teleological theory of the virtues with a Christian metaphysics, leading MacIntyre to what has been called a Thomistic “metaphysics of creation.”

Before carrying out a more detailed extrapolation of MacIntyre’s commitments, it is important to question why all of this Christian metaphysical business should concern us herein. The reasons are twofold. First, MacIntyre believes that a proper understanding of his theory of the virtues now requires a metaphysics, which he turns to Thomism for. Second, MacIntyre’s identification as a member of the Thomist tradition matters because the faith commitments of his position become clear while meeting with Bellah et al. in the 1980s. Interestingly, this provides yet another striking parallel between MacIntyre’s work and the work of Bellah et al., as we shall see in the next chapter. MacIntyre, as well as Bellah et al., rely on a blend of Aristotelianism and Christianity - Thomism (but also several other strands of Christian thinking, broadly speaking) for MacIntyre and the biblical tradition for Bellah et al. - to account for the regulation of human preferences and the achievement of common goods within their theory of the virtues.

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IVa. MacIntyre’s NeoAristotelianism

With these reasons for concern in front of us, let us now chronologically account for this shift in MacIntyre’s thinking and further expound on its significance. Significant shifts such as these are sometimes recounted best through the eyes of a friend. Stanley Hauerwas, who has been friends with MacIntyre now for decades, explains his move toward Aristotle as a first step that would eventually lead him to Aquinas. This move unfolded as a result of MacIntyre’s personal convictions during the 1970s and 1980s.

What MacIntyre draws out of the philosophy of Aristotle entails a social account of the good that is illuminated through the exercise of the rational capacity within practice-based communities, as we have seen. We have also already seen what MacIntyre’s turn toward Aristotle marked a turn away from (emotivism), but the argument so far should be restated briefly, and Hauerwas’ words summarize it succinctly:

MacIntyre’s work after Against the Self-Images of the Age forms the ongoing attempt to help us understand how it is that we now live lives we do not understand. He pursues that investigation by analysis of philosophical alternatives, because, as he says in After Virtue, key episodes in the history of philosophy were what fragmented and largely transformed morality. MacIntyre’s respect for such philosophers as Kant and Mill reflects this understanding of the philosophical task. Their attempt to develop accounts of morality in the name of some impersonal standard was an understandable response to the loss of shared practices necessary for the discovery of goods in common. Such a project was doomed to failure, however, exactly because no such standards can be sustained when they are abstracted from the practices and descriptions that render our lives intelligible. Modern moral philosophy becomes part of the problem, for its stress on autonomy, like its corresponding attempt to
free ethics from history, produces people incapable of living lives that have narrative coherence.²⁸⁴

Hauerwas rightly indicates that the MacIntyrean position entails a NeoAristotelian account of agency, and it argues that the intelligibility of common goods is illuminated through the exercise of reason (more specifically, what I have been calling ‘teleological deliberation,’) within practices - practices that rest upon tradition-constituted narratives. It is through these practices and the broader traditions within which they are housed that resources for our narrative understanding of the self are discovered. Traditions provide a narrative history about good and worthy ends, while practices shape the character of human beings so that they are better enabled to set out on a quest for their telos. For MacIntyre, character formation begins within practices, which he defines by relying on a NeoAristotelian account of ethics and in an attempt to restore teleological deliberation to late modernity.

In his Rhetoric, as NeoAristotelians often like to note, Aristotle argues that deliberation about the good within a social context reveals the “particular” laws of moral communities.²⁸⁵ Thinking of practices as reliant upon living traditions, we can argue that MacIntyrean practices illuminate particular laws of excellence. They call to mind certain virtues that are necessary for reaching standards of excellence. The

standards are prescribed by the moral community participating in the practice and thereby extending the living tradition. This matters to MacIntyre today just as much as it did when he wrote *After Virtue*.

But MacIntyre wants to go beyond particular laws to also speak of what Aristotle referred to as “common” laws, or moral laws that are objectively grounded and which transcend all social practices and traditions.\(^{286}\) The most obvious indication of his desire to do so is apparent in the way that he calls readers of *After Virtue* to consider what an objective and shared human *telos* might entail for *all human beings*.\(^{287}\) To do this, Aristotle grounded the common law within his metaphysical biology, but MacIntyre realizes that his metaphysical biology needed to be rejected in light of advances in contemporary scientific inquiry.\(^{288}\) Having rejected Aristotle’s metaphysical biology within *After Virtue*, he first attempts to carry out his philosophical project without either revising or replacing it.

MacIntyre’s need to revisit the conceptual hole left as a result of the rejection of Aristotle’s metaphysical biology would happen very soon after the completion of *After

\(^{286}\) Ibid.

\(^{287}\) MacIntyre (2007).

\(^{288}\) For one, Aristotle maintained that rationality flowed through the male semen. Obviously, scientists today rightly think otherwise.
Virtue, but not without significant consequences for the argument that MacIntyre developed within After Virtue. Hauerwas explains this in the following way:

MacIntyre notes that when he wrote After Virtue he was already an Aristotelian but not yet a Thomist. His Thomism came when he became convinced that in some respects Aquinas was a better Aristotelian than Aristotle. Indeed, MacIntyre reports, he learned that his attempt to provide an account of the human good in social terms was inadequate without a metaphysical grounding. ‘It is only because human beings have an end toward which they are directed by reason of their specific nature,’ he writes, ‘that practices, traditions, and the like are able to function as they do.’

So, MacIntyre‘s realization of the inadequacy of accounting for the good in strictly social terms (i.e., within the ‘particular’ laws of practices) forces him to make a choice. He could either adopt a NeoAristotelian position of naturalism or he could turn elsewhere for resources to replace Aristotle‘s metaphysical biology. One way or another, whether he chose to revise it or replace it, this became a project that MacIntyre realized he had to undertake.

That being said, one can imagine that the reflective MacIntyre, upon realizing the objective inadequacy of a strictly social account of morality, must have considered something like the following. He must have considered the Aristotelian tradition‘s extension of a naturally generated account of rationality - the account that grounds objective morality for NeoAristotelians today. NeoAristotelians‘ ultimate foundation for morality is, like Aristotle‘s, “naturalistic, in the sense that to live a virtuous life is to live

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a life of natural goodness.” NeoAristotelian’s maintain a position similar to Aristotle’s, namely that “the moral goodness or badness of humans have the same conceptual structure as evaluations of the goodness and badness of plants and animals.” In other words, “goodness consists in being good of one’s kind.” A life of flourishing for humankind, in the NeoAristotelian schema, consists in a life of goodness as a rational being.

IVb. MacIntyre’s Turn from NeoAristotelianism to Thomistic-NeoAristotelianism

Importantly, however, natural goodness does not imply created goodness for NeoAristotelians, meaning that there is no higher end for human life than the exercise of one’s rational capacity. While MacIntyre has never had a problem with a life of goodness for the human being consisting in a life of goodness as a rational being, he began to develop convictions in the 1980s that led him to disagree with NeoAristotelians about the source of this rational capacity and the ultimate telos of human life.

292 Ibid.: 321.
Shortly after publishing the first edition of *After Virtue*, MacIntyre came to believe that a NeoAristotelian conception of naturalistic metaphysics was, in his mind, no longer a more rationally coherent alternative to a Thomistic conception of metaphysics (which provided an account of divine creation). Interestingly, however, MacIntyre has since admitted that, even while writing *After Virtue*, he was to some extent aware of the conceptual hole that rejecting Aristotle’s metaphysical biology created, and he claims that he already had in mind a metaphysics which “presupposed the truth of something very close to the account of the concept of the good that Aquinas gives.”\(^{293}\) So, even MacIntyre’s attempt to create a purely social teleology within *After Virtue*, as it turns out, contains some hidden Thomistic metaphysical assumptions! What was at least partially assumed within *After Virtue* becomes an explicitly stated belief within the preface of his next book, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, in 1988.\(^{294}\) Between his publication of these two books, he filled the conceptual hole that rejecting Aristotle’s metaphysical biology created with a Thomistic metaphysics (much later, he also published a further extrapolation of his biology within *Dependent Rational Animals*).\(^{295}\)

\(^{293}\) MacIntyre (2007: xi).

\(^{294}\) MacIntyre (1988: 12).

\(^{295}\) MacIntyre (2009a).
This move in the 1980s implies a creationist metaphysics, and this is where MacIntyre’s NeoAristotelianism evolved into what he now refers to as “Thomistic-NeoAristotelianism.” So, while MacIntyre largely grounds his theory of the virtues in Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, we can understand MacIntyre’s moral philosophy as only partially NeoAristotelian. The objective resources for MacIntyre’s teleology now come from Thomism.

IVc. MacIntyre’s Commitment to Theological Construals of Sin & Grace

The advances in MacIntyre’s philosophical project, already well underway by the time he meets with Bellah and his colleagues, but not yet reflected in his written work until the publication of Whose Justice, Which Rationality? in 1988, carry significant consequences for his theory of the virtues. For Aristotle, knowledge of the good and the exercise of the virtues is made entirely possible for humans by way of their naturally generated rationality. However, this, according to MacIntyre’s Thomistic commitments, is not the sole mode for human understanding and character development. Following Aquinas, MacIntyre now maintains that humans are called beyond their natural limitations by charity, or the grace of God, and this allows humans to live in a way that they cannot aspire to by themselves, MacIntyre argues.

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296 MacIntyre (2017: 209-211).
What this means is that MacIntyre’s project since *After Virtue* contains a theological dimension. MacIntyre now sees that his philosophical picture is incomplete apart from theology. While MacIntyre’s philosophy exhibits a concerted effort to avoid wading into too many matters of theology (this is still apparent even after his turn to Thomism), the final end toward which MacIntyre believes human beings are directed clearly becomes something more than the NeoAristotelian picture of humans performing rational activities in a virtuous manner. The final end toward which human beings are directed, for MacIntyre, is a supernatural end – namely, knowledge of and union with God. MacIntyre’s decision to turn to Aquinas means that he now “clearly holds that the human creature is teleologically ordered toward an understanding of the truth, and ultimately to knowledge of God.”\(^{297}\) An understanding of goodness, for MacIntyre, is limited by the natural capacities of human rationality, but it is more fully understandable through the grace and knowledge of God. So, his new conception of ethics entails a final end which directs human beings toward increasing knowledge of God, and, as MacIntyre argues, this further regulates human preferences.

Importantly, then, MacIntyre’s theological position does not simply mean that humans have other business to carry out beyond the virtuous exercise of their rational capacity. Many scholars, even Thomists, sometimes insinuate that the rational capacity

\(^{297}\) Lutz (2004: 139).
of human beings remains uninfluenced after divine revelation. If this were the case, then MacIntyre’s account of the good would not seem to necessitate grace (qua charity), for a fuller exercise of the virtues that are acquired by way of the rational capacity.

However, this is not MacIntyre’s position. The latest developments in his philosophy represent the purity of his Thomism on this point. Being a good Thomist, MacIntyre recognizes that what the human being receives by means of grace does not simply offer humans access to the ‘infused virtues’ of faith, hope, and love. Grace also influences the rational capacity and humans’ ability to exercise the acquired virtues.

MacIntyre’s position on divine revelation, like Aquinas’, means that the very exercise of the acquired virtues is purified by grace.

So, MacIntyre’s Thomistic metaphysics fills the conceptual hole of his project with an account of rationality that is purified by grace. He shares Aquinas’ conviction that charity is no ‘cherry on top’ of the acquired virtues which simply grants humans the additional virtues of faith, hope, and love. Charity strengthens the whole set of acquired virtues that one cultivates through the exercise of natural reasoning. In this sense, like a tea bag infuses a mug of hot water, charity infuses the virtues that humans acquire.

Hence, when MacIntyre was recently asked about the role of grace in his philosophical project during a Q&A session, he responded in the following way:

Good. Here the crucial question of Aquinas is in the disputed question on the virtues. And Aquinas suggests that there are three ways in which - three levels in
which - one may exhibit the virtues. There’s a first level at which one may have particular virtues, but as it were, they are not organized together at all. They’re not unified. So, one’s ‘just’ in this aspect of one’s life, one’s ‘courageous’ in that. But this is a rather low level, and it’s compatible with being a failure with respect to the virtues in all sorts of ways. Go to the next level and this is when the virtues are organized by prudence - by practical intentions, by prudentia. And now this is a much more integral kind of moral life, but it is again one that is never wholly successful. People are invariably defective in this or that respect of the virtues. And so, we move to the third level where the governing virtue is no longer prudence but charity. And charity one has only by grace. And it is extremely important that it is only through charity that one exhibits the other [acquired] virtues as they should be exhibited.

It isn’t the case that if you have charity, you won’t be vicious in all sorts of ways. This is extremely important - that you may in fact be saintly in many respects but not in all sorts of others, and it’s very important that this is so. But it is also important that we need an account of sin if we are to explain why we fail in the virtues in the ways that we do and the degrees that we do - and that this is an unchangeable feature of human life- and that we also need an account of grace in order to explain how it is possible for us to, on occasion at least, explain how we are able to transcend these limitations to achieve a level of virtuous living that is beyond our normal power.

I used to have a colleague, a philosophical colleague, a very distinguished philosopher, who, when asked whether he believed the Christian religion or any other he would say ‘no I do not believe at all, but I do believe in grace.’ And what he meant by this was that he thought that there were many occasions in human life when people behaved in ways that transcended their ordinary limitations in such a striking way that you didn’t know what to say. And he saw this as a point at which upon his view, he was simply baffled. I take it that it’s a part of theology to explain the way that grace operates in human life. And that, at this point, both an account of sin and an account of grace is needed to complete the account of the virtues. This account remains incomplete until we’ve done this.298

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What this means for MacIntyre’s philosophical project is that his conceptualization of virtue acquisition, like Aquinas’, comes from two different rules. One rule is natural and available to humans apart from anything supernatural. But the other rule is supernatural, and it effects humans in ways that, ‘on occasion,’ allow them to transcend their natural capabilities. One Thomist scholar distinguishes these rules in the following way: “The two sets of virtues spring from two different sources - man’s created nature, on the one hand, and nature habituated by grace on the other - and dispose man to act in accord with two very different rules [the rule of reason and the rule of grace].” This supernatural rule, MacIntyre argues, is observable by religious and non-religious people alike, but it cannot be achieved through any amount of natural habituation within practices. *MacIntyre’s Thomism means that he understands the highest level of human excellence requires that the rule of reason must become subjected to the rule of grace.*

*MacIntyre’s commitment to Thomism implies that simply understanding the virtues in light of practices and traditions that have nothing to say about theological matters such as sin and grace is insufficient.* MacIntyre’s conviction is clear, even though it tends to remain hidden in much of his philosophy - humans need a metaphysical conception of realities such as sin and grace. *Hence, like a ‘square peg in a round hole,’ any purely rationalist metaphysics that totally denies the realities of sin and grace does not fit with MacIntyre’s*

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philosophy. The conceptual hole of MacIntyre’s philosophy must be filled by a metaphysical picture that accounts for these theological matters.

That being said, MacIntyre’s philosophy still begins with a social teleology that other traditions can ‘plug’ their own theological conceptions of grace and sin into. It needs to be emphasized, however, that this ‘plugging in’ is a necessary precondition to completing the philosophical project that MacIntyre’s framework provides. So, a complete understanding of MacIntyre’s theory of the virtues now necessitates theological matters, but MacIntyre believes that this does not fully inhibit him from participating in the work of philosophy, even with his secular colleagues. After all, and as MacIntyre articulates during the aforementioned Q&A session, many religions, and even many non-religious people today, recognize grace and falls from grace as human realities.300

Because MacIntyre’s social philosophy leaves open a conceptual hole for various traditions to ‘plug’ their own supernatural metaphysics into, his philosophy begs the question about matters of transcendence and revealed truth. Some traditions may conceptually deny the plausibility of revealed truth. But such traditions, MacIntyre has implied, will have to demonstrate the flaws associated with tradition-based accounts of revealed truth to justify the strength of their own tradition’s interior rationality and

their good reasons for denying supernatural realities. Supernatural realities cannot
simply be dismissed because they exceed the natural ‘rule of reason.’

**IVd. Is MacIntyre a Sectarian or Does He Advocate Some Form of Pluralism?**

Importantly, MacIntyre’s openness to the ‘plugging in’ of other metaphysical
world pictures means that he is not proffering any form of sectarianism, as critics of his
later work have repeatedly argued. MacIntyre is not suffering from any kind of
whiplash that would be the result of a backward-looking dream for some earlier kind of
Catholic state. His argument is not that the Catholic church ought to be restored to some
higher position of power in late modernity or that everyone ought to become a Thomist.

Instead, MacIntyre maintains that we ought to go as far as we can to construe
politics and common goods in secular terms, but that we must also realize the limits of
secular discourse:

We need an account of the ‘common good’ that is construed in secular terms for
politics. Politics is a secular activity and it has to be pursued as a secular activity. When it’s not pursued as a secular activity, the results are usually disastrous. So, we need an account that is secular and that can be presented in wholly secular
terms. But no account of any aspect of human life in purely secular rational terms
can explain the way in which human life is invaded by evils. And this is one of
the things that I...[Here, MacIntyre pauses, recognizing his limitations while
speaking as a philosopher, and abruptly changing the statement that he almost
makes as a theologian]. The furthest we can go in secular terms is to note this.
Hence, the thing that I want to emphasize in my paper is that no discussion of
common goods which does not understand the role of defect and evil and lack in
political life is going to work. Now, we can’t go any further than that without revealed truth.\textsuperscript{301}

MacIntyre’s notion of secularity is very different from the picture of secularity that we get in modernity. One gets the sense that when MacIntyre speaks of secularity he intends to advocate some form of pluralism. MacIntyre maintains that we must remember secular projects are limited in the shared picture of reality that they can offer. By collapsing all of reality into an “immanent [qua this-worldly] frame,” as contemporary secular projects tend to do, a secular account can identify that human life is ‘invaded by evils,’ but it cannot ‘explain the way in which’ this happens, as MacIntyre argues during his Q&A.\textsuperscript{302} Moreover, while collective political projects ought to remain a pluralistic endeavor, MacIntyre implies that we should consider the metaphysical gap (qua conceptual hole) that is characteristic of a secular account of reality, and that we must admit the dire need for particular metaphysical accounts to fill in this gap.

Invariably, each tradition has a distinct metaphysics that uniquely accounts for the good and for matters of sin and grace. In this way, MacIntyre refutes the late modern liberal myth which proffers some existent pluralism of a ‘universalist’ kind that possesses a generic and shared consensus about some complete and universal set of common goods. MacIntyre believes the account provided by liberal-political orders of a

\textsuperscript{301} MacIntyre (2018: 1:15).

\textsuperscript{302} Taylor (2007: 539-593).
shared general consensus that exists across all of the disparate metaphysical standpoints is just as mythical as unicorns.\textsuperscript{303} Such a ‘universalist’ kind of pluralism fails for the same reason that the Enlightenment projects of Kant and others fail. Whether or not Kant and other Enlightenment philosophers admit as much, they are all tradition-bound, meaning their ‘universalist’ projects are all tradition-constituted. Reasoning about the good, for MacIntyre, is inherently tradition-constituted, as we shall go on to see.\textsuperscript{304} 

\textit{Per MacIntyre, all human beings are tradition-bound and so advance their views as individuals situated within distinct moral traditions, all of which have different metaphysical world pictures that need to be respected, rather than banished from conversation or mythically sandwiched together, in secular spaces.}\textsuperscript{305}

Indeed, following Anscombe, MacIntyre expresses agreement with her that these ‘universalist’ ideas about good and evil have no “root” in post-Enlightenment culture.\textsuperscript{306} Rather, they rest upon account of ‘Morality’ that often becomes a tool in the hands of political bureaucrats, and generally for their own manipulative ends. Consequently, MacIntyre argues that various metaphysical accounts ought to be considered on their

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{303} MacIntyre (2007: 169-170).
  \item \textsuperscript{304} Nicholas (2012) provides a full account of MacIntyre’s Tradition-Constitted reasoning.
  \item \textsuperscript{305} MacIntyre (1990).
  \item \textsuperscript{306} Anscombe (1958: 5).
\end{itemize}
own terms and that we should stop attempting to assert the ‘universalist’ myth of pluralism that is proffered by liberal-political orders.\textsuperscript{307}

Instead, the metaphysics of each tradition, MacIntyre argues, must be understood on its own terms and by way of the rational resources that \textit{each tradition uniquely} provides.\textsuperscript{308} So, the kind of pluralistic project that MacIntyre believes in is one that grants each metaphysical world picture the opportunity to demonstrate a coherent and respectable interior rationality that provides a narrative about common goods as well as matters of sin and grace. \textit{Importantly, this account of secularity invites theological traditions to participate in the public sphere; it does not banish them to the private sphere.}

Hence, MacIntyre argues, much like Charles Taylor does throughout his work, that we must leave open a conceptual hole in our discussion of common goods within secular spaces so that particular metaphysical accounts can fill it.\textsuperscript{309}

Admitting the metaphysical limitations of secular discourse, this kind of pluralism requires one to ‘lean in’ and ‘seek to understand’ metaphysical world pictures that differ from one’s own, rather than strawman them. It is the job of individuals to earnestly seek out the possible ways that other metaphysical world pictures may be

\textsuperscript{307} This partly explains why he believes the entire spectrum of liberal politics is problematic and why he has made the off-hand remark before in lectures that both sides of the liberal-political spectrum are a mirror image of one another.

\textsuperscript{308} MacIntyre (1988).

\textsuperscript{309} Taylor (2007).
self-consistent.\textsuperscript{310} Civic membership, then, becomes a dutiful responsibility to learn about the interior rationality of all traditions, regularly putting them to the test.

Moreover, it calls individuals to look for “the best tradition so far” and to continuously identify their account of rationality as wholly bound to a particular tradition which provides a continuously advancing and self-consistent metaphysical world picture.\textsuperscript{311} Thus, it situates all individuals within “living traditions,” calling them to continuously strengthen their own interior rationality so that their tradition, too, can be seen as self-consistent and respectable by other metaphysical world pictures in secular spaces.\textsuperscript{312} Part of being respectable means that a tradition is able to either deny or account for other realities that different metaphysical world pictures have demonstrated.

Far from a sectarian, MacIntyre argues that staunch forms of sectarianism are self-defeating. The greatest traditions are able to take on the resources of others, showing them to be compatible. Moreover, the best form of politics is a form that does attempt to construe common goods in secular terms, to the extent that they can be agreed upon, as he argues within his Q&A session.\textsuperscript{313} He often praises individuals who can find

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{310}] MacIntyre (1990: 127-148).
\item[\textsuperscript{311}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{312}] MacIntyre (2007: 221-222).
\item[\textsuperscript{313}] MacIntyre (2018: 1:15).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
agreement where agreement has historically not been found, too. This is why MacIntyre praises Augustine, who aligns much of Platonism with his own Catholic tradition, and Aquinas, who is able to bring together resources from traditions once perceived as rivals - Augustinianism and Aristotelianism.\textsuperscript{314}

\textbf{IVe. Summarizing MacIntyre’s Thomistic-NeoAristotelianism}

Importantly, and as many NeoAristotelian readers of MacIntyre fail to recognize, MacIntyre calls for a completion of his philosophy through the work of metaphysical realities that are usually associated with theology. Stopping at a social teleology or a naturally generated account of rationality, for MacIntyre, is inadequate. MacIntyre’s Thomism contains a supernatural rule of grace. His metaphysics completes the NeoAristotelian social teleology that he advances within \textit{After Virtue}. Moreover, it reveals some hidden assumptions that MacIntyre already had about Thomism while writing \textit{After Virtue}. The way that we have seen MacIntyre’s theology complete his philosophy serves as a model for understanding why MacIntyre believes that secular accounts of the virtues and common goods must leave a conceptual hole for particular metaphysical world pictures to fill. Any attempt made by liberal-political orders to fill this hole by asserting some set of monolithic or ‘universalist’ common goods tends to

\textsuperscript{314} MacIntyre (1990).
result in a mythical account of pluralism that is as ‘rootless’ as ‘Morality,’ which all of MacIntyre’s work dismisses. Instead, MacIntyre advocates a respectful awareness of the polysemic and multivocal nature of deliberation about common goods as well as the need for ‘conceptual holes’ in secular discourse to fill these metaphysical gaps with particular visions of the good.

V. Chapter Three Summary

Within this chapter, we first examined the ways that MacIntyre problematizes three social roles in late modernity – the manager, the aesthete, and the therapist. MacIntyre associates each one of them with a hallmark of the self-serving and manipulative ‘Morality’ of liberal individualism. Turning next to Bellah et al.’s work, we shall see how they similarly problematize these social roles as hallmarks of the ‘first language’ of American individualism. Second, we examined how MacIntyre’s problematization of these three social roles is accompanied by a call to teleological, or goal-oriented, reasoning and a historically-informed theory of the virtues. Teleological reasoning is MacIntyre’s solution for transcending the subjective preferences and the manipulative modes of ‘Morality’ that he dismisses throughout his work. Teleological reasoning, as we have seen, regulates notions of the good in light of the virtues, qua the objective conditions for human excellence. We shall see in the next chapter how Bellah et al. also restore teleological reasoning, and for a similar purpose. Third, in this
chapter, we saw how MacIntyre contextualizes his goal-oriented theory of the virtues within practices, narratives, and traditions. Within these core components of MacIntyre’s theory, we also found three distinct strands of common goods: (a) the good and worthy ends of practices, (b) the goods of an individual life, and (c) the goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society. Turning next to Bellah et al.’s work, we shall see that their return to goal-oriented reasoning provides common goods at the very same levels of practices, individual lives, and communities and that their work relies on MacIntyre’s tripartite contextualization of the virtues to do so. Fourth, we briefly considered the classical republicanism of Aristotle, and some elements of Thomism that MacIntyre relies upon to ground his theory of the virtues in a creationist metaphysics. In the next chapter, we shall see how Bellah et al. similarly draw upon the civic republicanism of Aristotle and the resources provided by the biblical tradition as sources of reason and transcendence within their theory of the virtues.
Chapter Four:
Bellah et al.’s Account of ‘Good Work’

For readers concerned primarily with the ‘work as a calling’ literature, the last chapter probably felt like a long philosophical detour - one that could not possibly be anything more than tangentially significant to the emerging research on the calling orientation. In fact, this would be the case if the ‘work as a calling’ literature were not so thoroughly beholden to Bellah et al.’s calling orientation, as we saw in chapter 2. Consequently, however, this demonstrated beholdenness means that the ‘work as a calling’ literature must attend to MacIntyre’s suspicion of unregulated preferences, his call to teleological reasoning, his tripartite theory of the virtues, and his account of deliberating about and achieving common goods, all of which we examined closely within the previous chapter. This is because the philosophical framework of Bellah et al.’s calling orientation significantly depends on MacIntyre’s work, as we shall see more clearly in this chapter than we did within chapter 2. Furthermore, Bellah et al.’s account of American individualism more generally, which the calling orientation is intended to act as a buffer against, parallels MacIntyre’s account of the liberal-individualistic ‘Morality’ of late modernity.
In what follows, this chapter will expose deeper connections between Bellah et al. and MacIntyre. The following is intended to serve my primary audience – readers who are willing to take the moral foundation of the calling orientation seriously and incorporate MacIntyre’s thinking into their ‘work as a calling’ research accordingly. One of my additional hopes for this chapter is that readers of MacIntyre’s work will see how much Bellah et al.’s research sociologically complements MacIntyre’s philosophy.

With MacIntyre’s framework now in front of us, we are ready to see how the MacIntyrean schema contributes to Bellah and his colleagues’ concerns about individualism in American life and to the corrective that they provide in the workplace via the calling orientation. First, we shall see that the same social roles that concern MacIntyre in late modernity also concern Bellah et al., and for similar reasons. Second, we shall see that Bellah et al.’s critique of these social roles is accompanied by a call to teleological reasoning within the workplace and beyond it. MacIntyre’s account of teleological reasoning provides Bellah et al. with the necessary resources for transcending subjective preferences and for regulating notions of the good in light of the virtues. Third, we will examine the ways that Bellah et al. contextualize their discussion of the virtues within a MacIntyrean conception of practices, narratives, and living traditions, resulting in the achievement of the very same goods that MacIntyre identifies as common goods: (a) goods internal to practices, (b) goods of individual lives, and (c) goods of the community – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society.
Nowhere is this contextualization of the virtues and the goods that they sustain more apparent than within Bellah et al.’s account of the calling orientation, as we shall see throughout this chapter. Lastly, within this chapter, we shall turn our attention to the narrative history of civic republicanism and the biblical tradition, which Bellah et al. extensively draw upon to morally ground their theory of the virtues. The narrative resources provided by these traditions further illuminate striking parallels between the account of common goods proffered by both Bellah et al. and MacIntyre. Moreover, within this final section, it will be important for readers of both MacIntyre and Bellah et al.’s work to observe the connection between these figures’ accounts of pluralism. The nuances of their combined pluralistic vision provide a way of deliberating about and achieving common goods while, at the same time, better recognizing and respecting the polysemic and multivocal nature of inter-traditional dialogues.

I. Bellah et al.’s Late Modern Social Roles

Turning now to the social roles that Bellah et al. problematize within the culture of American individualism, we shall see that they take issue with the nature of contemporary morality in America by exposing issues related to the “representative characters” within American culture.\textsuperscript{315} Hence, much of their critique of individualistic morality rests upon contemporary social roles in the same way as MacIntyre’s critique

\textsuperscript{315} Bellah et al. (1996: 36-50).
does. These characters should already be very familiar to us. In fact, we analyzed them thoroughly within the previous chapter. Bellah et al. call their readers’ attention to key passages within *After Virtue* for a better understanding of MacIntyre’s social “types.”

Their work significantly builds on MacIntyrean social roles, particularly the manager and the therapist, to explain the American individualism that concerns them.

Relying on a MacIntyrean understanding of contemporary social roles in late modernity, they argue that his representative characters operate as symbols by which we can understand how individuals make sense of their lives and of their morality within a given culture:

A representative character is a kind of symbol. It is a way by which we can bring together in one concentrated image the way people in a given social environment organize and give meaning and direction to their lives. In fact, a representative character is more than a collection of individual traits or personalities. It is rather a public image that helps define, for a given group of people, just what kinds of personality trait it is good and legitimate to develop. A representative character provides an ideal, a point of reference and focus, that gives living expression to a vision of life...representative characters are not abstract ideals or faceless social roles, but are realized in the lives of those individuals who succeed more or less well in fusing their individual personalities with the public requirements of those roles. It is this living reenactment that cultural ideals their power to organize life. Representative characters thus demarcate specific societies and historical eras.\(^{317}\)

Hence, a representative character, for Bellah et al., is a social type which is embodied by real people in particular historical eras. In this way, such characters are reenacted by

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\(^{316}\) Ibid.: 313. In particular, see footnotes 33, 45, and 47 therein.

\(^{317}\) Ibid.: 39-40.
individuals who *imitate* the very social roles which epitomize their age. Such roles guide individuals’ decision making and enact a depiction of what the good life entails. Bellah et al. argue that *every society and historical era possesses distinct social roles that characterize the values and preferences of the dominant language of morality in a particular place and time.*

Hence, Bellah et al. imply that the imitation of social roles is not limited to the late modern world. They provide earlier and now outdated social roles, such as the “Tocquevillian image” of the “independent citizen” in the early nineteenth century and “the entrepreneurs of the Gilded Age of the late nineteenth century” (the latter, they argue, emerged in the decades shortly following Tocqueville’s visit to America).  

Social roles, therefore, speak of archetypal patterns and reflect the innate and ever-evolving human tendency to *imitate.* Even the ancients spoke about human patterns of imitation. For example, Plato discusses *mimesis* (imitation or representation) in the *Republic.* His Socratic character ultimately banishes the social role of the poet, believing that poets encourage pleasure-seeking and that they inflame desire in the sensible world, thereby obscuring the intelligible world’s immutable laws of reason. The patterns of *mimesis* that Plato believed would inflame the appetitive side of humanity and so lead to various vices, also concern MacIntyre as well as Bellah et al., and for very

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318 Ibid.: 35-44.

319 Plato (1997).
similar reasons. Albeit, the social roles have evolved considerably since Plato’s place and time.

That being said, the most up-to-date social embodiments of unregulated desire, Bellah et al. argue, are the very ones that MacIntyre presents within After Virtue. Bellah et al.’s work intends to demonstrate that these late modern social roles are thoroughly entrenched in contemporary American culture, both in public and in private life. Their work provides additional sociological evidence, gathered from hundreds of interviews with middle-class Americans, that supports the reality of these MacIntyrean patterns of imitation. Turning first to Bellah et al.’s account of the manager, we shall see that their analysis builds on MacIntyre’s account of the manager and problematizes its implications within and beyond the workplace.

Ia. The Manager

Like MacIntyre, Bellah et al. argue that the cultural instantiation of the manager is a result of the “dominant force” of “the bureaucratic organization of the business corporation,” and its prioritization of effective means-thinking.320 Consequently, Bellah et al. argue, “the essence of the manager’s task is to organize the human and non-human resources available to the organization that employs him so as to improve its

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320 Bellah et al. (1996: 45).
position in the marketplace.”\textsuperscript{321} Products and services are churned out quickly and effectively, with \textit{bigger} and \textit{better} releases each year. All of this is in the interest of increased expendability and for the purpose of profit maximization.

In a culture that prioritizes goods of effectiveness, laborers become, as Marx famously said, “cogs in the machine.”\textsuperscript{322} In other words, humans themselves become mere means, or material resources, in the hands of the manager whose primary concern is the continual advancement of the organization in relation to its competition in the marketplace. Not surprisingly, the treatment of humans as material resources caused those that Bellah et al. interviewed to claim that they were “‘sick of working,’ hated ‘the pressure,’ had ‘paid their dues,’ wanted ‘to get out of the rat race’ – and, finally, … they ‘never thought their work was socially necessary.’”\textsuperscript{323}

Within this management culture, “utilitarian individualism” reigns.\textsuperscript{324} Rather than a MacIntyrean ethic rooted in the virtues, like the practice-based ethic that shepherds Bellah et al.’s calling orientation to work (which we saw briefly in chapter 2 and shall analyze more closely within this chapter), the myopic focus of the manager’s

\textsuperscript{321} Ibid.: 45.
\textsuperscript{322} Marx (2010: 83-95).
\textsuperscript{323} Bellah et al. (1996: 72).
\textsuperscript{324} Ibid.: 46.
utilitarian ethic is “on the bottom line.” Bellah et al. define this ethic of utilitarian individualism as:

A form of individualism that takes as given certain basic human appetites and fears – for Hobbes, the desire for power over others and the fear of sudden violent death at the hands of another – and sees human life as an effort by individuals to maximize their self-interest relative to these given ends. Utilitarian individualism views society as arising from a contract that individuals enter into only in order to advance their self-interest relative to these given ends. According to Locke, society is necessary because of the prior existence of property, the protection of which is the reason individuals contractually enter society. Utilitarian individualism has an affinity to a basically economic understanding of human existence.

Most notably, what characterizes the utilitarian strand of individualism is the cost-benefit analysis that managers conduct to maximize “economic effectiveness.” This “hard” utilitarian calculus, which is conducted by the owners of organizations and enforced by the manipulative manager, does not consider ‘the greatest good for the greatest number’ of workers or customers. After all, and as we have just seen, this management culture leads to expendable products and employee burnout. Instead, organizational owners and managers prioritize a self-serving calculus that is rooted in the principle of “economic maximization.”

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325 Ibid.: viii.
326 Ibid.: 336.
327 Ibid.: 46.
328 Ibid.: viii.
utilitarian individualism reflects “an economic understanding of human existence,” making external goods the defining aspect of human lives and human relations.  

Bellah et al. argue that, in the interest of maximizing goods of effectiveness, the manager prioritizes what Aristotle and MacIntyre refer to as techne, making his “view of things akin to that of the technician of industrial society par excellence.” Importantly, since the ends of the organization are treated as non-negotiable, technical wisdom is not guided by a democratic deliberation about the achievement of common goods (like the goods that MacIntyre associates with practices, individuals, and communities, for example). Thus, all teleological deliberation about the common goods is suspended in the manager’s public role. Like MacIntyre, Bellah et al. state that “the manager takes the ends as they are given.” And such common goods are only thought about in a technical way; they only seem to matter insofar as they impact the ‘bottom line.’ Hence, Bellah et al. agree with MacIntyre that this management culture exhibits a prioritization of external goods at the expense of (a) goods internal to practices, (b) goods of an individual life, and (c) goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society.

Furthermore, and again following MacIntyre, Bellah et al. argue that the resources at the manager’s disposal are reflective of the “manipulative, achievement-
oriented” priorities of the modern workplace.\textsuperscript{333} As we have just seen, the manager receives his ends from the self-legislating and self-serving organization that employs him. More specifically, the manager serves the authoritarian owners of the organization, and this means that “his role is to persuade, inspire, manipulate, cajole, and intimidate those he manages so that his organization measures up to criteria of effectiveness shaped ultimately by the market but specifically by the expectations of those in control of his organization – finally, its owners.”\textsuperscript{334} Hence, Bellah et al. find that manipulation becomes a centrifugal force within the late modern working world. Just as we have seen in MacIntyre’s account, manipulation becomes a primary source of the manager’s effectiveness, and it tends to characterize his relations in the workplace.

But sometimes, the manager must at least ‘look like’ he is ‘doing the right thing.’ This leads us to another important point that Bellah et al. make. It is one that intuitively illustrates the manager’s manipulation in a way that we do not find within MacIntyre’s work. Namely, they argue that even managers and organizations that vocalize an avowed commitment to corporate social responsibility (henceforth referred to as CSR) often fail to live up to their promises and only pursue CSR in a manipulative way that serves the principle of economic maximization. In other words, the managerial type tends to subject CSR to the principle of economic maximization, pursuing social

\textsuperscript{333} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{334} Ibid.
responsibility only when it is financially beneficial to the organization, as we shall see in a moment.

Reflecting on this problem that pervades CSR discourse today, Bellah et al. forcefully argue that contemporary managers and organizations ought to adhere to the following corrective:

Reasserting the idea that incorporation is a concession of public authority to a private group in return for service to the public good, with effective public accountability, would change what is now called the ‘social responsibility of the corporation’ from its present status, where it is often a kind of public relations whipped cream decorating the corporate pudding, to a constitutive structural element in the corporation itself. This, in turn, would involve a fundamental alteration in the role and training of the manager. Management would become a profession in the older sense of the word, involving not merely standards of technical competence but standards of public obligation that could at moments of conflict override obligations to the corporate employer. Such a conception of the professional manager would require a deep change in the ethos of schools of business administration, where ‘business ethics’ would have to become central in the process of professional formation.335

Like MacIntyre, Bellah et al. argue that the ends of an organization ought to be rooted in a theory of workplace practices with goods internal to them.336 Instead, however, Bellah et al. find that the CSR discourse, which ought to be a greenhouse for practices in the workplace, has become another manipulative implement in the manager’s toolkit. Rather than being a greenhouse for practices, CSR discourse becomes a means for

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335 Ibid.: 290. Related to this are the numerous examples of corporate ‘greenwashing’ that pervade the late modern working world.

336 Ibid.: 66.
greenwashing in this management culture by deceptively leading consumers to think that their products, services, and policies are ‘good for people’ and ‘good for the environment.’

Consequently, Bellah et al. also find that technical wisdom (techne), divorced from good and worthy ends, ultimately weakens the manager’s possibility of having a practice-based calling. This is evident in the excerpt above as well, wherein Bellah et al. imply that management is no longer a ‘profession’ in the old sense of seeing ‘work as a calling.’ Bellah et al. rightfully indicate that managers are often educated as technical bureaucrats to prioritize the external good of capital. This means that many managers employ the language of CSR and opportunities to ‘do good’ in the community principally for the self-serving ends of the corporation, (i.e., self-marketing and capital gains). And they do so manipulatively. Hence, without any normative grounding of a moral vision in the workplace, it is no wonder why CSR discourse is criticized as manipulative by Bellah et al., MacIntyre, and so many others today. CSR discourse merely becomes a way for organizations to conceal their prioritization of goods of effectiveness with whipped cream and a cherry.

337 Ibid.: xvi.
338 See, for example, Moore (2017: 26-32).
339 To illustrate this point, consider Monsanto Corporation. This company continues to deceptively mislead farmers in poor communities, calling them to switch to their GMO seeds and arguing that those seeds will be ‘good for people’ insofar as they will yield more crops and, therefore, sustain famished communities. Instead, however, many of these farmers in poorer rural regions have been driven into bankruptcy (several ultimately committing suicide). They have also argued that their herbicides, which GMO seeds are designed to withstand, are not
Because of the public and private consequences of this management culture as well as the inauthentic character of CSR discourse in late modernity, Bellah et al. argue that utilitarian individualism very clearly breaks “the crucial link between the individual and the public world,” (which civic republicanism as well as the biblical tradition emphasize, as we shall see later in this chapter).\textsuperscript{340} This culture of management does so, in part, by diminishing any kind of democratic deliberation about public and private goods and by diminishing one’s prosocial concerns.\textsuperscript{341} Manipulative means-thinking and spin-stories become the way to get ahead in a culture that prioritizes economic effectiveness.

Moreover, the utilitarian individualism that guides late modern management culture also influences individuals’ construal of their work as a “source of material rewards.”\textsuperscript{342} Not surprisingly, the emphasis on material rewards causes the job and career orientations to largely overshadow the prevalence of a sense of calling in the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{340} Bellah et al. (1996: 66).
\textsuperscript{341} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{342} Ibid.
\end{footnotesize}
workplace today for the managed as well. As a result, Bellah et al. argue that misprioritized goods in the workplace and the dominance of utilitarian individualism in management culture makes the calling orientation “harder and harder to understand.”  

Because this culture places primacy on economic effectiveness, both managers and the managed do not participate in a deliberation about good and worthy ends within the workplace. Consequently (and just like MacIntyre), Bellah et al. find that they do not consider good and worthy ends in private either. Instead, they are driven to “achieve a more gratifying private life” by relying on a similar utilitarian calculus to “become more efficient in adapting to new sets of expectations and styles of consumption.” Therefore, the way that modern management culture emphasizes economic effectiveness subsequently habituates individuals to exercise a similar utilitarian calculus in private. Within the private sphere, the primacy placed on means-thinking and effectiveness also dominates, but in this sphere the measure of effectiveness involves the achievement of individualistic preferences, which are thought to offer therapeutic rewards. Therefore, in the same way that MacIntyre links his discussion of the manager to his discussion of the aesthete and the therapist, Bellah et al. also believe that

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343 Ibid. Emphasis added.
344 Ibid.: 46.
345 Ibid.: 47.
these social roles all promote a kind of means-thinking and, consequently, reinforce one another.

Ib. The Aesthete

The emphasis on means-thinking and effectiveness within the public sphere takes a “‘hard’ utilitarian shape” which focuses “on the bottom line,” as we have seen. This, Bellah et al. find, inhibits the possibility of seeing work as a practice-based calling with goods internal to it. On the other hand, Bellah et al. believe that the way practices have been abstracted from the workplace (among other areas of public and private life) also reinforces a “utilitarian calculus” which takes a “‘soft’ expressive” form in Americans’ private lives. In private, the primary concern of individuals, who tend to be abstracted from practice-based callings, becomes the achievement of individualistic goods that they prefer. Lacking any account of a need for the regulation of preferences, individuals within late modernity instead tend to pursue their preferences without any reflection on common goods. This pursuit of what one wants, when one wants it, and

346 Ibid.: viii.
347 Ibid.: 66.
348 Ibid.: viii, 6.
without deliberating about whether or not such a thing is worth wanting, is thought to inculcate desirable “psychic rewards,” such as happiness.  

Therefore, and as we shall go on to see, the dominance of utilitarian individualism in the public sphere causes a “split” between public and private goals, creating “contradictory pressures.” The public sphere of work becomes a place to gather the material resources that are necessary to carry out individuals’ tireless pursuit of their individualistic preferences in private. Thus, while a utilitarian calculus of maximization remains in private life, Bellah et al. argue that, within this domain, the calculus is in service to a different kind of means-thinking. In the workplace, as we have seen, the calculus has to do with economic effectiveness insofar as work becomes a means to material rewards. In private, however, human beings are guided by an ethic of expressivism, calling them to plumb the depths of their ‘core’ preferences and to maximize the achievement of aesthetic goods and experiences - therapeutic resources that life in the industrialized working world detaches them from.

This means that when the manager is not at work, he is likely to be guided by the ‘softer’ ethic of expressivism, rather than the harder ethic of utilitarian individualism. Related to this point, we should consider both the manager and the managed. First, let us consider the manager. Bellah et al. rightfully remind us that “the manager also has

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349 Ibid.: 66.

350 Ibid.: 48, 177.
another [private] life, divided among spouse, children, friends, community, and religious and other nonoccupational involvements.” In private, therefore, the same person who embodies the social role of the manager in the workplace seeks to maximize the achievement of personally desirable aesthetic goods and experiences, which are thought to be a psychologically pleasing expression of his ‘core’ preferences.

But the manager is not the only figure who exercises this ‘soft’ form of preference-maximization in private. In the same way that MacIntyre suggests many middle-class individuals “share the attitudes of the rich in fantasy and aspiration,” Bellah et al. find that many other middle-class Americans daydream about more material resources and experiences, the achievement of which are thought to lead to greater levels of personal satisfaction. For example, Bellah et al. discover during their interviews that many of the hard-working middle-class citizens within the small town of Suffolk, Massachusetts “readily admit that they really would prefer to live in one of the more affluent towns in the area, but stay in Suffolk because they could not afford a house in a wealthier community.” Providing numerous similar examples from middle-class working Americans within various towns across the country, Bellah et al. intend to show that the private lives of many middle-class Americans are marked by

351 Ibid.: 45.
353 Bellah et al. (1996: 11).
aesthetic dreaming, which is a result of the “social basis of that culture” being “the world of bureaucratic consumer capitalism.”\textsuperscript{354} What this illustrates is that the values of American individualism within the workplace reinforce a pattern of individualistic consumption in private.

But, “where the creation of a consumption-oriented lifestyle, which may resemble that of ‘beautiful people’ or may simply involve a comfortable home and a camper, becomes a form of defense against a dangerous and meaningless [public] world” that is ruled by the hard calculus of utilitarian individualism, Bellah et al. argue that this manifestation of a ‘softer’ form of expressive individualism “probably takes on a greater burden than it can bear.”\textsuperscript{355} To understand why Bellah et al. believe that the aesthetic lifestyle of many middle-class Americans is self-defeating, we have to attend to what the private culture of bureaucratic consumer capitalism is missing. As we shall see, the answer winds up being the same thing that is missing in the modern working world.

The weakening of what MacIntyre refers to as practices in the lives of many middle-class Americans means that their preferences are not regulated in light of any normative vision of common goods. Instead of finding happiness, individuals become susceptible to the

\textsuperscript{354} Ibid.: 47.

\textsuperscript{355} Ibid.: 291.
effective marketing that is characteristic of bureaucratic consumer capitalism and the persistent feeling of the need for more. The content of effective marketing campaigns, rather than virtues that could be strengthened within practices (i.e., a practice-based calling) fills the minds of middle-class Americans. So, following MacIntyre, Bellah et al. argue that the intense focus on lavish styles of consumption stems largely from the loss of practices in the workplace, where many middle-class Americans spend a majority of their waking lives.\textsuperscript{356}

This loss of practices in the workplace, combined with habituation in the private culture of bureaucratic consumerism, causes many middle-class Americans to become sequestered into patterns of life with people who exhibit similar aesthetic preferences. For many, identifying “wholly with work” as a “job or career does not seem to be enough;” at some point, such orientations become “suffocating.”\textsuperscript{357} Others sense that they are “limited by narrowing opportunities in the upper echelons” of their career, or find that “unemployment is peculiarly painful.”\textsuperscript{358} For all of these individuals, “the absence of a sense of calling means an absence of a sense of moral meaning.”\textsuperscript{359} Not discovering the resources provided by practices within the workplace, many Americans

\textsuperscript{356} Ibid.: 66.

\textsuperscript{357} Ibid.: 72.

\textsuperscript{358} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{359} Ibid.
instead turn to the “like-minded” and to “loved ones” who think like them, dress like them, live in the same gated neighborhoods as them, and ‘pass the time’ just like them.\textsuperscript{360} Hence, the expressive turn that the American dream has taken as a consequence of the culture of individualism creates a prioritization of financial acquisitiveness in the workplace so that Americans can achieve increasingly lavish “styles of consumption.”\textsuperscript{361} These patterns are intended to strengthen one’s identity by providing Americans with an abundance of shared status symbols, which illustrate their individualistic preferences.\textsuperscript{362}

Bellah et al. refer to this lifestyle that bureaucratic consumer capitalism reinforces as the “fragile and shallow” alternative of the “lifestyle enclave,” which is a portrait of what being consumed by one’s preferences looks like in late modernity.\textsuperscript{363} While lifestyle enclaves often take the place of moral communities that are missing within the workplace, Bellah et al. argue that these enclaves are \textit{not} communities.\textsuperscript{364} Such groups become “fundamentally segmental and celebrate the narcissism of similarity.”\textsuperscript{365}

\textsuperscript{360} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{361} Ibid.: 46.
\textsuperscript{362} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{363} Ibid.: 75.
\textsuperscript{364} Ibid.: 72.
\textsuperscript{365} Ibid.
So, Americans’ alternative to moral communities becomes *segmental lifestyles*, and for two reasons: “They involve only a segment of each individual, for they concern only private life…and they are segmental socially in that they only include those with a common lifestyle.” In other words, one’s whole identity becomes wrapped up in “some feature of private life” that one shares with others - features “which often serve to differentiate them sharply from those with other lifestyles.” Importantly, founding morality and social organization upon personal preferences, Bellah et al. argue, divides individuals into narcissistic groups that are not informed by a moral tradition, but instead by shared preferences that are “most closely linked to [shared patterns of] leisure and consumption.” Instead of practice-based communities (i.e., one’s practice-based community in the workplace) that become organized around shared beliefs about goods worth wanting and what makes a life worth living, individuals retreat to lifestyle enclaves, which offer materialistic goods and expressive experiences that are intended to illustrate who and what they prefer.

The way that Bellah et al. contrast the calling orientation with the lifestyle enclave of late modern aesthetes is intended to promote moral communities in the workplace and to ward off what they take to be a much shallower alternative. Many,

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366 Ibid.
367 Ibid.: 335.
368 Ibid.: 72.
however, lacking resources to understand what a practice-based calling entails (in part due to disordered desire and also due to the institutional marginalization of practices), turn to the lifestyle enclave with their loved ones and others who share their preferences, hoping that this lifestyle of bureaucratic consumer capitalism will give “form to their private lives.”

Additionally, some turn to “therapy, a newer, but increasingly important, way in which middle-class American find meaning in the private sphere.” As we shall see, Bellah et al. have much to say about the closely related MacIntyrean social role of the therapist and the culture of therapy more broadly.

**Ic. The Therapist**

We have seen already that MacIntyre’s therapist shares with the manager the emphasis on effectiveness that departs from any deliberation over good and worthy ends. The only real difference is that the effectiveness of the therapist has to do with getting *patients* what they want, rather than getting *organizational owners* what they want. Grounded in the same expressive strand of individualism that guides the aesthete, the therapist exists to help individuals discover their ‘core’ preferences and to

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369 Ibid.: xliii.

370 Ibid.
express them without constraint. \(^{371}\) Hence, the therapist argues that “to be free psychologically is to succeed in separating oneself from the values imposed by one’s past or by conformity to one’s social milieu, so that one can discover what one really wants.” \(^{372}\) Instead of reinforcing a vision of the life worth living, among other common goods worth wanting, what the therapist does is simply reinforce one’s aesthetic preferences, while also helping one to achieve those preferences more effectively.

In a paragraph that nicely builds on the picture of the therapist that we see within After Virtue, Bellah et al. explain the role of the therapist in the following way:

Like the manager, the therapist is a specialist in mobilizing resources for effective action, only here the resources are largely internal to the individual and the measure of effectiveness is the elusive criterion of personal satisfaction. Also like the manager, the therapist takes the functional organization of industrial society for granted, as the unproblematical context of life. The goal of living is to achieve some combination of occupation and ‘lifestyle’ that is economically possible and psychically tolerable, that ‘works.’ The therapist, like the manager, takes the ends as they are given; the focus is on the effectiveness of the means. \(^{373}\)

In this way, the social role of the therapist is situated within late modernity and accepts the structural realities supported by the ‘first language’ of American individualism as unproblematic. This means that the therapist must take the culture of management and

\(^{371}\) Ibid.: 47.


\(^{373}\) Ibid.: 47.
the striving for a lifestyle enclave as unproblematic. *The therapist’s job is to help individuals find a satisfying life within these individualistic structural realities.*

Importantly, the American therapist maintains that a good life within the structure of late modern culture entails a significant degree of nonconformism. As reflected by the fact that the therapist is the effective maximizer of individual preferences, the “images of the good life” that therapy intends to provide are images that speak of being “your own person in the sense that you have defined who you are, decided for yourself what you want out of life, free as much as possible from the demands of conformity to family, friends, or community.”  

That being said, Bellah et al. argue that the ideals of the therapist are “generally hostile to older ideals of moral order.” In place of these older ideals, they find that the *poster boys for the late modern culture of therapy are transcendentalist figures like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry David Thoreau.* Emerson, as we saw in chapter 2, argues that “the only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be.” Emerson’s life story speaks to his embodiment of the early values of American individualism. His rise to fame happens after he rejects the traditionalism of his Christian pastoral role early in life so that he can attempt to ‘freely’ pursue self-

374 Ibid.: 23.

375 Ibid.: 47.

376 Emerson (200: 132-153).
realization apart from any tradition-constituted histories. Like Emerson, Hawthorne and Thoreau reflect an individualistic version of the self-making project in late modernity. Casting aside commitments to “higher truths” that are pursued from within a tradition, these poster boys instead exhibited an anti-traditionalist and “vague pantheistic mysticism that tended to identify the divine with a higher self.” All of these figures embody an autonomous aesthetic lifestyle that, in many ways, is marked by living as an outsider looking into traditions.

More than anyone else, Bellah et al. argue that the figure “who represents what we may call ‘expressive individualism’ in its clearest form” is the transcendentalist poet, Walt Whitman. He demonstrates best the ‘softer’ strand of individualism that dominates in therapy sessions and Americans’ private lives. This strand, as we have glimpsed already in our analysis of the aesthete, emphasizes something more than just aesthetically pleasing material goods, but also “feelings…viewed therapeutically.” Whitman epitomizes this strand of individualism by emphasizing “a life rich in

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377 Ibid.: 47.
378 Ibid.: 233.
380 Ibid.: viii
experience, open to all kinds of people, luxuriating in the sensual as well as the intellectual, and above all a life of strong feeling.”

Whitman’s poetry and his life placed emphasis on the self’s freedom. But Whitman embodies what Bellah et al. refer to as the “old meaning of freedom.” This is because “freedom to Whitman was above all the freedom to express oneself against all constraints and conventions.”

Intentionally, I have waited to present Bellah et al.’s definition of expressive individualism until our discussion of Whitman. This is because I sense that the very way in which Bellah et al. chose to define expressive individualism must have happened with Whitman’s poetry and with his idea of freedom in mind. They describe the expressive strand of individualism in the following way:

A form of individualism that arose in opposition to utilitarian individualism (which see). Expressive individualism holds that each person has a unique core of feeling and intuition that should unfold or be expressed if individuality is to be realized. This core, though unique, is not necessarily alien to other persons or to nature. Under certain conditions, the expressive individualist may find it possible through intuitive feeling to ‘merge’ with other persons, with nature, or with the cosmos as a whole. Expressive individualism is related to the phenomenon of romanticism in eighteenth and nineteenth-century European and

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381 Ibid.: 34.
382 Bellah et al. (1991: 7).
383 Bellah et al. (1996: 34).
384 Ibid.
American culture. In the twentieth century, it shows affinities with the culture of psychotherapy.\textsuperscript{385}

Expressivism holds that, at one’s ‘core,’ there is a self that is just waiting to be discovered. The self, as understood from within, does not wholly banish others from one’s life. However, the relationship of the self to others is serendipitous rather than fully committed. Like Whitman’s conception of the self, which “identified the self with other people, with places, with nature, ultimately with the universe,” expressivism holds that one’s true loyalty must always be to one’s ‘core’ feelings as they are found to exist within oneself; this is ultimately the project of the mystical individual who attempts to be abstracted from tradition-constituted commitments and communities.\textsuperscript{386}

Other individuals become a serendipitous resource for the project of freely constructing one’s own identity.\textsuperscript{387} Ultimately, however, other individuals are merely \textit{just a resource} for the late modern project of turning inward and more deeply exploring one’s preferences. The discovery of these preferences, as we have seen, is thought to lead to some higher, divine-like conception of the self. So, like MacIntyre, Bellah et al. problematize the dominant mode of therapy for prioritizing means-thinking and an unconstrained search for individual goods instead of common goods. They do this

\textsuperscript{385} Ibid.: 333-334.

\textsuperscript{386} Ibid.: 34.

\textsuperscript{387} With this account of Whitman now in front of us, we can see further how Dik & Duffy’s “serendipitous” account of “transcendence” must be problematized. See p. 34 herein.
within their definition of expressive individualism by tracing romanticist and transcendentalist commitments to the dominant mode of therapy today. The fact that the dominant mode of therapy today tends to reflect Whitman’s commitments rather than a deliberation about common goods is problematic, Bellah et al. argue.

One of the most interesting links between the culture of therapy and consequences in individuals’ lives is the way that this therapeutic individualism tends to be corrosive for religious communities. In this respect, Bellah et al. critique the way that the culture of therapy causes “morality and religion” to take “refuge in human subjectivity, in feeling and sentiment.” They note that commitments to others within a shared religious tradition seem altogether lost in the lives of many religious Americans today. For example, there is Sheila, “who has received a good deal of therapy and who describes her faith as ‘Sheilaism,’” an individualistic religion which is guided by her “‘own little voice.’”

In general, and across all kinds of traditions, Bellah et al. find parallels between the nonconformism of Americans like Sheila and the transcendentalist figures discussed herein. They note the ways that therapy tends to reinforce a sharply autonomous account of freedom, which dismisses the “tight linkage” between public and private

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388 Ibid.: 46

389 Ibid.: 221.
life, and between the individual and others within a shared moral tradition.\textsuperscript{390} The social role of the therapist, and this dominant mode of expressive individualism embodied within the culture of therapy more broadly, reinforces a pattern of behavior that causes Americans to cringe at the idea of subjecting themselves to communities that would call for the regulation of individualistic preferences for the purpose of striving \emph{together} for the achievement of common goods.

\textbf{Id. What the Three Social Roles Teach Us}

What all three of these social roles exhibit is an impoverished and individualistic morality that manifests itself in the ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ forms of American individualism. We can think of American individualism as a national manifestation of the emotivist (and later, expressivist) ‘Morality’ that MacIntyre critiques within his work. Therefore, the American individualism that Bellah et al. problematize via these social roles also carries the same consequences that MacIntyre identifies within his work. In public and private, Bellah et al., like MacIntyre, find that discussions about good and worthy ends worth pursuing within shared moral traditions have waned significantly and that means-thinking dominates in its place. What has dropped out of Americans’ conversations to a great extent is deliberation about common goods within the core

\textsuperscript{390} Ibid. Related to this point, Bellah et al. also discuss other American historical figures, such as Thomas Jefferson, as we shall see later.
institutions and practices of daily life. Neither public nor private life in late modernity emphasizes the need to regulate preferences for the achievement of common goods.

In the last chapter, we saw that MacIntyre believed such a culture carries consequences pertaining to identity formation. Bellah et al.’s sociological analysis of these social roles affirms that this is indeed the case. *Bellah et al. argue that the sharply autonomous conception of the self as understood from within, or via one’s ‘core’ feelings, “places the burden of one’s own deepest self-definitions on one’s own individual choice.”*391 This understanding of autonomy entails a rejection of “the notion that one discovers one’s deepest beliefs in, and through, tradition and community.”392 Also, this rejection of shared commitments attempts to place all individuals outside of the very traditions that bind notions of meaning to visions of the good, and therefore constitute more enriching resources for identity formation. Bellah et al. mourn the way that this rejection of commitment in American life creates a shallow conception of the self as well as a “powerful cultural fiction that we not only can, but must, make up our deepest beliefs in the isolation of our private selves.”393 Therefore, like MacIntyre, Bellah et al. discover that the project of identity formation becomes impoverished in late modernity.


392 Ibid.

393 Ibid.
Overall, Bellah et al. find that American individualism glorifies an “ironic” kind of nonconformism which is blind to the fact that, “just when we think we are most free, we are coerced by the dominant [individualist] beliefs of our own culture.” As Bellah et al. argue, however, these individualistic ideals did not come strictly from within, or via one’s ‘core’ feelings. Rather, (and as MacIntyre’s account of the social roles in late modernity also clearly exhibits) they came from inherited narratives proffered by earlier individualists who shaped the contemporary social roles of American life. Importantly, these post-Enlightenment individualist figures failed to see how their own identities and beliefs were bound to specific traditions. Thus, Bellah et al. call Americans out of this state of blindness. Bellah et al. recommend that, instead of placing so much emphasis on unregulated preferences and false narratives about freely-choosing, hyper-autonomous individuals, we should again return to teleological deliberation about (a) the good and worthy ends of practices, (b) the goods of an individual life, and (c) the goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society.

II. Bellah et al.’s Call to Teleological Reasoning

The MacIntyrean social roles that Bellah et al. expose within their work should be read as a call to teleological reasoning. We have seen how this means-thinking

\[394 \text{ Ibid.}\]
prioritizes the effective maximization of aesthetic goods and experiences in the private sphere. The result is an ends agnosticism in private life, which focuses on the means necessary to achieve individual wants. Bellah et al. find a link between the loss of teleological deliberation in private and public, pointing to the way that this kind of “freedom to make private decisions is bought at the cost of turning over most public decisions to bureaucratic managers and experts.”\footnote{Ibid.: 150.} In the public sphere (wherein the manager and the therapist work), we have also seen that a form of means-thinking replaces any teleological deliberation about common goods.

The result across public and private life, Bellah et al. argue, is a culture that affirms MacIntyre’s suspicion of the dominance of “bureaucratic individualism,” where the ends and purposes of life are traded for a culture of experts who effectively strengthen means-thinking.\footnote{MacIntyre (2007: 40, 85, 260).} In such a culture, claims are made “in terms of utility” and “culture conceptions of the virtues become marginal.”\footnote{Ibid.} Bellah et al. share with MacIntyre this sense that contemporary social roles eliminate teleological deliberation across the public and private spheres within practices, individual human lives, and communities. In both the public and the private sphere, Bellah et al. argue that “it is as though the stress on the rationality of means and on the importance of individual

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\footnote{Ibid.: 150.}

\footnote{MacIntyre (2007: 40, 85, 260).}

\footnote{Ibid.}
wants, the primary emphases of utilitarian and expressive individualism, have come
loose from an understanding of the ends and purposes of life.”398

IIa. Bellah et al.’s Turn to a MacIntyrean Account of Ends-Agnosticism

Building on the MacIntyrean account of the turn that led to the culture of
emotivism, which we saw in the last chapter, Bellah further clarifies the ends agnosticism
of late modern public social roles in a presentation shortly after the publication of Habits of
the Heart. Within that presentation, he states that the public bureaucrats of late
modernity (the manager and the therapist):

are oriented to means and systematically avoid discussion of ends. Ends are either
given or random or both. The end for the manager is there by the very nature of
the organization within which he or she works. The task is simply to maximize
the efficient attainment of those ends. For the therapist the end is simply whatever
the client or patient wants. Again, that [end] is not to be questioned within the
therapeutic context399

Hence, American individualism maintains that the telos of workplace practices and

communities as well as the telos of human lives need not be questioned. The manager is
to remain focused on the means necessary to carry out whatever orders his
organizational owners give him, and the therapist is not supposed to deliberate with

398 Bellah et al. (1996: 150).

399 Bellah et al. (1986: 6).
patients about whether or not their wants are ‘worth wanting.’ As we have seen, the therapist’s role is to help patients more effectively achieve their wants.

To provide a contrast to the way that teleological reasoning has been banished in late modernity, Bellah reminds his audience of the older public social roles that MacIntyre distinguishes the manager and the therapist from in the third chapter of After Virtue. Bellah summarizes MacIntyre’s argument, reminding the audience that the “statesman” and the “priest” once spoke “about what we ought to do and who we really are.” Now, however, “the manager and the therapist” operate as revisionary roles that have replaced these earlier characters. While older social roles fostered teleological deliberation, the manager and the therapist, claiming “no knowledge of those things [that we ought to do], rest their authority on the fact that they can provide effectiveness of means rather than guidance with respect to ends.” Hence, Bellah reasserts the MacIntyrean claim that means-thinking and ends agnosticism have replaced an earlier culture that was rooted in the virtues and a deliberation about the good life of the individual and the community.

Moreover, Bellah states that these late modern public social roles are reinforced by the private social role of the aesthetic American individual who remains ends-agnostic in the search

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400 Ibid.: 6-7.

401 Ibid.

402 Ibid.
for personal satisfaction. Private individuals end up fulfilling the role of the consumer in “the world of bureaucratic consumer capitalism.” Bellah concludes that aesthetically concerned “individuals seeking their private ends actually turn out to be good functionaries in a bureaucratically conceived world.” They embody another kind of utilitarian calculus that is devoid of ends-thinking, thereby legitimizing the ‘hard’ utilitarianism of public life that produces expendable products and services for their consumption. Instead of setting out on a narrative quest for the good life - a quest that would be guided by the virtues - Bellah et al. find that Americans have become passively consumed by their preferences, which serve as a therapeutic cocoon, eliminating teleological deliberation and distracting them from the ‘harder’ realities of public life in late modernity.

Therefore, what MacIntyre refers to as the emotivist or expressivist culture of bureaucratic individualism and what Bellah et al. refer to as the culture of American individualism turns out to be a self-reinforcing culture of ends agnosticism all the way around. Moreover, as it pertains to the turn that led to the culture of emotivism, Bellah et al. make their agreement with MacIntyre known. Emotivist morality becomes, as Bellah says, “the appropriate moral language in a culture of bureaucratic individualism.

403 Ibid.: 47.
404 Ibid.
405 Bellah et al. (1986: 7, 21-25, 36).
precisely because there is no language to speak about ends. Therefore, emotivism – in the sense of the good is what I feel the good is or what I feel comfortable with – is the only moral language that transcends sheer utilitarianism.”

Departing from a deliberation about good and worthy ends in public and private life, the result is a prioritization of what MacIntyre refers to as external goods, or goods of effectiveness, across all practices. Bellah et al. argue that this, in turn, results in “the weakening of the practices of social life and civic engagement.” Hence, the combined absence of teleological deliberation in public and in private leads Bellah et al. to conclude that “the expressive culture, now deeply allied with the utilitarian...treat[s] normative commitments as so many alternative strategies of self-fulfillment. What has dropped out are the old normative expectations of what makes life worth living.”

Importantly, in an attempt to restore an account of what makes life worth living and a vision of goods sought together, Bellah et al. reflect on the most time-consuming practical activity in most middle-class Americans’ lives - one that carries the potential to restore teleological deliberation at work, at home, and within one’s moral communities. Particularly in Habits of the Heart, Bellah et al.’s call to teleological reasoning is situated within their MacIntyrean conceptualization of practice-based callings.

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408 Ibid.: 48.
IIb. Bellah et al.’s Turn to a MacIntyrean Teleology Within the Workplace

Prioritizing a turn to MacIntyrean teleology within the workplace, Bellah et al. first consider the not-so-MacIntyrean state of the working world today. Their research illustrates that the tenets of American individualism significantly mar the way we understand our work. All too often, work has become a place to shore up the economic resources that we need to embody the lifestyle enclave of our choosing, causing money to become the top priority (job orientation). Just as often, if not more, they argue, work has become a place that we also strive to make a name for ourselves. The therapeutic “demand to ‘make something of yourself’ through work is one that Americans coming of age hear as often from themselves as from others,” they argue. What we do and the prestige of our title in the office often become, at one point or another during many of our working lives, a primary motivation and the principal source of our identity (career orientation).

Whatever our orientation to work is, how we understand ourselves in relationship to our work significantly “bears on who we are,” they argue. That being said, our identity is largely constituted by the way we identify with our work. As we have seen already, there are reasons for seeing both the job and the career orientations as inadequate orientations to work.

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409 Ibid.: 65.

410 Ibid.: 66.
But, what specifically are the consequences of these not-so-MacIntyrean workplace conditions and work orientations today? Importantly, we do not understand ourselves in relation to others that we work with or in relation to the good product or service that we are contributing to the public and/or private spheres. In this way, the true function of many of our working lives seems to have been lost in late modernity, causing us to see no point in work beyond the individualist demands that we place on it. Work becomes a means for making money or making a name for ourselves, rather than a practice with goods internal to it. In this way, work has become very un-MacIntyrean.

However, Bellah et al. believe that there is a third and much lesser-understood way of construing our work, as we saw already in chapter 2. Understood correctly, *Bellah et al. argue that ‘work as a calling’ carries the potential to reclaim what has been lost in the culture of American individualism.* “The recovery of the idea of ‘work as a calling,’” they argue, “means a change in the meaning of our work.” Moreover, it results in a change in the way that work is perceived as meaningful. Work no longer becomes meaningful primarily because it makes us feel good about ourselves, or because it results in material rewards. Granted, Bellah et al. argue, “it would be utopian to try to disentangle achievement and material reward altogether, but some weakening of the

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connection is the only way we can introduce an alternative” to the “pattern” of individualism that has become the ‘first language’ of American culture. Believing that the characteristic ‘patterns’ associated with the strands of utilitarian and expressive individualism make ‘work as a calling’ “harder and harder to understand,” they call us to consider our working lives in a way that does not prioritize these patterns of means-thinking. In an effort to return to teleological deliberation within (a) practices, (b) individual lives, and (c) communities - or society more broadly, Bellah et al. call us to reconsider the idea of ‘work as a calling.’ This notion constitutes a MacIntyrean turn to teleological deliberation within the workplace. Such a turn, as they rightfully admit, will “take an extraordinary exercise of political will to achieve so major a transformation in our ideology and our institutions.” But the hard work of reclaiming a proper vision of ‘work as a calling’ is worth the fight.

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412 Ibid.


414 Bellah et al. (1991: 107). A proper way of understanding Bellah et al.’s project would be to consider Habits of the Heart their initial book about ideological transformation at the personal and cultural level. The Good Society is a ‘sequel’ insofar as they see that such an ideological transformation cannot happen apart from institutional change as well. While their sociological definition of institutions is broader in scope than MacIntyre’s, the parallel between Bellah et al. and MacIntyre on this point is a striking one. Arguably, MacIntyre’s project is better served by the sociological analysis that Bellah et al. deliver in these combined works. In this respect, the relationship between these figures, as I imply throughout, is a symbiotic one. MacIntyre provides Bellah et al. with a philosophical framework and Bellah et al. provide MacIntyre with a robust sociology, not to mention a further extension of MacIntyrean inquiry via the ethical deliberation that makes up what Bellah et al. refer to as their ‘public philosophy.’
III. How Bellah et al. Situate Their Calling Orientation Within a Tripartite Conception of the Virtues & Common Goods

How then do we understand what it means for work to be pursued as a calling? In chapter 2 we saw that Bellah et al.’s account of ‘work as a calling’ “subsumes the self into a community of disciplined practice and sound judgment whose activity has meaning and value in itself, not just in the output or profit that results from it.”\(^{415}\) What this means is that ‘work as a calling’ restores the ends-thinking that appears to be absent from the contemporary social roles of late modernity. Moreover, Bellah et al.’s account of the calling orientation restores an account of the virtues to the workplace.

Bellah et al. argue that we must understand the calling orientation as an highly intentional alignment to our work. Such an orientation “allows one to form attachments, make commitments, and engage in activities that are good in themselves.”\(^{416}\) Restoring this alignment to our work, they argue, “could go far to relieve the competitive, anxious self-assertiveness of this individuated [American] self, for they would encourage other virtues and competencies.”\(^{417}\) As Bellah et al. imply here, and as we shall see, the idea of ‘work as a calling’ has implications that are much farther reaching than the effects that this alignment to work has on practices. This


\(^{417}\) Ibid.: 106.
orientation offers a complete picture of the MacIntyrean theory of the virtues, which begins with a social account of human excellence in practices, but then broadens to consider the significance of individual narratives and over-arching traditions.

The calling orientation, resting on a MacIntyrean theory of the virtues, also delivers the various common goods that MacIntyre discusses in his work. Bellah et al. agree that such goods can only be understood and achieved through a virtue-informed account of agency that pushes well beyond the unregulated and individualistic preferences of Americans. Each practice-based calling, sustained by the virtues that regulate human preferences, offer the goods that MacIntyre’s teleological framework calls for at the level of (a) practices, (b) individual lives, and (c) communities – or society more broadly. In what follows, we shall analyze each one of these components and the relevant goods that they offer. First, we shall turn our attention to Bellah et al.’s account of practices and the internal goods, or the goods of excellence, that are associated with them.

**IIIa. Virtues & Practices**

Following MacIntyre, Bellah et al. imply that restoring a human *telos* in modernity requires that we first attend to excellence *within practices*. Then, in the next subsections, we can examine how Bellah et al. share the MacIntyrean position that the achievement of excellence *within practices* habituates individuals in the virtues.
required to set out on a *quest* for the good human life. Later, we will also see how these objective conditions for human excellence result in healthy individuals who are contributors to tradition-guided communities of memory and to society more broadly.

In chapter 2, we saw how exactly Bellah et al. define practices. However, now that we have MacIntyre’s framework in front of us, their definition is worth revisiting:

Practices are shared activities that are not undertaken as a means to an end but are ethically good in themselves (thus close to *praxis* in Aristotle’s sense). A genuine community – whether a marriage, a university, or a whole society – is constituted by such practices. Genuine practices are almost always practices of commitment, since they involve activities that are ethically good.

On the subject of practices, notice the dependence on Aristotle that MacIntyre and Bellah et al. share. In the previous chapter, we saw that this idea of practical activities with goods internal to them comes from Aristotle and we analyzed his examples of the good house, which he associates with architecture, and good health, which he associates with medicine. MacIntyre’s work builds on this Aristotelian notion by further detailing an account of practices. Bellah et al. further contribute to this project by clarifying the MacIntyrean notion of practices.

They do so by showing how all practices are *practices of commitment*. Individuals participating in these practices remain committed to the achievement of good and worthy ends – or, goals that mark the primary reasons for which a practice exists. A

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418 Bellah et al. (1996: 335).
practice of commitment means that individuals remain committed to these good ends as a community. Such a commitment to the good and worthy ends of their practice-based communities implies that individuals’ preferences must be regulated in light of the notion of the good that is revealed through the historically-constituted practice. In this way, practices situate individuals within a community that possesses a “historically-constituted good form of life.” Throughout this subsection, we shall examine this idea of practices by looking at the multiple components of this definition, all of which can be tied back to MacIntyre’s seminal account of practices in *After Virtue*.

With this definition of practices of commitment in front of us, let us consider for a moment one of the reasons that Bellah et al. pay the most attention to practices within the workplace. One key reason is that the workplace is one of the most time-consuming spheres of many middle-class Americans’ public lives, which means that it makes up much of the content that they possess for formulating their identities. The sheer amount of time spent at work makes it a place which carries the potential to house a personally transformational practice of commitment. In this way, if work becomes a practice-based calling, it carries the potential to be one of the most significant training grounds for excellence in a craft and for one’s moral formation as an individual and as a citizen.

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419 Ibid.: 290.
Bellah et al. argue that, being rooted in an account of practices, a calling “subsumes the self into a community” that exhibits “sound judgement” with respect to the achievement of good and worthy ends.420 By this, they mean something much like what MacIntyre means when he argues that practices situate the individual within a community that continuously advances a conception of what doing a shared activity well looks like. In the same way that MacIntyre calls individuals to submit to the best standards of a practice so far, Bellah et al. call workers to a teleological vision of work. Workers ought to carefully consider the goods of excellence associated with their practice. They must also continuously sharpen those standards that have been “handed down in a community.”421 Callings situate workers within a moral community of individuals who must continuously deliberate about the ends for which any given practice exists.

Therefore, to see ‘work as a calling’ is also to see work as a practice with goods internal to it. Such practices are considered “beautiful in themselves,” meaning that they have ends, or teloses, for which they exist. Practice-based callings exist for good and worthy ends beyond their “material or psychic rewards.”422 Hence, Bellah et al.’s account of ‘work as a calling’ reflects the MacIntyrean mandate that practices must prioritize goods of

420 Ibid.: 66.
421 Ibid.
422 Ibid.
excellence, qua internal goods – the first of three distinct types of common goods. In the same way that MacIntyre calls for goods of effectiveness to remain subservient to goods of excellence, so also Bellah et al. stipulate that individuals who exhibit the calling orientation ought not to place primacy on goods of effectiveness (i.e., the material and psychic rewards that individuals construing their work as a job or a career prioritize).

Importantly, then, for Bellah et al., pursuing one’s ‘work as a calling’ entails a practice-based vision of work. It restores one’s commitment to good and worthy ends that are internal to a specific form of work. Such a vision places primacy on achieving the goods of excellence over, and sometimes against, the goods of effectiveness that are associated with one’s calling.

It should be noted that, within their second book, *The Good Society*, Bellah et al. broaden their scope beyond “cultural and personal resources for thinking about our common life” to consider further “the patterned ways Americans have developed for living together, what sociologists call *institutions.*”423 This is yet another interesting parallel to MacIntyre’s work, and it exposes the inherent tension that exists between practice-based callings (among other practices) and the institutions within which they are housed.

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Like MacIntyre, Bellah et al. express the need for virtuous institutions that will sustain practice-based callings as well as common goods. They argue that it is tempting to think that the problems that we face today, from the homeless in our streets and poverty in the Third World to ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect, can be solved by technology or technical expertise alone. But even to begin to solve these daunting problems, let alone problems of emptiness and meaninglessness in our personal lives, requires that we greatly improve our capacity to think about our institutions. We need to understand how much of our lives is lived in and through institutions, and how better institutions are essential if we are to lead better lives. In surveying our present institutions we need to discern what is healthy in them and what needs to be altered, particularly where we have begun to destroy the non-renewable natural and nearly nonrenewable human resources upon which all our institutions depend.\footnote{Ibid.: 5.}

Perhaps this is why a central point of focus for Bellah et al. within The Good Society is on “a major reform in our economic institutions” within the workplace and a restoration of the idea that “the work each of us does is something we do together and for each other as much as by and for ourselves.”\footnote{Ibid.: 105.} This is an ideological change that requires institutional support. Institutions must subject profit and production to visions of individual, communal, and societal flourishing in order for practice-based callings and common goods to be sustained.

So, Bellah et al. argue that practice-based callings must be situated inside of virtuous institutions, “within which we citizens can better discern what we really want and what we ought to want to sustain a good life on this planet for ourselves and the...
generations to come.” Bellah et al.’s work expresses the need for virtuous institutions that do not prioritize goods of effectiveness at the expense of goods of excellence, lest practices become even further marginalized in late modernity. There is much reason for concern, as Bellah et al.’s account of the detachment of economics from the support of practice-based callings and the achievement of common goods indicates. That said, however, there are still cases where an individual with a calling orientation to work may be found. Some institutional patterns of activity have not been impacted as severely as others, Bellah et al. argue.

While practice-based callings tend to be marginalized in late modernity, some committed workers have not lost sight of this vision within our society. For an example, and alongside of their definition of the calling orientation, Bellah et al. illustrate the components of ‘work as a calling’ by pointing to the ballet dancer. They argue that “the ballet dancer, devoted to an ill-paid art, whose habits and practices, beautiful in themselves, are handed down in a community based on a living tradition, so that the lives of the public may be enriched, is an example [of a worker with a practice-based calling].” Bellah et al. argue that the practice of ballet is one of “a few economically marginal but symbolically significant instances” of work that we can look to in late

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modernity to “still see what a calling is.” In this respect, the ballet dancer exemplifies the kind of practice-based work that Bellah et al. hope to restore through a transformation of our individualistic American ideology and our institutions.

Moreover, in pointing to the practice-based calling of the ballet dancer, Bellah et al. follow MacIntyre’s line of argument about the distinct kinds of good and worthy ends that are internal to practices, demonstrating that there are two. First, there are the unique crafts that arise from practice-based callings (i.e., excellent products or services). Second, callings habituate individuals in the virtues necessary for them to achieve excellence in their craft, or in the work that they are construing as a calling. These mark the two distinct types of goods of excellence that practice-based work can offer - goods which are worthy ends in themselves, rather than means to some other end.

We should carefully distinguish the two kinds of internal goods provided by the practice of ballet as an example. In so doing, we shall see that Bellah et al. indeed point to the two distinct strands of internal goods that MacIntyre’s work identifies. The first good internal to the practice of ballet is the excellent art-form, which is a service that enriches the lives of the public. One gets the sense here that Bellah et al. imagine members of an audience who have paid to enjoy the masterful technique that the ballet dancer exhibits in the practice of her calling. There is an inherent beauty to the way that

\[428\] Ibid.
she is able to move her body with grace and precision. She takes intentional steps with a well-rehearsed tempo, syncing her movement to the music that she dances to. Her flow to the music brings the song to life, striking a sense of awe and wonder in the audience, and filling them with joy. She is a clear example of someone who has mastered a practice. Members of the audience know that what they are observing took a lot of “disciplined practice,” as Bellah et al. state.\textsuperscript{429}

The discipline observed by the audience members, all of whom appreciate the enriching and awe-inspiring service of the ballet dancer’s craft, leads us to the second kind of good internal to practices. The second kind of good internal to the practice of ballet entails the virtues required to sustain the excellent practice of ballet. This implies that she also must abstain from certain vices. Let us look first to the vices that the ballet dancer abstains from and then we shall examine the virtues that she has cultivated, which are a stark contrast to the vices that she must avoid.

For one, the ballet dancer has avoided the vice of \textit{pleonexia} (extreme greed), which would, as MacIntyre says, subject her work “to the service of impersonal capital.”\textsuperscript{430} Avoiding the temptations of modern management culture, the ballet dancer who participates in what Bellah et al. refer to as an “economically marginal” practice,

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\textsuperscript{429} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{430} MacIntyre (2007: 227).
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clearly exhibits intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation, at least with respect to profit. \(^\text{431}\)

Moreover, because Bellah et al. indicate that this ballet dancer has a calling orientation to work, this means that she does not consider her work as a “segmental, self-interested activity.”\(^\text{432}\) In this sense, the ballet dancer avoids the tendencies of therapeutic culture as well. She sees her work as work that “subsumes” her preferences to a moral community of individuals who are becoming habituated in the excellent commitments of the practice of ballet together.\(^\text{433}\) The ballet dancer does not break out into a ‘free’ form of self-expression, nor does she change her tempo to one that she prefers. Instead, she accepts the technical standards as they are outlined within her community and she regulates her own dancing preferences in light of those standards.

Thus, to achieve excellence in the practice of ballet, the ballet dancer must avoid certain tendencies that are associated with the self-serving strands of individualism that MacIntyre’s social roles exhibit. Bellah et al. agree with MacIntyre that practices require certain virtues in order for the excellent product or service to be achieved. Specifically, moral agents require both intellectual and character virtues to achieve the excellent product or service that is associated with their respective calling.

\(^{431}\) Bellah et al. (1996: 66).

\(^{432}\) Ibid.

\(^{433}\) Ibid.
In the case of the ballet dancer, the intellectual virtue of technical wisdom (*techne*) allows her to regulate her dancing preferences to the style and tempo of her community. And the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) allows her to course-correct, or to learn from her past mistakes. Combining her technical wisdom and her practical wisdom, the ballet dancer also relies on theoretical wisdom (*episteme*) to apply what her mistakes and failures teach her so that the technical execution of her calling is further perfected in the future.

Additionally, the character virtue of courage (*andreia*) is exhibited by the ballet dancer, who strikes the mean between fear and over-confidence in the performance of her craft by boldly carrying out the highly technical moves of her dance. It is also likely that the ballet dancer exhibits what the biblical tradition refers to as humility (*humilitas*) in her craft, which ultimately impacts her disposition in such a way that she does not engage with others in her community as an abrasive ‘know-it-all’ personality. Rather, the ballet dancer is likely someone who both recognizes that there is still more to learn and that she can learn more from others within her very own practice-based ballet community.

Virtues such as these sustain the achievement of excellence in the ballet dancer’s craft. However, they also very likely lead to a healthier relationship between the ballet dancer and other communities that she probably engages with in other areas of her life. Assuming she exhibits the same virtues within her other communities, one can only
imagine that such patterns of behavior would be conducive to flourishing relationships in all areas of her life. *In other words, one cannot imagine an activity in life that would be better served apart from techne, phronesis, episteme, andreia, and humilitas.* In fact, Bellah et al. show throughout their work that the virtues transcend one’s practice-based calling, promoting sound reasoning and virtuous character in other practices, relationships, and along one’s *quest* for the good life more broadly, as we shall see in a moment.

In all of the aforementioned ways, practices serve as “the bedrock” of moral formation within Bellah et al.’s work, just like they have been shown to do in MacIntyre’s work.⁴³⁴ Practices provide the very training ground that regulates individualistic preferences in light of shared visions of good and worthy ends. *This means that practice-based callings move individuals from thinking about meaning in terms of individual satisfaction (which is commonly the case in the emerging ‘work as a calling’ literature, as we saw in chapter 1) to thinking about meaning in light of goods shared in common.*

The search for meaning apart from such purposeful involvement with others, Bellah et al. argue, “threatens” to “deprive” us of a “life of meaning.”⁴³⁵ For one’s life journey to be meaningful, we must be on a *quest* that is purposeful. In this respect, it is very important for a proper understanding of Bellah et al.’s work to note that

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⁴³⁴ See Sinnicks (2016:107) for an articulation of how practices serve as “the bedrock” of MacIntyre’s project.

⁴³⁵ Bellah et al. (1996: 150).
deliberation about purposes begins within practices wherein we share a pattern of activity with others that sustains common goods.

Within this section, we have seen the ways that callings are sustained by the virtues and how ‘work as a calling’ promotes two distinct kinds of goods internal to practices, which are valued above goods of effectiveness, such as material and psychic rewards. Bellah et al.’s account of practice-based callings (as well as practices in general) parallels the MacIntyrean account of virtues and practices that we explored in the previous chapter. Turning now to Bellah et al.’s account of virtues and narratives, we shall see that regulation by way of the virtues is also necessary to sustain us along our quest “to lead better lives.”

IIIb. Virtues & Narratives

As we have just seen, Bellah et al.’s account of practices moves individuals from means-thinking to ends-thinking. Situated within distinct practices, individuals’ callings locate the self within a collective that is directed by teleological reasoning about the goods internal to specific forms of work. Importantly, having a calling entails participation within a practice-based activity that regulates individuals’ visions of common goods in light of historically constituted visions, or narratives, of the good.

436 Ibid.
Moreover, and as we shall see in this section, discussion about goods internal to practices both equips individuals with teleological reasoning and sustains them in the virtues that are needed along their quest for the good life.

Importantly, Bellah et al. maintain that teleological deliberation transcends the domain of one’s calling as well as other practices that individuals participate in. Teleological deliberation within practices also impacts one’s conceptualization of the good human life. So, Bellah et al., like MacIntyre, maintain that teleological deliberation within practices spills over into the ways that we think teleologically about the good human life. On this point, they look to MacIntyre’s teachings about practices - especially how practices regulate the ways that we envision the good life. Bellah et al. suggest that MacIntyre shows us how practices, such as a practice-based calling, can provide “a historically constituted good form of life.”437 Also, they maintain that individuals need these visions of the good life to better construe what the life worth living looks like. So, when one’s life includes a practice-based calling, Bellah et al. show how one’s calling becomes a fundamental component of achieving the virtues in life that sustain individuals along their quest for the good life.

Indeed, Bellah et al. demonstrate that teleological thinking may be extended by a social deliberation about the goods internal to one’s practice-based calling. Moreover,

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we have seen, both in MacIntyre’s work and in Bellah et al.’s work, how practices are sustained by the virtues – and how this promotes the common goods that are internal to practices. But, Bellah et al.’s turn to questions about the good human life also parallels MacIntyre’s theory of the virtues insofar as they share the belief that the same virtues which sustain practices also provide goods for individual lives insofar as they sustain individuals along their “life course.” In other words, the virtues acquired within practice-based callings sustain individuals along their adventure to discover and achieve goods that are “worth seeking” in all areas of their lives.

The virtues sustain individuals along their life course in the following way. Participation in practice-based callings, which both habituates humans in the virtues and regulates visions of the good, in turn, promotes the intellectual, emotional, and volitional resources necessary to set out on a journey toward the good human life. Because callings can both restore ends-thinking and promote the cultivation of virtues, Bellah et al. argue that individuals become equipped with “the means to a good life.” By this, they intend to say that individuals are provided with the means necessary to pursue one’s human telos – a pursuit which MacIntyre refers to as a quest. One’s

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438 Bellah et al. (1996: 81-84).
439 Ibid.: 80.
practice-based calling provides a locus for the resources that a moral agent requires to understand excellence in all areas of one’s adventure through life.

When Bellah et al. discuss how the virtues regulate our visions of the good human life, they are concerned primarily with the cultivation of a narrative ethic about a *quest* for the life worth living. With respect to an individual’s calling, Bellah et al. maintain that such a practice promotes the search for a vision of the good life in a *narratively unified way*. But, reflecting on the several hundred interviews that they conducted with middle-class Americans, Bellah et al. sociologically affirm an observation that worries MacIntyre very much throughout his philosophy. Namely, they discover that the two areas in which Americans spend much of their time, work and leisure (before and after retirement), are often devoid of the very virtue-inculcating practices that could provide individuals with the necessary resources for envisioning such a *quest* for the good life in any kind of unified way. Instead, they find that most middle-class Americans exhibit compartmentalized patterns of behavior, and they do so by exercising disparate rational skills across disjointed social roles.

Bellah et al. argue that “our culture does not give us much guidance as to how to fill the contours of this autonomous self-responsible self, but it does point to two important areas” that occupy much of our time and are intended to be the breeding
ground for self-reflection and self-understanding. \(^{441}\) “One of these is work, the realm, par excellence, of utilitarian individualism…The other area is the lifestyle enclave, the realm, par excellence, of expressive individualism.” \(^{442}\) Unfortunately, as they note, these two areas of American life have sold out to the strands of utilitarian and expressive individualism, both of which make the whole of one’s life an incubator for the “competitive, anxious self-assertiveness of this individuated self.” \(^{443}\)

So, instead of fostering a narrative understanding of one’s quest for the good via ‘work as a calling’ or via the shallow alternative to ‘work as a calling’ - the lifestyle enclave, Bellah et al.’s account of American life in late modernity affirms something very similar to the argument from Viktor Frankl that we reflected on within the introduction to this book. Namely, they argue that this individualistic search for meaning in American life has become self-defeating. They argue that this is so because a life composed mainly of work that lacks much intrinsic meaning and leisure devoted to golf and bridge does have its limitations. It is hard to find in it the kind of story or narrative, as of a pilgrimage or quest, that many cultures have used to link private to public; present, past, and future; and the life of the individual to the life of society and the meaning of the cosmos. \(^{444}\)

\(^{441}\) Bellah et al. (1996: 83).

\(^{442}\) Ibid.

\(^{443}\) Bellah et al. (1991: 106).

\(^{444}\) Bellah et al. (1996: 83).
Like Frankl, Bellah et al. argue that meaning has become detached from good and worthy ends in late modernity. Moreover, like MacIntyre, Bellah et al. argue that the marginalization of practices in one’s working and leisurely life results in the marginalization of communally shared narratives about the life worth living. This, in turn, seriously limits one’s resources for carrying out a narrative quest for the good life.

Bellah et al. express the self-defeating nature of this individualistic search for success and happiness by arguing that “thinking about the life course in this [hyper-autonomous] way may exacerbate rather than resolve the problem of the meaning of individual life.”445 The idea of success changes when ‘meaningful work’ is divorced from an account of ‘good work.’ Construed via the ‘first language’ of American individualism, people come to see no point in working beyond material and psychic rewards. Divorced from any narrative about good and worthy ends in the workplace, the possibility of achieving the narrative resources provided by a calling is often exchanged for a life of consumerism and a search for psychic rewards in private. Moreover, in private, “the same inner contradictions that undermined occupational success as a life goal also threaten to deprive private life of meaning when there is no longer any purpose to involvement with others except individual satisfaction.”446 Again, we find that Frankl’s suspicion is affirmed in the words of Bellah et al., who argue that

445 Ibid.: 82.
446 Ibid.: 150.
the “meaning of ‘success’” is divorced from good and worthy ends in the workplace and private life, making visions of success individualistic and “increasingly in doubt.”\footnote{Ibid.} As such, they find that, resting upon the language of American individualism, the human search for meaning becomes self-defeating.

However, Bellah et al. want life, within and beyond the workplace, to be meaningful for Americans today. This is why they repeatedly call our attention to the necessary connection between notions of individual meaning and good and worthy ends that are worth pursuing. Calling our attention particularly to this disconnect within the workplace and within our lifestyle enclaves, Bellah et al. mourn the way that means-thinking and unregulated preferences have been divorced from an earlier vision of occupational achievement that considered ‘success’ at work something like ‘excellence in one’s calling.’ Now, however, they find that

the stress on the rationality of the means and on the importance of individual wants, the primary emphasis on utilitarian and expressive individualism, have come loose from an understanding of the ends and purposes of life...making occupational achievement, for so long the dominating focus of middle-class individualism, no longer an end in itself, but merely an instrument for the attainment of a private lifestyle lived, perhaps in a lifestyle enclave.\footnote{Ibid.}

As we have seen, a practice-based calling entails a commitment to good and worthy ends, which provides a historically-constituted narrative of the good. Now, however,
the workplace is frequently guided by bureaucratic experts who suspend deliberation over ends. That being said, they argue that we must carefully protect shared visions of common goods and carry them forward, lest we come to instrumentalize our work for the achievement of shared aesthetic preferences within a lifestyle enclave. In such a place, Bellah et al. argue that “history and hope are forgotten and community means only the gathering of the similar,” which devolves community into an “enclave.”

Already, we have explored at least a couple of reasons why individuals retreat to lifestyle enclaves. Generally speaking, they are a product of no narrative vision about common goods, but rather common interests. During Americans’ working lives, such enclaves become a brief reprieve from the constricting utilitarian individualism of management culture and the competitive skills one must demonstrate in such an environment. Often serving as a mere means to decompress on the weekends, lifestyle enclaves cause one to look past the absence of any normative vision of the good life within both their workplace as well as their lifestyle enclave. This is the case for many, at least until retirement, which becomes particularly “painful” for those who traded ends-thinking for means-thinking, believing that they would discover a narrative vision of the life worth living upon their permanent retreat to a lifestyle enclave. What many retirees find instead, however, is that there is no good and worthy quest worth

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449 Ibid.: 154.

450 Ibid.: 71.
pursuing within their lifestyle enclave and that they are tired of trying to make a meaningful life out of the achievement of their preferences.

Indeed, it would seem that many Americans stave off narrative visions of the good life until retirement. Many seem to expect that their *quest* for a purpose will ultimately culminate into a unified vision once they have permanently escaped the ‘hard’ utilitarian culture of management, but they become downtrodden when such a vision does not reveal itself. For example, research published by The American Psychological Association (henceforth referred to as APA) suggests that “people can go through hell when they retire and they will never say a word about it, often because they are embarrassed...The cultural norm for retirement is that you are living the good life.”\(^{451}\) And, while the APA article goes on to suggest that the good life does not come about without some narrative reflection, it does promote the first language of American individualism, arguing that the achievement of a good life really only requires an individualistic process of reflection on Americans’ “social or psychological portfolio...to figure out what makes them happy.”\(^{452}\) If we believe anything about what Bellah et al. say regarding the need to focus on common goods instead of “material” or “psychic” rewards, then we must find this recommendation from the APA problematic.\(^{453}\)

\(^{451}\) Chamberlin (2014: 61).

\(^{452}\) Ibid.

\(^{453}\) Bellah et al. (1996: 66).
Perhaps it should not be surprising that this APA article on retirement, written by therapists, epitomizes the expressive individualism of the culture of therapy. But such a conclusion still seems astoundingly compartmentalized, especially considering that the very same article points to empirical evidence reporting that those who are “truly engaged in their post-retirement activities” with others tend to “reap the psychological benefits.” While the article does not provide any substantive account of what ‘active engagement’ in post-retirement activities looks like, examples of individuals who exhibit signs of what we may more fully account for as ‘flourishing,’ instead of ‘reaping the psychological benefits,’ all appear to be engaged in intrinsically meaningful social activities – activities that Bellah et al. refer to as public and private practices of commitment. In some cases, retirees even appear to have extended their callings into retirement!

That being said, the APA’s own findings imply that their recommendation is self-defeating. Americans should not conduct an individualistic analysis of their psychological portfolio to determine what makes them happy. This is self-defeating both before and after retirement. We can come up with a better alternative using the very data that the APA provides. While examples of individual satisfaction achieved by way of some kind of self-reflection about what makes one happy are nowhere to be

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found in the APA’s report, their report does contain empirical data suggesting that purposeful involvement with others leads to a sense of flourishing in life.

Hence, American’s would be better served by “re-creating” the American vision of “retirement” through an extension of their “true calling” into retirement.455 Such a recommendation comes from Steven M. Tipton, the very scholar who initially drafted the vision of the calling orientation that we find in Habits of the Heart.456 Rather than a suspension of questions of the good life until retirement, we ought to extend our calling into retirement and, in so doing, stave off the shallow alternative of the lifestyle enclave, as Tipton helpfully suggests.457 The quest for leading the good life should not be cast aside until retirement.

An extension of visions of the good life (and perhaps our calling) into retirement means that we must not wait until our retirement to participate together in practices of commitment. Importantly, this means that we must not shirk off a deliberation about the narratives that are associated with our practice-based communities until later in life. Active participation entails active deliberation in such practices (both in one’s calling

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455 Tipton (2018).

456 Bellah et al. (1996: 331).

457 Tipton’s suggestion also implies that one’s calling does not have to entail paid work. That being said, however, one’s calling must entail a practice of commitment. Such a practice connects us to others who are striving for the same goods of excellence. Moreover, such a practice enhances our narrative vision of the good. And, as we shall see in a moment, such a practice also brings us into a tradition within which our practice-based calling becomes historically-constituted.
and in all other public and private practices) over the course of a whole human life, not just later in life. Bellah et al. maintain that our life’s narrative is envisioned through the various practices and social roles that we occupy within all of our communities and across the whole of our life course.

That being said, Bellah et al. imagine a world where there are therapists who make recommendations that would be a stark contrast to the ones we find within the aforementioned APA article on retirement. Bellah et al. envision a form of therapy that would “exercise memory and imagination in narrative form to unify the individual’s life story with the community’s ideals of a good life.” Relying on a narrative account of ethics, then, Bellah et al. describe the contextualized way that one ought to consider their quest for the good. Such a quest, they argue as much as MacIntyre does, is not an autonomous one. We need narrative visions that life together provides.

This social understanding of the good life as a connected life is informed by their account of “narrative ethics.” Bellah et al. maintain that narrative ethics unfolds when “one puts oneself in a broader context and comes to see how one is caught in a web that binds us all.” Here, they imply what MacIntyre implies when he argues that one’s narrative

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459 Bellah et al. (1991: 208). Interestingly, Stanley Hauerwas, who has been influenced considerably by MacIntyre’s work and by his friendship with MacIntyre, is an additional resource for Bellah et al.’s understanding of narrative ethics. Another source of influence that Bellah et al. and MacIntyre share in common with regard to narrative ethics is Marx.

460 Ibid.: 208.
must be understood via one’s practices and social roles (within and beyond the workplace). Moreover, they share the MacIntyrean conviction that our human *telos* must be envisioned in light of our shared human *telos*. Instead of an autonomous project of meaning-making that is rooted in individualistic preferences about what makes one happy, such a narrative can become deeply rooted in an individual’s life through an active commitment to one’s practice-based community within the workplace and through one’s calling orientation to work.

So, during both one’s working life and one’s retired life, a narrative *quest* for the good life requires historically-constituted visions of the good, which unfold within practice-based communities, such as the community that one’s calling provides.\textsuperscript{461} Recognizing the failures of the contemporary culture of therapy, which is beholden to the ‘first language’ of American individualism – particularly the ‘softer’ strand of expressive individualism - Bellah et al. argue that “we have jettisoned too much, forgotten a history that we cannot abandon.”\textsuperscript{462} When meaning is divorced from our shared visions of common goods within our social contexts, which should provide historically-constituted visions of the good life, then the project of carrying out a narrative *quest* for the good life collapses. So, visions of the good life discussed within practice-based communities, as opposed to similar aesthetic preferences embraced

\textsuperscript{461} Ibid.: 290.

\textsuperscript{462} Bellah et al. (1996: 83).
within a lifestyle enclave (before or after retirement), must be carried forward rather than totally abandoned. Importantly, and as Bellah et al.‘s work, along with Tipton‘s later work suggests, one‘s practice-based calling provides precisely such an opportunity during one‘s working life and perhaps even into retirement.

This contextualization of the individual‘s quest for the good life, rooted in narrative ethics, speaks of a self that is “constituted” by stories rather than “empty.” ⁴⁶³ Bellah et al. argue that the empty (or, as MacIntyre would say, ‘compartmentalized’) self, “makes sense in a particular institutional context – that of the upward mobility of the middle-class individual who must leave home and church in order to succeed in an impersonal world of rationality and competition.” ⁴⁶⁴ The empty self, embracing a job or career orientation to work, prioritizes the skills necessary to “succeed in an impersonal world of rationality,” whereas the constituted self “adheres to examples of the men and women who have embodied and exemplified the meaning of the community.” ⁴⁶⁵ Hence, the constituted self is a reflection of MacIntyre’s claim that we are “story-telling animals.” ⁴⁶⁶ Instead of relying on disparate skills of effectiveness that vary across our social roles, the constituted self depends upon a narrative ethic that is “rooted in the

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⁴⁶³ Ibid.: 153.
⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.
⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.
⁴⁶⁶ MacIntyre (2007: 256).
virtues that define a worthwhile life." Thus, every calling is rooted in such a narrative. Every calling provides the goods of an individual life just as much as every calling sustains goods internal to practices.

That being said, however, Bellah et al.’s account of narrative ethics is not complete without their account of living traditions. Turning next to their account of living traditions, we shall see how this dimension completes their vision of the calling orientation as well as their theory of the virtues and the common goods that they sustain.

IIIc. Virtues & Living Traditions

So far, we have seen how Bellah et al. maintain that social engagement within practices habituates individuals in the virtues. Importantly, one’s calling, which is situated within an account of practices, provides this habituation. Individuals who are situated within a practice-based calling work together to deliberate about the goods internal to their relevant practices. As we have seen, Bellah et al. also suggest that shared deliberation within one’s calling contributes to one’s identity-formation, along with one’s conceptualization of the good life. Moreover, and also like MacIntyre, Bellah et al. argue that the virtues, practices, and narratives associated with one’s calling come from

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Bellah et al. (1996: 159-162).
historically-constituted traditions, and that these living traditions sustain the goods of particular communities as well as the interests of a good society.

Thus, Bellah et al.’s theory of ‘work as a calling,’ which shares a MacIntyrean conception of the virtues, is only complete when practices and narratives are considered within the living traditions that house them and within the communities of memory that embody them. By adding the living tradition component to their account of practices and narratives, Bellah et al.’s complete theory of the virtues accounts for a historical vision of three distinct types of common goods. Situated within living traditions, the virtues sustain (a) the good and worthy ends of practices, (b) the goods of an individual life, and (c) the goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society. As we have seen in the last chapter, MacIntyre refers to (a), (b), and (c) as common goods because they are all shared human needs. Like MacIntyre, Bellah et al. agree that visions of all three goods are passed down through living traditions and that the virtues are articulated by living traditions to sustain these goods.

Based on MacIntyre’s and Bellah et al.’s shared theory of the virtues, it would seem that there is no way of escaping the role of traditions in one’s calling or in one’s life. However, what Bellah et al. find is that “the notion that one discovers one’s deepest beliefs in, and through, tradition and community is not very congenial to Americans.”

\[468\] \textit{Ibid.}: 65.
In contrast to this prototypical American individualism, which causes many Americans to “imagine an autonomous self existing independently entirely outside any tradition and community, and then perhaps choosing one,” Bellah et al. argue that we are either actively aware of the traditions that we have chosen or we are “coerced by the dominant beliefs of our own culture.”\textsuperscript{469} That being said, \textit{Bellah et al. argue that there is no way of getting outside of traditions altogether.}

Some traditions are better than others, however. We saw in the last chapter that MacIntyre makes this point, and Bellah et al.’s criticism of the language of American individualism is also representative of their belief that this is the case.

Given the impossibility of escaping traditions, it becomes imperative to understand precisely what a tradition is for Bellah et al. Not surprisingly, it means something very similar to the MacIntyrean picture of traditions that we saw in the last chapter:

A tradition is a pattern of understanding and evaluations that a community has worked out over time. Tradition is an inherent dimension of all human action. There is no way of getting outside of tradition altogether, though we may criticize one tradition from the point of view of another. \textit{Tradition} is not used in contrast to \textit{reason}. Tradition is often an ongoing reasoned argument about the good of the community or institution whose identity it defines.\textsuperscript{470}

\textsuperscript{469} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{470} Ibid.: 333.
Thus, a tradition is sustained by ongoing reasoned argument about the soundness of its values and its identity. Bellah et al. share with MacIntyre the belief that this historically extended and socially embodied reasoning is what makes traditions living traditions.471 As such, living traditions constantly evolve in dialogue with their contemporary and historical members.

What Bellah et al.’s definition of tradition also makes clear is that traditions define the practice-based communities that embody them. Moreover, members of these communities are defined by their relevant traditions. Thus, one’s calling, insofar as it is situated within a practice-based community, is an embodiment of a tradition-constituted identity, as we shall see. In this way, callings (as well as human lives) must be rooted in traditions that carry specific identities and visions of the good forth, and they often do so across many generations.

To illustrate the role of traditions in one’s calling and in one’s life, let us look at two examples. First, we shall consider further the calling of the ballet dancer, which we saw already within the subsection on practices earlier in this chapter. Bellah et al. describe the ballet dancer alongside of their definition of the calling orientation. It is a relatively straightforward illustration that is intended to illuminate all of the important dimensions of ‘work as a calling’ (i.e., virtues, practices, narratives, still-living

471 Ibid.: 309. In the first footnote of chapter 2 on p. 309 of the second edition of Habits of the Heart, it is apparent that the notion of a ‘living tradition’ employed by Bellah et al. is synonymous with the notion of a ‘living tradition’ employed by MacIntyre (2007: 221-222).
traditions, etc.). Following this example of the ballet dancer, we shall examine the calling of Cecilia Dougherty, a political activist from Santa Monica.\textsuperscript{472} It is important to attend to a story like Cecilia’s in addition to the illustration of the ballet dancer so that we can see how real individuals who exhibit the calling orientation to work synthesize values from a plurality of living traditions. In comparison to the illustration of the ballet dancer, this adds an obvious layer of complexity that needs to be worked out. As we shall see, Cecilia’s story shows that, \textit{while one’s calling is historically constituted by a particular living tradition, it is altogether likely that other virtues and narrative visions are brought into the practice of one’s calling from outside of the tradition that primarily constitutes one’s calling.}

\textbf{IIIci. The Tradition- Constituted Ballet Dancer}

First, let us consider further the relatively straightforward illustration of the ballet dancer and her community, all of whom embody the habits, practices, and narratives of a shared tradition. Bellah et al. articulate that the ballet dancer’s “habits and practices” are “handed down in a community based on a still-living tradition [of ballet].”\textsuperscript{473} Like the ballet dancer’s community, each community is marked by distinct habits and practices that are associated with a living tradition, and this results in a shared communal identity, which is defined in light of living traditions.

\textsuperscript{472} Bellah et al. (1996: 159-162).

\textsuperscript{473} Ibid.: 66.
The habits and practices that the ballet dancer shares with her community cause her to also share a common identity with her community because, as Bellah et al. state, “what we ‘do’ often translates to what we ‘are.’”\textsuperscript{474} What Bellah et al.’s narrative account of ethics suggests is that an understanding of who we are comes through the very stories that living traditions provide. As Bellah et al. remind us, “the stories that make up a tradition contain conceptions of character, of what a good person is like, and of the virtues that define such character.”\textsuperscript{475} Importantly, the habits, practices, and identity of the ballet dancer and her community are all linked to the living tradition of ballet and the ongoing narrative that it extends. In this way, the ballet dancer’s reasoning about her calling is tradition-constituted. She cannot understand her calling apart from these resources that her living tradition provides.

Moreover, the ballet dancer’s living tradition is not one that she and her community narrated all by themselves. Instead, the ballet dancer’s calling draws upon a long historical deliberation that has persisted within the tradition of ballet for centuries. The living tradition of ballet has been refined and strengthened through continued deliberation across many generations and across many similar communities that have reasoned about the tradition-constituted identity of a ballet dancer as well as the

\textsuperscript{474} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{475} Ibid.: 153.
necessary habits and practices that a ballet dancer must embody to become a good ballet dancer.

Hence, the reason that the calling of the ballet dancer lives on is that the tradition of ballet lives on within communities of memory, such as the ballet dancer’s community, that embody its very habits and practices. A community of memory, such as the ballet dancer’s community, represents “a group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision-making, and who share certain practices...that both define the community and are nurtured by it.”476 Hence, the ballet dancer’s community is an embodiment of historically-constituted reasoning about the living tradition of ballet. This reasoning takes place together with the members of the ballet dancer’s community who are striving for the same habits and are in search of excellence within the same shared practice-based calling of ballet. Through a continued deliberation about these habits and practices, the possibility of narrating a calling to ballet is extended and the tradition lives on.

What the illustration of the ballet dancer provides, then, is the way that one’s calling must be situated within a historically-constituted tradition of moral reasoning that defines the habits, practices, and narrative understanding of one’s ‘work as a calling.’ As a result of the perfection of the ballet dancer within her practice, which

476 Ibid.: 333.
happens through the acquisition of virtuous habits within her community of memory, the identity of the ballet dancer as a ballet dancer is realized. However, while this illustration captures the role of tradition as it relates to one’s calling in life, the real-life examples provided by Bellah et al. add a layer of complexity, demonstrating the ways that multiple traditions can, in fact, play a role in one’s calling in life. Let us attend to the real-life story of Cecilia for an example of this.

IIIcii. The Tradition-Constituted Life of Cecilia Dougherty

At the time Cecilia was interviewed, she recounted that her calling entailed a transcendent summons to political activism. She, like many other Americans, felt strong pulls to other callings throughout her life. At one point, she almost went back to school to be a teacher; instead, however, Cecilia decided to “build on the past,” becoming a political activist just like her mother had been.477 Cecilia greatly admires her mother, “an Italian immigrant who married at eighteen and did not go to college, but became the first woman in her county to be elected chair of the state Democratic Central Committee.”478 The social role of Cecilia’s mother contributed to her own narrative about what it means to be a good political activist, but Cecilia’s father, a labor movement organizer, also “gave Cecilia a deep sense of identity with the labor

477 Ibid.: 159-160.
478 Ibid.: 160.
movement and its goals of a more just and inclusive society.” Cecilia’s decision to become a political activist was “a response to part of her identity, as fulfilling a responsibility to which her life, her heritage, and her beliefs [as a member of the labor movement and a member of the Catholic Church] have called her.”

This attitude that Cecilia has toward her calling parallels Bellah et al.’s claims that a calling is fundamental to a narrative understanding of our identity insofar as “what we ‘do’ often translates to what we ‘are,’” and also insofar as they argue that an individual’s calling is “morally inseparable from his or her life.” Cecilia’s heritage, the values instilled from the social roles of her parents, as well as the values that Cecilia holds in other roles that she is committed to, such as her role as a single mother of four children, and her role as a wife (before the death of her late husband), all inform her vision of the good life and the virtues that she exhibits in her calling. Cecilia’s commitment to her calling led to further cultivation of essential civic virtues. However, these virtues had already begun to take root within other practices and social roles earlier in her life. Holding her values together with a unified narrative about the good life and the good society that spans across her various social roles and tradition-based

479 Ibid.
480 Ibid.: 161.
481 Ibid.: 66.
482 Ibid.: 159-162.
commitments, Cecilia hopes “to ‘bring people away from a concern only about their own lives, to a sense of much, much broader, greater responsibilities.’” 483

In the last chapter, we saw that MacIntyre argued one must conduct a synthesis of the values learned through the multiple living traditions within which individuals live their lives. This, he argues, is essential to leading one’s narrative quest for the good life in any kind of unified way. Let us see, then, how a synthesis of the values learned within two important traditions of Cecilia’s life results in a unified vision of her quest for the good life and her hope for a good society within her calling as a political activist. In so doing, we should also consider the tradition of American individualism that Cecilia remains guarded against, believing it to be antithetical to her pursuit of common goods within her life and within her calling.

Cecilia does not seem to rely on the ‘first language’ of American individualism as a primary resource for her narrative sense of purpose in life. Let us now tease out the “fundamental contrasts between Cecilia Dougherty’s [narrative] self-understanding and the first language of American individualism,” which Bellah et al. believe can be “narrowed to three” key points.484 Bellah et al. describe these three key distinctions as follows:

First, Cecilia articulates her sense of self by reference to a narrative illustrative of long-term commitments rather than desires and feelings…the second contrast:

483 Ibid.: 161.
484 Ibid., 161-162.
that her sense of self is rooted in virtues that define a worthwhile life and have been passed on and modeled by others who have shared that tradition, not in a contentless freedom attained by leaving concrete commitments behind. The third distinguishing feature of Cecilia’s ‘second language’ [a blend of civic republicanism and resources from the Catholic tradition] is her notion that community means a solidarity based on a responsibility to care for others because that is essential to living a good life. She describes her solidarity with working people and ‘the have-nots’ as an expression of a concern for human dignity, the violation of which sparked her first anger at the abuse of power. This sense of a community of solidarity recalls the classical civic contrast between the private person who thinks first of himself alone and the citizen who knows himself to be a participant in a form of life through which his own identity is fulfilled. The civic vision is quite different from the image of a gathering of like-minded individuals whose union depends entirely on their spontaneous interest [shared within a lifestyle enclave].

What Cecilia’s narrative understanding of her purpose in life reveals is that she is committed to the members of her community and that she strives to serve them by exhibiting virtues that she learned from other moral exemplars within shared practices of commitment and living traditions. Moreover, Cecilia relies on the virtues to both sustain her on her quest to lead a good life and to serve within her practice-based calling. Cecilia realizes that her own good is inextricably linked to the good of her community. In this respect, she realizes that common goods and her own individual good are not in competition with one another. She chooses to rely more on the virtues, rather than personal preferences, to sustain (a) her pursuit of the goods internal to her

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485 Ibid.
practice, (b) her *quest* for the good life, and (c) her desire to contribute to the good of her community.

What Cecilías calling shows more clearly than the example of the ballet dancer is the way that individuals who exhibit the calling orientation to work often synthesize values from a plurality of living traditions that they live their lives within. Cecilia expresses a commitment to at least two sets of living traditions. Both living traditions that Cecilia mentions during her interview inform the values that she brings into her calling. Cecilia embodies a civic vision that is associated with communally-shared visions of the good as they are proffered by both the labor party and Catholicism. For this reason, Bellah et al. argue, “the lived source of the civic language in Cecilia Dougherty’s life is not hard to identify: it was her and her parents’ lifelong commitments to the labor movement. It was probably reinforced by a similar emphasis on solidarity [and human dignity] in the Catholicism she shared with [her] parents and husband.”486 *Bellah et al. associate the labor party with the civic strand of republicanism, and they associate Catholicism with the biblical tradition, both of which are extended as living traditions through the lives of Cecilia and others.*

Bellah et al. see that the labor party provides Cecilia with a tradition-constituted vision of the good life as a life that is lived *together* within shared practices of

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486 *Ibid.*: 162.
commitment. This is an idea that has been inherited, in part, from civic republicanism. As such, Cecilia’s labor party relies on a long history that has been continuously refined since the writings of Plato and Aristotle. Hence, Cecilia understands her labor party as a community of memory whose tradition-constituted values are antithetical to the tradition of American individualism – particularly the utilitarian strand of individualism and its emphasis on an individualistic ideal of economic effectiveness.

Bellah et al. express that Cecilia’s tradition-constituted beliefs, which lead her to reject utilitarian individualism, appear to be aligned with their own arguments made throughout Habits of the Heart. As we have seen, Bellah et al. associate utilitarian individualism with the “treacherous” “Lockean view” that “we can create a good life simply by striving for individual comfort and security, and that by so doing we are indirectly enriching the lives of those around us.” 487 Related to this vision of Lockean, qua American, individualism, Cecilia’s tradition-constituted vision of the good life as a political activist must also be a rejection of Adam Smith’s utilitarian (and quasi-utopian) vision of capitalism, which, seeing no need for practices of commitment, rather maintained that “free competition alone would drive quality, honesty, integrity, and fairness.” 488

487 Ibid.: 86. Bellah et al. use the term “Lockean individualism” interchangeably with American individualism. In The Good Society, Lockean individualism becomes a way of speaking about the same pattern of American individualism that concerns them in Habits of the Heart. The next section shall account for this in further detail.

Instead of relying on values and historical figures associated with utilitarian individualism, the tradition-constituted vision of Cecilia’s labor party is more closely aligned with the values of civically-minded republicans such as Alexis de Tocqueville. Tocqueville maintained that “individualism has been sustainable over time in the United States only because it has been supported and checked by other, more generous moral understandings.” Similarly, Cecilia’s participation within the labor party is a deliberate attempt to check utilitarian individualism with the labor party’s vision of “involvement in practices of commitment” and its emphasis on working together to bring about the good of all individuals. Hence, Cecilia’s stance against American individualism is an embodiment of the civic republican vision of the good society as one that works together to sustain the community and individuals within it. Like Tocqueville, Cecilia’s community of memory exhibits the belief that “public order and trust cannot spring from individual spontaneity alone, but require the kind of cultivation that only active civic life can provide.” Building on a continued deliberation about values worked out in a tradition that is mutually shared by Plato, Aristotle, Tocqueville, and Cecilia’s own labor party, among many others, Cecilia believes that the practices of civic republicanism help to regulate the desires of middle-

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489 Bellah et al. (1996: ix).

490 Ibid.: 162.

491 Ibid.
class Americans. She believes that this living tradition provides a helpful vision of the ways in which individual and common goods are, in many respects, the same, rather than in competition with one another.

Hence, Cecilia’s labor party functions as a community of memory that is bound to the tradition of civic republicanism. And it does so in a way that links her self-understanding to prosocial concerns. Communities of memory, such as Cecilia’s labor party, “allow us to connect our aspirations for ourselves and those closest to us with the aspirations of a larger whole and to see our efforts as being, in part, contributions to a ‘common good.’” This regulated vision of good and worthy ends, which has been instilled within her through a reasoned deliberation within her labor party, impacts Cecilia’s calling as a political activist. The habits, practices, and narrative provided by this living tradition turn out to be the ones that primarily define her identity as a political activist. Moreover, as we shall see next, the values that have been instilled in Cecilia through a reasoned deliberation within her Catholic community of memory also have a bearing on her values as a political activist.

Cecilia’s local Catholic community of memory, like her labor party community, provides a tradition-constituted vision of the good life as a life together in “solidarity with working people and the ‘have nots.’” This vision has been nuanced and carried

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492 Ibid.: 153.
493 Ibid.: 162.
forth since the earliest days of the biblical tradition. Members of Jewish and Christian
religious communities (both of which encompass Bellah et al.’s conceptualization of the
biblical tradition) place primacy on this kind of unity.

Considering Cecilia’s Catholic faith, let us reflect for a moment on one key
analogy provided within the biblical tradition by the Apostle Paul. In so doing, we shall
see how this analogy provides Cecilia with a strong sense of unity, which parallels the
way that she sees others in relation to herself within her calling as a political activist.
The teachings of the Apostle Paul emphasized the good life as a life together, with
individuals making up one collective body that supports all of its members. Cecilia’s
vision of a life together in solidarity probably has strong roots in this very commonly
referenced analogy of the Body of Christ within the Paulene letters. Surely Cecilia
would have reflected on it during the practice of Mass within her Catholic community
of memory.

That being said, Cecilia’s deliberation within the biblical tradition probably
aligns her beliefs about solidarity with a later member of the biblical tradition, John
Winthrop, who continues this Pauline line of reasoning about life together as one body,
and who specifically relates it to life in America. Relying on the words of Winthrop’s

\[1\text{ Corinthians 12: 12-27.}\]
sermon, “A Model of Christian Charity,” Bellah et al. characterize solidarity in America in the following way:

Winthrop warned that if we pursue ‘our pleasures and profits’ we will surely perish out of this good land. Rather, what Winthrop, paraphrasing the Apostle Paul, tells us is that we must ‘entertain each other in brotherly affection, we must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities, for the supply of others’ necessities…we must delight in each other, make others’ conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes…our Community as members of the same Body.’

Centuries before Cecilia’s discovery of her own calling, the biblical tradition had already begun a deliberation about the flourishing life together in America. Earlier Americans embodying a similar calling to political life, such as Winthrop, modeled biblical principles within their practice of politics. And Cecilia’s language of solidarity is an extension of this same Christian deliberation about the flourishing life as a life together, with all individuals making up one interdependent body. In this way, Cecilia’s calling as a political activist, like Winthrop’s, exhibited a synthesis of values from a plurality of traditions – particularly from the traditions of civic republicanism and the biblical tradition.

Importantly, what this combination of values in Cecilia’s life (imported from civic republicanism and the biblical tradition) indicates is the way that traditions can

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495 Bellah et al. (1996: xxxv).

496 Unfortunately, however, Winthrop and other early Puritans’ visions of the flourishing life together falls short of the pluralism that Bellah et al. hope for, since the flourishing of the Native American people was not considered. Further implications related to this, which impact Bellah et al.’s broader narrative, will need to be problematized later.
work together. Her Catholicism builds on earlier civic visions of a life lived together. It builds further on the civic republican idea that an individual’s identity is discovered within community. Commingled together in Cecilia’s life, these traditions speak of vicious ways of behaving which are destructive to any communal body. These traditions also unify a vision of the virtues and practices that Cecilia believes can strengthen the bond between individuals within one’s community.

Interestingly, the way that Cecilia’s calling attends to values taken from both the tradition of civic republicanism as well as the biblical tradition exhibits another point of compatibility between Bellah et al. and MacIntyre. Namely, Bellah et al. demonstrate that workers today are likely to be situated in a plurality of traditions, all of which constitute their vision of the good life and impact the conceptualization of their ‘work as a calling.’

Turning next to a more in-depth analysis of these two ‘second languages’ of American life, we shall see that Bellah et al. also rely on these traditions. Like Cecilia, they find that we are tempted “to forget our obligations of solidarity and community, to harden our hearts and look out only for ourselves.”\(^{497}\) At the same time, however, they wonder what it would be like to restore the habits, practices, and narratives provided by civic republicanism and the biblical tradition. Bellah et al. hope to do so in such a

\(^{497}\) Bellah et al. (1996: xxxv).
way that our hearts would soften and that our identities would begin to take shape together within shared practices of commitment. For this to happen, they, like Cecilia, recognize the need to lessen citizens’ dependence on the ‘first language’ of American individualism.

IV. Bellah et al.’s Calling to Restore Civic Republicanism & the Biblical Tradition in American Life

Like Cecilia, Bellah et al. express a similar kind of calling to shape public life and support a vision of the good society. We may describe the calling that Bellah et al. mutually share as a calling to “public philosophy,” or practical philosophy in action. Such a calling attends to a combination of philosophy and social science. Bellah et al.’s calling to public philosophy “requires not just an evaluation of arguments and evidence but ethical reflection.” So, their calling to public philosophy pushes beyond the late modern limits of social science because their work “involves…a different focus of

498 Like any calling, public philosophy has “more than a few exemplars,” and Bellah et al. suggest that one of them is Alasdair MacIntyre. While not discussed herein, another important figure in public philosophy, and within Bellah et al.’s work, is Jürgen Habermas. Future projects should further trace Habermas’ influence within Bellah et al.’s work – particularly Habermas’ notion of a lifeworld, which grapples with the systems that are conducive to the flourishing of healthy normative communities. He deserves the same amount of attention that I have given to MacIntyre. Such a project would attend to other important components of Bellah et al.’s public philosophy that bear the mark of Habermas’ influence, and which have not received as much attention herein – such as his notion of a lifeworld. Ibid.: 297-307.

499 Ibid.: 302.
attention” insofar as they are going beyond rational evaluation to also conduct “ethical reflection.”

Like MacIntyre’s calling to public philosophy (assuming, for a moment, that he would be comfortable with this characterization of the work that Bellah et al. believe he is committed to doing), Bellah et al. share his vision of “a different understanding of society, one grounded…in commitments to substantive traditions.” In this way, Bellah et al. reject the study of social science as “a disembodied cognitive enterprise.” Toward this end, Bellah et al., like MacIntyre, reject late modern attempts to escape traditions. Instead, they rely on tradition-constituted resources like MacIntyre does. One gets the sense that Bellah et al. take very seriously the practical implications of their work. Such implications lead them to both an acceptance and a rejection of various strands of thinking in American life, as we have glimpsed already.

Particularly, Bellah et al. reject American individualism and instead tie their calling as public philosophers to the language of civic republicanism and the biblical tradition. These two ‘second languages’ in American life comprise the ‘bedrock’ of their tradition-constituted calling to public philosophy. Like Cecilia, Bellah et al. realize that their calling is not to

\[500\] Ibid.: 300.
\[501\] Ibid.
\[502\] Bellah et al. express respect for those scholars who rejected social science as a disembodied cognitive enterprise and instead “took conscious responsibility for their philosophical positions in a way that most social scientists today do not.” Ibid.: 301.
'change the world,' but to change the society within which they are at home.

Specifically, their calling “seeks to engage the [American] public in dialogue” together about a vision of (a) the good and worthy ends of practices, (b) the goods of an individual life, and (c) the goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society.503

Bellah et al. show us within their work that a complete illustration of the goods that their public philosophy intends to restore is apparent within tradition-constituted visions of ‘work as a calling.’ In fact, they argue that “the idea of a calling is closely tied to the biblical and republican strands in our tradition.”504 Here, Bellah et al. imply that a revival of the calling orientation, if properly construed, would lead to a revival of the civic republican and the biblical language in and beyond the American workplace. Hence, they believe that restoring a sense of ‘work as a calling’ can go a long way toward reviving what has been culturally jettisoned by American individualism.

Indeed, their calling to public philosophy entails a hope for the revival of the ‘second languages’ of American life that have been jettisoned by the ‘first language’ of individualism. Collectively, these ‘second languages’ comprise all of the resources of civic reason and transcendent revelation that they hope to restore, as we shall see.505

503 Ibid.: 303.

504 Ibid.: 66.

505 During one of Bellah et al.’s dialogues on Habits of the Heart, a commentator suggested that civic republicanism predominantly provides the reasoning component that they hope to restore to American life while the biblical
What these traditions offer are practical narrative resources that better characterize a shared vision of the good life and the good society as realities that are achieved together in solidarity. Believing that such “an idea of turning away from preoccupation with the self and toward some larger identity is characteristic of most of the great religions and philosophies of mankind,” they call for a “deeper understanding of the moral ecology that sustains the lives of all of us.” Such an ecology, which speaks of healthy practices of commitment and healthy institutions, is found within these “older traditions, biblical and civic republican, that had a better grasp on the truth that the individual is realized only in and through the community.”

So, they turn to these tradition-constituted narratives that provide a vision of solidarity because they wish to practically attend to social problems (especially the increasingly sharp divide between the upper-class and the middle/lower-classes), ecological problems, as well as “problems of emptiness and meaninglessness in our lives.” In what follows, we shall first look at these two important traditions in a bit further detail, glimpsing the ethical reflection that Bellah et al. provide within the [tradition predominantly provides the dimension of transcendence that is necessary to overcome American individualism. This comment strikes me as a very insightful one, so I have chosen to carry on with this line of thinking. Bellah et al. (1986: 70).]

506 Ibid., xxxi, 5.
507 Ibid.
508 Ibid.
tradition-constituted narratives that they recount. Finally, we shall conclude this chapter by comparing and contrasting Bellah et al.’s pluralistic vision of the good society to its MacIntyreen equivalent. Throughout the remainder of this chapter, it will be important to keep in mind that these broadly construed traditions provided by Bellah et al. root their calling orientation in a narrative vision of solidarity that complements MacIntyre’s framework in many respects. Generally speaking, we shall see that civic republicanism is a more broadly construed version of the moral resources that NeoAristotelianism provides for MacIntyre within his work, while the biblical tradition is a more broadly construed version of the moral resources that Thomism provides for MacIntyre within his work.

After we analyze these two distinct traditions, we shall compare and contrast Bellah et al. and MacIntyre’s civic vision of achieving common goods. We shall see that they both provide a similar account of pluralism - or secular deliberation about goods in common - that draws heavily on the aforementioned traditions, and which better recognizes and respects the polysemic and multivocal character of pluralistic dialogue.

Before reflecting on civic republicanism, the biblical tradition, and Bellah et al.’s advocacy for respect across national and traditional boundaries, however, a

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509 I must emphasize that what follows is merely a preview of Bellah et al.’s 600+ pages of ethical reflection on these traditions. It is a preview with many important figures that must be far too briefly covered and other important figures that I’ve chosen to leave out for the sake of brevity. A future project of mine will entail revisiting Bellah et al.’s ethical reflection on civic republicanism and the biblical tradition and expanding on it, just as I have tried to do with their notion of the calling orientation throughout this book.
shortcoming that pertains to their narrative within Habits of the Heart ought to be highlighted – especially because confusion about their position has led some scholars to a rejection of their pluralistic vision. They have sought to remedy this particular shortcoming in the years following the book’s initial publication, and well before their publication of The Good Society. Namely, their narrative within Habits of the Heart has a ‘WASP’ character to it. While their narrative most certainly praises moments in American history that have extended equal freedoms to ‘non-WASP’ groups, it has also overlooked some of the atrocities committed by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

For the sake of providing just one example, let us consider the following. The credibility of Bellah et al.’s narrative has been thrown into question in recent years for esteeming the civic and biblical virtues of early Puritans (i.e., Winthrop). The Puritans are articulated within Habits of the Heart as a group that cared about the achievement of common goods, but humanities and history researchers today rightfully prompt us to address the following question: To whom did these common goods extend in the Puritans’ minds? Certainly, they did not sufficiently consider the good for Native Americans, many of whom were either killed or driven from their lands by early Puritan settlers.

A narrow reading of American history that overlooks such atrocities would not be considered credible today, and Bellah et al. realize this. It is the position of the authors of Habits of the Heart that “there is certainly no ideal past to which we can look,
for our deepest problems were there in germ from the beginning. Nor are there any perfect heroes to point the way.” As much as anyone today, Bellah et al. agree that what happened to the Native American people is a tragedy, and the story of Native Americans is only one of many examples of oppression that they mourn in America’s past.

To rectify this oversight within their narrative, Bellah and his colleagues have returned in later commentary on Habits of the Heart to a fuller picture of problematic figures such as Winthrop. Bellah et al. have expressed that Winthrop did not embody the ideals of civic republicanism and the biblical tradition in a sufficiently pluralistic way. So, while the authors’ exhibited “relatively unrestrained” “admiration” for Winthrop within Habits of the Heart, Bellah argues that Winthrop, like many others, also “bears a heavy burden for beginning us on a wrong path, much as we still have to learn from him.” Namely, Winthrop marks the beginning of a dangerously divisive kind of nationalism that pits ‘us’ against ‘them’ and confused “the kingdom of God” with “the nation” – a nation that Native Americans were not given equal status within. Such sectarian “absolutism” is antithetical to their pluralistic vision, Bellah now argues.

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511 Ibid.
512 Ibid.: 267.
With this qualification about their narrative now in front of us, it must be emphasized
that their vision of pluralistic dialogue, as we shall see at the end of this chapter, marks their
earnest attempt to prevent such atrocities that have marred American history. Along these lines,
Bellah has suggested that one way Habits of the Heart can be read is as a book which attempts to
instill in the historically dominant white American middle-class important virtues and purer visions of our common humanity for the prevention of such patterns of oppression in America’s future. That being said, Bellah et al. do not assert an account of the good that is exclusionary in any way that remotely resembles the actions taken by earlier American Protestants. They especially do not seek to impose a ‘WASP’ vision of final ends on all Americans. In fact, they emphasize equal respect and an equal voice for the positive moral visions of all minority groups in American life. As we shall see at the end of this chapter, their nuanced account of pluralism demands that all groups have a seat at the table when pluralistic gatherings are arranged. The closing pages of this research will also make a case for the significance of this nuanced vision of pluralism as it relates to the calling orientation and the achievement of common goods in the workplace.

514 Bellah (1988: 269-288). This epilogue also exceptionally grapples with criticisms leveled against Habits of the Heart by members of the Pragmatist tradition, such as Jeffrey Stout, among others. Stout’s criticisms can be read in the same volume, and Bellah’s response to Stout neutralizes Stout’s concerns while also characterizing Stout’s essay in response to Habits of the Heart as “more supportive than critical.” Ibid.: 271.
IVa. A Brief Sketch of Civic Republicanism

Let us turn next to civic republicanism for an account of its values, concerns, and the publicly enriching moral ecology that Bellah et al. believe it provides. In so doing, we ought to imagine how this tradition ethically reflects on American individualism, just as Bellah et al. do.\(^{515}\) Within this section, we particularly need to reflect on ways that Bellah et al. discuss civic republican figures as a contrast to the less-culturally-enriching language of American individualism. Their narrative about this tradition, which they both inherit and extend, is what we must attend to herein.\(^{516}\) Furthermore, Bellah et al.’s own narrative may be extended so that it speaks more to our present moment and to our concern with the calling orientation by looking at the recent work of Steven M. Tipton, who initially conceptualized Bellah et al.’s calling orientation within Habits of the Heart, and who has extended a line of thinking about ‘work as a calling’ ever since that important first formulation.\(^{517}\)

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\(^{515}\) We already began a conversation about some of the figures that are associated with this tradition within the previous subsection (during our discussion about Cecilia’s calling to political activism). Some of these figures will be important to mention again here to further illustrate how they present a stark contrast to the tenets of American individualism.

\(^{516}\) For this reason, I will not rely on republican and biblical scholarship that has not been published within Bellah et al.’s ongoing conversation since Habits of the Heart. To do so, I think, would be a distraction from the narrative that Bellah et al. (together, embodying a tradition-constituted calling and functioning as a community of memory) have inherited.

\(^{517}\) In particular, see (Tipton 2018).
Let us begin this subsection by first examining Bellah et al.’s definition of civic republicanism. Bellah et al. provide the following definition within *Habits of the Heart*:

The [civic republican] tradition that originated in the cities of classical Greece and Rome, was expressed in the civic humanism of late medieval and early modern Europe, and contributed to the formation of modern Western democracies. It presupposes that the citizens of a republic are motivated by civic virtue as well as self-interest. It views public participation as a form of moral education and sees its purposes as the attainment of *justice* and the *public good*. In much of American history, the republican tradition has been linked to the biblical tradition.⁵¹⁸

Bellah et al. consider civic republicanism as a still-living tradition with a long moral history. Indeed, ongoing deliberation about civic values dates back to Hesiod and Phocylides in the sixth or seventh century BCE.⁵¹⁹ Such values were extended and revised by communities of memory in Athens, Rome, and early modern Europe. Bellah et al. argue that this tradition-constituted deliberation ultimately inspired the character of many civic ideals within our Western democracies – *ideals which, at their core, were intended to promote civic reason and curb self-interest*. Notably, this tradition provides the following resources for making sense of ‘good work,’ good individual lives, and the good society: (a) the economic protection of all citizens, (b) democratic deliberation, and (c) the cultivation of civic virtues. Let us see how these themes play out within their narrative about the civic republican tradition.

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⁵¹⁸ Bellah et al. (1996: 335).

Many of the earliest substantive resources provided by the civic republican tradition come from Plato and Aristotle, Bellah at al. argue. For example, as Tipton claims, Plato’s Republic teaches Americans that, “as a citizen of a true republic, seen as a living body of self-governing members, no one can retire from the lifelong calling Plato posits to learn to serve the good, to make good laws through shared deliberation and discipline, and come to rule oneself in order to rule and be ruled justly.”

Plato’s republicanism illustrates that a healthy republic requires active deliberation about the good as well as virtuous habituation in the light of the ‘forms’ of the good. Plato maintained that it was the responsibility of all citizens within a republic to pursue the flourishing life and to carry this vision forward within society. For Plato, the good society exhibited a commitment to one another and a disciplined quest for the public good.

Aristotle, like Plato, realized that the establishment of a good society must consider the flourishing of all citizens. This meant, in part, the economic protection of citizens. However, Aristotle also emphasized the moral formation of citizens as a part of his vision of flourishing. Considering both of these dimensions related to human flourishing, pleonexia, as we saw earlier, concerned Aristotle within the polis. He

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520 Ibid.: 182.

521 Rather unfortunately, however, Aristotle denied women, children, and slaves citizenship. As for Plato, it is unclear whether he believed that his utopian Republic ought to include slaves. Certainly, in other parts of his work, where moral formation is spoken of in realistic rather than idealistic terms, slaves seem to be a part of the polis, and generally without much moral reflection about whether or not this was a problem.

522 See p. 124.
maintained that such greed would inhibit the institutions within a republic from contributing to the economic well-being of citizens and that such greed would corrupt the moral formation of good citizens. Thus, Aristotle emphasized the importance of healthy institutions within the *polis*. Healthy institutions housed practices that were thought to both facilitate the moral formation of citizens and meet their material needs.

Toward the ends of promoting both the moral and economic well-being of citizens who lead their lives within various institutions, Bellah et al. find that Aristotle’s work emphasized distributive justice across social classes. To promote this distributive justice, Bellah et al. note that Aristotle particularly emphasized “the importance of the middle-classes for the success of free institutions.”\(^{523}\) Aristotle’s thinking marks the early beginnings of this living tradition’s recognition that middle-classes “have traditionally provided the active public participation [in practices] that makes free institutions work.”\(^{524}\)

Aristotle believed that this civic vision of the good society also depended on democratic deliberation. In particular, Aristotle believed that it was the role of all citizens to democratically promote justice and equilibrium and to “oppose monarchy and despotism” within all institutions that make up the *polis*.\(^{525}\) Hence, much of the

\(^{523}\) Bellah et al. (1996: xliii).

\(^{524}\) Ibid.

\(^{525}\) Ibid.: 119.
emphasis on *reason* within the civic republican tradition can be tied back to Aristotle’s work.

These demands that Aristotle placed on a republic and on its institutions meant that the good society required excellence in the exercise of citizens’ rational capacity. His account of flourishing necessitated the perfection of the human rational capacity for the protection of the good society as much as it did for the flourishing of human lives within society. The flourishing of both the *polis* and individuals within it, Aristotle argued, requires sound reasoning that promotes the economic and moral interests of all citizens.

Bellah et al. find that these Athenian ideals were nuanced and extended by many communities of memory, ultimately finding their way into American life via figures such as Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson realized that a good society depended on the cultivation of civic virtues. He held that the civic virtues of a free people must be cultivated through a participatory deliberation via “the common life.” Toward this end, he subdivided “counties into ‘wards’ of approximately 100 citizens that would be ‘small republics.’” Jefferson feared that “cities and manufacturing…would bring great inequalities of class and corrupt the morals of a free people.” Motivated by these

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526 Ibid.: 30.
527 Ibid.: 31.
528 Ibid.: 30.
concerns, which, in many respects, paralleled Aristotle’s concerns about the corruption of institutions as well as the corruption of citizens within them, the Jeffersonian account of freedom emphasized “an educated people actively participating in government” and seeking to promote the good of all citizens. In these ways, Jefferson resisted economic and moral corruption, both of which he believed were a threat to democracy.

As Bellah et al.’s reflection teaches us, this civic republican vision did not stop with Jefferson. There are many other historical figures that we can look to throughout the 19th century. For another example, let us turn to Tocqueville, whom Bellah et al. reference heavily in their work. Following Tocqueville’s visit to America in 1831, he called on Americans to restore a vision of the good life as a life together. In this respect, his sociology became marked by a strong call to the restoration of flourishing communities. Moreover, Tocqueville called for public deliberation about goods shared in common amongst a community’s individual members. Searching for a moral exemplar of civic republicanism, Tocqueville praised Jefferson’s ideals, believing him to have been “the greatest democrat whom the democracy of America has yet produced.”

At the same time, however, one can quite clearly see Tocqueville’s attempts to curb a pattern of individualism in American life of which Jefferson was a key

529 Ibid.: 31.
contributor. Jefferson’s vision of private property rights built on the earlier ideas of John Locke and Adam Smith (we shall review these figures in a moment) to construct an account of economic independence. Epitomized by his vision of the ‘independent farmer,’ Jefferson promoted a kind of utilitarian calculus with respect to property maximization that ultimately became self-defeating. This vision of economic independence, originally intended to support the common life of small republics and the civic morality that promotes healthy democracy, began to progress apart from his civic republican values.\footnote{Ibid.: x.}

Tocqueville saw firsthand that civic republican values had become grafted with a newly emerging stripe of competitive economic (qua utilitarian) individualism that extended a line of thinking stretching from John Locke and Adam Smith on up to Jefferson. All of these thinkers were civic republicans in their own right. However, Bellah et al. find that they seem to have promulgated an economic vision that had \textit{accidentally become antithetical to their values as civic republicans}. And this is precisely what Tocqueville’s visit to America problematizes. Seeing firsthand that this strand of utilitarian individualism had become self-defeating in America, Tocqueville predicted that this sort of “immersion in private economic pursuits” would result in “antagonistic individuals” who would become “easy prey to despotism.”\footnote{Bellah et al. (1996: 37-38).} While America was down
on the farm, Bellah et al. recount that Tocqueville worried about how “the inherent tendency of large-scale government toward centralization and the emergence of large-scale industry would lead to administrative despotism.” The only way to curtail this, Tocqueville thought, was for Americans to no longer remain distracted and divided “by the pursuit of material interest.”

Let us now, very briefly, consider how Bellah et al. recount that what Tocqueville observed in America demonstrated a material pursuit of self-interest that came unhitched from the very values of civic republicanism shared by Locke, Smith, and Jefferson. We have seen a glimpse of Jefferson’s civic republican values already, so we shall attend next to the values of Locke and Smith and then reflect on the ways that this newly emerging stripe of utilitarian individualism, which all three thinkers contributed to, created future consequences in American public and private life.

The theory of economic independence that Tocqueville considered destructive to common life did not begin with the Jeffersonian vision of the ‘independent farmer.’ Jefferson’s vision was steeped in the thinking of Locke and Smith. It was partly rooted in what Bellah et al. refer to as a dangerous “Lockean individualism” that departed from Locke’s own values as a Calvinist and as a civic republican. Followers of

\[533\] Ibid.: 209.
\[534\] Ibid.
\[535\] Ibid.: 67.
Lockean individualism often solely “emphasized that the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is exemplified by the solitary individual’s appropriation of property.”\footnote{Ibid.} Tocqueville’s work illustrates quite clearly the dangerous way that these private pursuits had become detached from Locke’s own strong “sense of obligation” to the common life, meaning that “all limits on freedom and autonomy of the individual,” besides a “(quite limited) social contract,” were “rejected.”\footnote{Ibid.} Forgetting Locke’s strong moral obligation to the “common good,” followers of Locke began to pursue their “own good” in such a way that the result, described by Bellah et al., was “a strange perversion of the original Lockean teaching,” one that was originally intended to promote the good of all citizens. Locke emphasized responsible public citizenship and a commitment to the ‘common good’ through his social contract, but Lockean individualism departed from many of Locke’s own moral values, instead holding fast to a self-interested theory of economic maximization, Bellah et al. argue.

Similarly, Bellah et al. find that what Tocqueville observed in America was also a product of the way that Adam Smith’s economic vision had already become promulgated apart from his vision of public citizenship and moral progress. Smith’s theory of capitalism was never intended to be divorced from the civic republican principles of
care for the economic and moral prosperity of all citizens, nor from the prioritization of
democratic deliberation. Bellah et al. explain this in the following way:

Although many of his latter day prophets ignore this, Smith taught that the social
benefit of the free market would be realized only in the wider public sphere, with
the populace actively debating matters of common concern and expressing its
will through the state. Opinion circulating among members of a myriad of
voluntary associations would produce a collectively prudent public. This public
would expand in social inclusiveness as its ethical level rose, gradually elevating
the minds of commercial men toward the standard of judgement summed up in
Smith’s idea of the ‘Impartial Spectator,’ the quintessentially public citizen.538

One can clearly see all three of the values that Bellah et al. associate with civic
republicanism within this description of Smith’s civic vision. In particular, the following
three priorities that Bellah et al. tend to associate with civic republicanism are apparent
within Smith’s early vision of capitalism: (a) the economic protection of all citizens, (b)
democratic deliberation, and (c) the cultivation of civic virtues. Hence, Smith’s
capitalistic vision of individual-striving in the free market never intended for self-
interest to be divorced from a progressive vision of civic virtue, lively debate, and social
inclusivity.

Obviously, Smith’s vision has been badly bastardized insofar as it began to take a
‘hard’ utilitarian shape in the 19th century and continues to do so still today. But Smith’s
hopes as a civic republican are worth preserving, Bellah et al. argue. And, in order “to
advance Adam Smith’s [civic republican] hopes for a free society growing progressively

more cooperative and inclusive,” Bellah et al. claim that “we must make more conscious efforts to redesign markets for public aims.” What they mean by this is that we must not divorce Smith’s vision of capitalism from his higher civic republican concerns, which supported the interests of good individuals and a good society.

Indeed, calls for more conscious efforts to redesign markets in the interest of the public aims only became louder following Tocqueville’s visit to America and as a result of an emerging utilitarian individualism that departed from Locke, Smith, and Jefferson’s own civic republican values. Carrying on with this narrative, Bellah et al. find that later 19th and early 20th century figures extended the call to the civic republican ideals of democratic deliberation, civic virtue, as well as the protection of all classes.

For a later example of this civic republican line of thinking in American life, Bellah et al. point to another US visitor at the turn of the 20th century, Max Weber. His work, following Marx, thoroughly critiqued modern management culture with the intent of curbing the economic individualism that had exponentially increased during the industrial revolution. In this way, Weber provides a kind of public philosophy that MacIntyre and Bellah et al. also come to espouse. Weber’s problematization of the utilitarian individualism that had snowballed in America after the industrial revolution

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539 Ibid.
makes up much of the character of the MacIntyrean social role of the manager that we have reviewed within this chapter and the previous one. 540

During this same moment in early 20th century American history, Bellah et al. argue, “the ‘job’ became separated from family and kin, neighborhood and church. More rather than fewer Americans were working not for themselves but for someone else, or something else. Some, like many farmers, fought the power of the market and its manipulation by the railroads and corporations.”541

New movements were now needed to protect American democracy. The rise of the bureaucratic manager and corporation marked the heyday of the trustbusters as well as local labor union organizers, all of whom actively sought to reclaim the older civic vision of economic protection for the now-struggling middle-class. These groups banded together in solidarity to ward off greedy institutions that were run by elites who sought monopolization of the market and accepted no limits with respect to their financial gain.

540 It should be noted that the connection between Weber and the MacIntyrean social role of the manager was also indicated by Bellah et al. in a footnote. Ibid.: 313. That being said, however, Bellah et al. seem to think that the Weberian critique of individualism is a rather overgeneralized picture that does not see the ways many individuals still exhibit a struggle for other moral languages beyond the ‘first’ language of individualism. To the extent that MacIntyre tended toward this Weberian picture in his earlier work, Bellah et al. exhibit more criticism of that work than they do of MacIntyre’s later works.

541 Bellah et al. (1991: 74).
Many within the struggling middle-class found their voice in the founder of the progressive movement and the author of *The Promise of American Life*, Herbert Croly.\textsuperscript{542} Leading up to the First World War, Bellah et al. see Croly as a figure who “helped to focus a new debate on the direction of American life and institutions.”\textsuperscript{543} His visions sought to counterbalance the runaway greed of capitalism that Locke, Smith, and Jefferson could have never fully imagined leading up to - and during, for Smith and Jefferson - the early days of the Industrial Revolution. Croly, like the public philosophers before him, wished to re-envision the good society by promoting economic prosperity for all classes. He imagined a future where institutions would again serve the public good rather than treat middle-class Americans as a means to bureaucrats’ uncapped financial gain. But what it meant to serve the public good began to change as questions of economics continued to rise to the fore, largely overshadowing other civic republican values and concerns.

Bellah et al. recount a history of sharp divides in party politics that goes well beyond Croly’s time. Regardless of what side of the political spectrum Americans fell on in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, however, one shared value came along with this century that we carry with us still today. Across the political spectrum, Americans share in common their pursuit of a dream that hinges on a materialist vision of economics. As industrialization

\textsuperscript{542} Croly (2014).

\textsuperscript{543} Bellah et al. (1991: 74).
opened the floodgates to consumerism and interest maximization, ends-agnostic materialism became “the primary aim of modern society.”

The values of the American Dream became “twofold: to provide physical security and material well-being for citizens and at the same time encourage as much individual choice as possible regarding the goals of activity.” Thus, Americans’ materialism reduced much of our public and private deliberations to questions of economic effectiveness and the equal distribution of an economic American Dream.

Indeed, debates over the equal distribution of the opportunity to pursue this dream of materialism have been heated. Whether Americans believe (a) that “widely shared” economic growth leads to “citizen empowerment” and the welfare of all citizens or (b) that economic distribution leads to a lethargic welfare state, has tended to depend largely on political affiliation. Either way, however, what it means to be well as an American is now spoken of in very shallow economic terms. And this points to the fact that our economic deliberation as Americans has carried on largely apart from other important civic republican values.

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544 Bellah et al. (1996: 262).
545 Ibid.
546 Ibid.:268-269.
Bellah et al. find that the 20th century marked the period when the American citizen became “swallowed up by economic man.” 547 This, they argue, makes us “more and more tempted to put ourselves in the hands of the manager and the expert” as the effective maximizers of means in American life. 548 Without a civic deliberation about good and worthy ends, Americans have become privatized citizens, barraged by effective marketing campaigns which inspire in us a flurry of wants. Consumed by our private preferences, public projects have turned into private projects. Conversations about common goods have been replaced by conversations about individual wants.

This need to counterbalance the runaway greed of interest maximization that became largely detached from civic republican values bleeds throughout the history of the 20th and 21st century. There are many other important voices in this story, but attempts to speak about every important figure who deserves a place in this narrative would require many volumes. For our purposes, we already have enough public philosophers within this tradition to see a pattern of virtues and vices that makes up civic republicanism’s historically-constituted rationality. Let us now apply this historically-constituted rationality to our contemporary situation by reflecting for a moment on the way that Steven M. Tipton extends Bellah et al.’s civic republican narrative into our present context.

547 Ibid.: 271.
548 Ibid.
Today, what we find is that, while the civic republican language of economic prosperity persists across the political spectrum, commitment to the ‘common good’ and to the cultivation of civic virtues has waned. Economics remains “the main model for our common life.”

Private interests, driven largely by the ‘first language’ of individualism, continue to occlude a united vision of the good society in the 21st century, making the calling orientation harder to properly construe than ever before in American history. Service to “the good of our country as a whole” within our callings and within our lives more broadly has been abated by service to the good of one’s own interests and one’s own political party. These sharply divided differences in economic opinion have been combined with a strong sense of economic entitlement on both sides of the political spectrum, and this debate ultimately boiled over during the 2016 election.

Indeed, tension stemming from contemporary political debates over economic and social entitlements have sharply divided Americans over the past few years. As Tipton suggests, one only has to consider healthcare-related issues, such as Obamacare, Medicaid, and Medicare to see how sharp these divides really are. Often during these debates, we find that American discourse is not guided by rational deliberation from within the

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549 Ibid.


civic republican tradition. Instead, these debates tend to be marked by the economic concerns of private American citizens, all of whom express a sense of being denied their due or a sense of having something taken from them that is duly theirs. While some Americans rightly feel taken advantage of by forces which exercise the principle of economic maximization before a consideration of common goods, the generally strong sense of economic entitlement across the aisle points to the dominance of the ‘first language’ of American, qua Lockean, interest maximization in our contemporary political climate.

Instead of relying on this language that makes economic demands related to interest maximization, however, what would it look like to understand this situation as a “moral drama”? Tipton argues that

For all the complexity of economic causes and effects in this ongoing story of inequality and poverty, it is nonetheless important to understand it as a moral drama with unsettling civic implication for how we pose and answer questions of what’s fair, who deserves what, and who is responsible for making things right at what cost. This is particularly true as our society grows more segregated by income into different neighborhoods, suburbs, schools, and places of work and play. Only 40 percent of Americans live today in middle-income neighborhoods, compared to 65 percent in 1970. Over a third of American families now live in areas of either affluence or poverty, up from just one-sixth in 1970, with the affluent rising from 7 percent to 16 percent of all families. Has this narrowed the everyday interaction of affluent Americans with those worse off, and deepened differences between their ways of life? Has it shrunk their reservoir of mutual empathy, and blurred the vision of their mutual understanding when it comes to common concerns, for example, over fair wages

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552 Ibid.: 12.
and taxes, or adequate provision for pensions and health care, education, and employment?553

Both sides, unfamiliar with one another, believe that their party is the best promoter of their interests. Our ‘empathy tank’ seems to be on empty, Tipton argues. Perhaps this is because, unfortunately, many lifestyle enclaves that Americans have retreated to seem to find a weak form of unity in a common enemy – an enemy that is characterized as wholly other. Where is our vision of common humanity? Why has it become so difficult to deliberate with fellow human beings who oppose our own point of view without becoming hostile or derogatory? In our sharply dichotomous political culture, Americans tend to drown out opposing points of view within their relevant enclaves, blurring visions about the public good of all Americans (and distorting visions of our common humanity that ought to transcend our borders). The language of interest maximization that is rooted in economics, based on these statistics, does not appear to be expanding our prosocial concerns.

All of this is happening while many of us, “in the midst of affluence” remain fleetingly bedazzled by the existential vacuum of the “bourgeois market or the romantic self-expression of the bohemian moment,” always chasing more and never feeling like we have enough.554 As a result, for those of us who have the money to spare (or perhaps

553 Ibid.
554 Ibid.: 179.
just swipe our credit cards like we do), much of our life is marked by the all-consuming advancement of “our own interests” and the “assert[ion] of our own rights in the pursuit of happiness.”\textsuperscript{555} In these respects, the old republican values of civic virtue, democratic deliberation across social classes, and the economic protection of all classes - still effective rhetoric during political speeches - seems harder and harder to find in public action. We say that we care about our fellow Americans and about the homeless that we pass within our gentrified neighborhoods. However, as Bellah et al. argue, we often fail to see how increasingly sharp divides between the rich and the poor have been “created by social choices” and we often “feel helpless to shape the institutional order that made these choices.”\textsuperscript{556}

Moreover, we seem to have lost sight of Plato’s early teaching that our citizenship within a good society, before and after retirement, entails support for the goods that we share in common as humans.\textsuperscript{557} Often, we vocalize our belief that “the good of each person is inseparable from the good of the community.”\textsuperscript{558} Trapped within lifestyle enclaves, however, many of us must admit that we think much more about our own interests and about what we like to do with others than we do about the good society –

\textsuperscript{555} Ibid.: 182, 184.

\textsuperscript{556} Ibid.: (1991: 4).

\textsuperscript{557} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{558} Ibid.: 182, 184.
an attitude that seems rather unfit for Bellah et al.’s notion of ‘work as a calling,’ we should add.

How, then, can a deliberation take place across these sharp divides? And what can we do to seek the ‘common good’ together, reviving civic virtue and restoring a reasoned deliberation about the life worth living, even in the midst of our differences, and well beyond our lifestyle enclaves? Tipton, both reflecting on the heated division that followed the 2016 presidential election and extending the arguments made within Habits of the Heart and The Good Society, addresses such questions in the following way:

Citizens need not be equal in income and education to engage in self-government. But democratic citizens of different backgrounds, unequal resources, and diverse social positions must share a common life and decide in common how they want and need to live together, if government of and by the people is to endure. Otherwise it threatens to tilt toward the most powerful and divide the body politic through bitter protest, mistrust, and withdrawal driven by anger and despair, if ordinary citizens find themselves in a society so unequal that no matter how hard they work, they cannot make ends meet, buy a home, pay for college, or save for retirement. Democracy thrives only if it sees to the universal distribution of hope as well as rights, and gives to all its citizens a representative voice as well as a fair slice of the economic pie.559

Tipton’s suggestions ring true for many virtue ethicists today. Sharp divides can only be overcome through individuals from all walks of life ‘leaning in’ and ‘seeking to understand’ one another. This, of course, requires active participation and deliberation.

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559 Ibid.: 16.
well beyond a lifestyle enclave. Enclaves will only sharpen divisions and thicken walls. What we need instead, Tipton argues, are practices of commitment and a common life with people that do not quite fit within the enclaves that so many of us feel drawn into. Active participation within practices, ones that regulate preferences in the interest of common goods, can restore what Tocqueville referred to as our civic mores – or our “habits of the heart.” As we have seen in this chapter as well as the previous one, the tradition of civic republicanism, from Athens to America, provides a tradition-constituted history about these practices that promise to bring us back together, replacing our enclaves with practice-based communities. Practices of commitment within public and private life can enliven our empathy for others through their retained memories of goods that we share in common as human beings. Practices of commitment cause us to realize that the other is really another one of us.

The public philosophers of civic republicanism provide a vision of the public citizen, committed to common goods and to a life together for us to draw upon. Within the still-living tradition of civic republicanism, we find a long history about the regulation of preferences and the promotion of common goods within practices. One of the most important ways that this happens, as we have seen already, is by living out our calling, before and after retirement. Properly construed and situated within the

560 Bellah et al. (1996: 270).
language of civic republicanism, Bellah et al.’s account of the calling orientation situates us within practices of commitment, formed around a common desire to facilitate the achievement of common goods. Through this deliberation within our practice-based communities, we come to realize that we find ourselves not by our preferences, but by our shared vision of common goods.

Individualistic preferences can and should become regulated in light of shared visions of common goods. Many pages have already been devoted to precisely the kind of picture that the civic republican tradition provides with respect to practices and the ways that practices regulate preferences, promoting a shared desire for the achievement of common goods. Instead of recapitulating that picture at great length, then, let us reflect on Tipton’s latest words about the civic republican account of practices and “the golden thread of lawful reason” that practices, construed in light of this tradition, can still provide us today:

Actual social practices and relationships are framed in classical republican perspective by the institutional ordering of households, schools, legislatures, courts, and temples seen as an integral moral ecology arranged to nurture virtues in practice, by contrast to modern instrumental models of institutions seen as sets of coordinating social mechanisms designed to serve the interests of individuals and protect their rights. So instead of seeking simply to advance our own interests and assert our own rights in the pursuit of happiness, we are bound to struggle together in practice against the power of our own passions to shape the steel cords of appetite in accord with the golden thread of lawful reason. In democratic deliberation through informed and reasoned argument, lit by enlightenment ideals of conscientious truth-telling and mutual sympathy, we are bound to struggle, too, against the powers of political partisanship and oligarchy. Only by such effort can we shape institutions in accord with the practical wisdom and justice of a republic that enables everyone to contribute fully to its
well-being and share fully in its liberty and prosperity. To be true to these principles in practice, we must provide and pay for the social conditions that enable citizens to work, earn, and save enough to retire securely.\footnote{Ibid.: 184. Tipton references both Aristotle and MacIntyre in a footnote associated with this paragraph, thereby confirming an extension of Bellah et al.’s account of ‘practices of commitment’ outlined within Habits of the Heart, which, as we saw, depended on the Aristotelian account of praxis as well as the MacIntyrean notion of practices within After Virtue.}

Tipton’s account of practices promotes a moral education in the civic virtues. This civic republican account of practices extends teleological deliberation and a moral formation in the virtues across the many dimensions of one’s private and public life. Like Aristotle’s vision of moral education, which maintained that “it was the whole community that educated: the home, the church, the voluntary association, and local politics had an educative function at least as important as that of the school,” Bellah et al. also imagine a future where “technical and moral education” would take place within all of these spheres of American life.\footnote{Bellah et al. (1991: 145-178).}

With this tradition-constituted narrative of civic republicanism now in front of us, let us consider again for a moment some of the values that Bellah et al. associate with this tradition. Bellah et al. narrate a history of civic republican values such as (a) the economic protection of all citizens, (b) democratic deliberation, and (c) the cultivation of civic virtues. Resting upon a civic republican vision of practices, such values can materialize. It is no wonder, then, why Tipton says that struggling together
for common goods shapes our preferences in light of “the golden thread of lawful reason.” Across all spheres of American life, Bellah et al. illustrate the possibility of restoring civic republican values within practice-based callings and within other significant practices of commitment that form our ‘habits of the heart’ as Americans. Turning now to a brief sketch of the biblical tradition, we shall see that this crucial tradition in American life also sustains a vision of ‘work as a calling’ and other practices of commitment.

IVb. A Brief Sketch of the Biblical Tradition

Let us now turn to the biblical tradition for an account of its core values, concerns, and the publicly enriching moral ecology that Bellah et al. see it providing in American life today. In so doing, we again need to reflect on the ways that Bellah et al. discuss this tradition as a contrast to the less-culturally-enriching language of American individualism. First, we must attend to Bellah et al.’s formal definition of the biblical tradition and recount its roles in American life. We must do this in such a way that we tease out a general idea of transcendence embedded within this definition. We must


564 We already began a conversation about some of the figures that are associated with this tradition within the previous subsection (during our discussion about Cecilia’s calling to political activism). Some of these figures will be important to mention again here for the purpose of further illustrating how they present a stark contrast to the tenets of American individualism.
also clear up an important point of misunderstanding – one that often tends to be associated with Bellah et al.’s conceptualization of the biblical tradition. Second, we should consider a few important points about the calling orientation with respect to the roles of the biblical tradition in American life. Third, we shall briefly glance at some important figures and movements within this tradition, all of whom represent historically-constituted embodiments of the “public church” in America (see footnote for a definition of the public church).\(^{565}\) Fourth, and finally, we must take a look at some of the ways that Bellah et al. think that this tradition is slipping in some respects from its social role in American life.

First, let us attend to Bellah et al.’s formal definition of the biblical tradition. Bellah et al. define this tradition as follows:

The tradition that originates in biblical religion and, though widely diffused in American culture, is carried primarily by Jewish and Christian religious communities. Though certain elements, such as belief in God, are widely shared, there are numerous versions of this tradition. In the Colonial period, Puritanism, a form of Protestantism, was particularly influential. In the eighteenth century, Protestant sects increased in numbers, and in the nineteenth century, large numbers of Catholics and Jews immigrated to America. Church, sect, and mystical or individualistic forms of Christianity have all played an important role in American history.\(^{566}\)

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\(^{565}\) Bellah et al. (1991: 179-219). The term “public church” is one that Bellah et al. inherited from Martin Marty, whose work aims to inspire pluralistic conversation related to questions about the ‘common good’ “without dissolving” the “particularity” of each tradition, or sect, that comprises the public church. Ibid.: 239. In fact, Marty's term inspires one of the most important chapters in their sequel to *Habits of the Heart*. See, for example, Ibid.: 179-219. In later pages, I shall propose a replacement for this term that is less beholden to the Christian tradition. My reason for doing so is to clear up confusion that the term has created pertaining to the character of their pluralistic project. Their vision of pluralism extends well beyond a vision of Christian ecumenism.

\(^{566}\) Ibid.: 333.
Perhaps obvious, but indeed necessary to point out, is that “the various religious traditions have somewhat different memories,” or different narratives.⁵⁶⁷ As a result of these different narratives, Bellah et al. find that penning down the language of the biblical tradition is “hard for Americans to understand” because of the “very freedom, openness, and pluralism of American religious life” that is woven into the fabric of our republic.⁵⁶⁸

While their conceptualization of the biblical tradition within Habits of the Heart points primarily to Christian and also to some Jewish sects, their work within The Good Society reflects the ways that Bellah et al. more broadly construe the biblical tradition for some as “a cosmic force or spiritual energy.”⁵⁶⁹ Perhaps surprising to readers who are unfamiliar with their work, Bellah et al. do not believe that religions of “Asian origin” or even “a wide spectrum of beliefs, from astrology to reincarnation to an ecological earth mysticism” tend to “represent a schism in the American soul, any more than earlier radical religious changes did, as for example, when the population was altered by large-scale Catholic immigration.”⁵⁷⁰ One does not necessarily have to believe in God, the Torah, or the Bible, to be situated within the biblical tradition, nor does unbelief in the

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⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.
⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.
⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.: 182.
⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.
God of the Jewish and Christian tradition radically transform the enduring character of the pluralistic “American soul,” they argue. Bellah et al. maintain that even these forms of “New Age consciousness...too, enter the overlapping consensus that has characterized American public life from the beginning.”

What we shall see throughout Bellah et al.’s account of the American soul is that individuals who are affiliated in some way with the biblical tradition (which we now know that we must understand more broadly than ‘the Judeo-Christian tradition’), amidst all of the sharp divides existing within it, generally exhibit four overlapping areas of consensus. In their healthy form, Bellah et al. find that all religious groups within the biblical tradition provide the following: (a) a loyalty to the self-transcendent function of the human being (often in relation to the divine), which generally widens concerns beyond national boundaries and commitments, (b) active commitment and participation with others, usually within shared communities of memory, (c) visions of the ‘common good’ and of our common humanity, and (d) a “deeply engaged” “quest” that is intended to “help us grapple with the ultimate problem of meaning, of trying to find a way to live that is based on something more than cost-benefit calculation or desire; of whether we have a place in the universe at all and any abiding purpose to pursue

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571 Ibid.: 180.
572 Ibid.
Thus, in its healthy form, the biblical tradition is “not a lonely existentialist quest but comes out of a deep engagement with other people, with a moral world.” The American soul, in all of its varieties, Bellah et al. argue, reminds us of these four points.

Before considering this tradition in relation to the calling orientation and in relation to some of the historically-constituted figures that Bellah et al. associate with it, we should first get clearer on a general idea that is embedded within this definition. Important to note is that Bellah et al. depict the biblical tradition as the tradition (or, more accurately, set of traditions) in American life that provide(s) an account of transcendence. The biblical tradition’s account of transcendence is what makes the American search for meaning and purpose in the world something other than a lonely existentialist quest.

Transcendence, Bellah et al. argue, happens within the American soul in two respects. First, transcendence is commonly experienced through an understanding of “the relationship of the individual to God,” which is “ultimately personal.” Second, transcendence is experienced by the way that “the traditional pattern [of the biblical tradition] assumes a certain priority of the religious community over the individual;” such a community means that the individual’s relationship to God “is mediated by a

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574 Ibid. Emphasis added.
575 Bellah et al. (1996: 227).
whole pattern of community life,” which the individual understands via “a community of memory.” In this respect, the individual’s desires, understanding of God, and narrative *quest* are shaped in no small way by one’s religious community. What the biblical tradition teaches us within such communities is that “each person’s story is a part of ‘our story’ told within a community. It is also a story of the social world we share, and the social institutions, relations and practices that enable or frustrate our flourishing.” So, the transcendence of the American soul is experienced in relation to the divine and in relation to the historically-constituted narratives that we share within our respective communities of memory – and this makes the search for meaning in Americans’ lives something other than a lonely existentialist *quest*.

That being said, Bellah et al. emphasize the importance of taking seriously the ways that religious people often reflect on matters of transcendence and human flourishing. A common mischaracterization of Bellah et al.’s work is that they view religion as a functionalist concept, rather than as an active movement of spiritual force that is observable within a culture but not fully capturable by way of the intellect. And they are aware of the way that their work has been misread in this respect. Indeed, Bellah et al. express a refutation of “functionalist” and “utilitarian ideas of biblical religion,” which tend to associate it with “inculcating morality” or “evaluate it only with regard to its

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576 Ibid.

contribution to the social good” insofar as it sometimes operates as “social cement.” \(^{578}\)

Such views, which are apparent even from the earliest days of the American republic, they argue, are “manifestly false” and “distort the deepest meaning of religious life.” \(^{579}\)

While the biblical tradition and religion more broadly certainly does have a social function in American life that is irrefutable, Bellah et al. wish to express that they first take religion seriously as a connection to a spiritual force that inspires an active *quest* in culture. This, they argue, marks the American soul’s deep engagement with a search for transcendent spiritual meaning. Bellah et al. believe that the biblical tradition contains a metaphysical worldview that beckons us toward a recognition of both common goods and our common humanity, and that it does so in all areas of human life and well beyond our national boundaries. \(^{580}\)

“To forget that is to obscure perhaps the most important thing we need to understand about the role of religion in society,” they argue. \(^{581}\)

Now, with this definition, this account of transcendence, and the general mischaracterization of Bellah et al.’s ideas about religion cleared up, let us consider the way that religion as an active force in the American soul impacts one’s transcendent

\(^{578}\) Ibid.: 181.

\(^{579}\) Ibid.

\(^{580}\) Ibid.

\(^{581}\) Ibid.: 182.
summons to a calling in American life. The depth of meaning that Bellah et al. associate with the biblical tradition perhaps already makes it obvious that a religious persons’ calling must remain inseparable from their religious quest for the good life. The narrative of the ‘common good’ that one both senses from God and inherits from one’s community of memory is deeply bound to one’s vision of the good in the workplace.

In fact, we already observed an example of this in the previous section when we reflected on Cecilia’s calling to public activism and her values pertaining to solidarity and human dignity as they related to her Catholic faith. Cecilia’s conceptualization of public activism as ‘good work’ is deeply intertwined with her faith commitments that stem from her relation to God and from her Catholic community of memory. Important to realize is that some of the richest resources of one’s burning desire to pursue ‘work as a calling’ come from one’s relation to a transcendent source of meaning, and also from one’s relation to a religious community of memory. Religious traditions extend narrative visions across all dimensions of one’s life. As a “deeply engaged” force of moral and spiritual energy, religious traditions tend to greatly impact one’s conceptualization of common goods and the good of one’s calling more specifically.582

This is important to emphasize because the ‘work as a calling’ discourse sometimes implies that regulated notions of the good, which are construed as a part of

one’s calling, happen *primarily within the living tradition* that is most closely associated with the practices that define one’s calling, such as architecture or medicine, for a Christian architect or a Buddhist doctor, for example. This, however, results in a mischaracterization of the deeper practices and traditions that inform one’s *quest* for the good across all areas of life and particularly within one’s calling. Moreover, it breaks from the emphasis on *narrative unity* that we have seen now within both MacIntyre and Bellah et al.’s work. *Generally speaking, when it comes to a conceptualization of the good and worthy ends of one’s calling, one’s quest for the good life, and one’s desire to promote the good of the community and society more broadly, visions inspired by living traditions with transcendent dimensions of meaning tend to take priority over visions inspired within workplace traditions and practices.*

Importantly, this also means that one cannot feel whole, or feel a sense of narrative unity in one’s calling, if one feels forced to abide by a more hostile secular compartmentalization of religion or the biblical tradition, which intends to harness transcendent concerns from the very sphere within which one’s calling is housed. This creates some tension in various industries within the late modern working world, such as the public education system, for example, which Bellah et al. argue has become “elevated… into something of a secular [and, in this case, exclusionary] religion.”

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583 Ibid.: 146.
respect of all Americans’ religious identities. This mutual respect must allow Americans
to bring their religious identity with them into public life, where many individuals’
callings reside. More hostile forms of secularism today demand an unfair
compartmentalization of one of the deepest sources of meaning and self-understanding
as it relates to one’s calling in American life when they seem to imply that one must
leave their religious beliefs at home.

That being said, Bellah et al. claim that the practice of religion in America,
though often construed as a private endeavor, has important implications in public and
in private that ought to be valued and respected. Through reminding the people of
transcendent values and “through reminding the people of their relationship to God,”
Bellah et al. maintain that the biblical tradition “establishes patterns of character and
virtue that should operate in economic and political life as well as in the context of
worship.”\textsuperscript{584} Indeed, Bellah et al. provide an account illustrating the very ways that
religion in America, resting upon the biblical tradition, bleeds into all areas of one’s life
and provides (a) a loyalty to the self-transcendent function of the human being, (b)
active commitment and participation with others, (c) visions of common goods and of our
common humanity, and (d) a “deeply engaged” “quest” that is intended to “help us
grapple with the ultimate problem of meaning.”\textsuperscript{585} Now, let us reflect very briefly on the

\textsuperscript{584} Ibid.: 227.

\textsuperscript{585} Ibid.: 146.
narrative history of the biblical tradition that Bellah et al. recount, examining these resources provided by the various sects that make up the biblical tradition in America.

Bellah et al.’s narrative of the biblical tradition begins with the Massachusetts Bar Colony’s arrival in New England in 1630, spearheaded by John Winthrop (whom we analyzed briefly within the account of Cecilia’s calling as a public activist, and whom I provided a cautionary qualification of in the opening pages of this section).\textsuperscript{586} Important to note is that, from the very first moment that these early Protestants set their eyes on North America, Bellah et al.’s narrative recounts that it becomes difficult or near-impossible to disentangle the republican tradition from the biblical tradition in American life.\textsuperscript{587}

Winthrop’s quest for the good life within his Puritan community of memory, in no small way, motivated him to immigrate to America in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century. His biblical ideals also bleed throughout his calling to public activism as a 12-year governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Winthrop’s Puritanism enlivened what Bellah et al. refer to as the “public church” in America by placing emphasis on “‘always having before our

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\footnote{\textsuperscript{586} Bellah et al. (1996: 28). Also see p. 258 herein.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{587} Bellah et al., however, do not imply that the two traditions became thoroughly interwoven at this moment. They, like MacIntyre, would readily admit the blending of the two traditions by earlier influential figures whom they associate with this tradition, such as the Apostle Paul, Augustine, and Aquinas, for example. (Perhaps it is impossible to completely distinguish the two traditions from one another at any point in history, but this is a subject for another project).}
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eyes our community as members of the same body.’” Bellah et al. recount that he, along with other early Puritan settlers, desired “the creation of a community in which a genuinely ethical and spiritual life could be lived.” His Puritanism collectively drew upon a deeply intertwined republican and biblical account of civic virtue that combined both reason and revelation, decrying what we know today as American, or Lockean, individualism. Winthrop replaced this form of individualism, which he understood as “natural liberty,” or “the freedom to do whatever one wants,” with what Bellah et al. refer to as a “true freedom.” Winthrop himself referred to this as a “‘moral’ freedom, in reference to the covenant between God and man…[remaining committed] ‘to that only which is good, just, and honest.’”

In Winthrop and other early Puritan settlers, Bellah et al. see religious individuals who remained committed to common goods, keeping in mind their common humanity (albeit, they did not recognize the common humanity of all members of the human race), which regulated their self-interest in light of the good of the colony. Winthrop’s life is marked by stories of altruism, so much altruism, in fact,
that he nearly drove himself bankrupt.\footnote{Ibid.} The depth of his engagement as a part of this community, Bellah et al. argue, cannot be explained by his appeal to civic reason alone. Winthrop drew heavily on the Christian tradition to illustrate a transcendent picture of the good life as a life committed to one another and to the teachings of the biblical tradition.\footnote{Recall during our discussion of Cecilia in the previous section that Winthrop drew on the Pauline description of ‘the Body of Christ’ to strengthen communal ties and commitment to the ‘common good.’ See p. 240 herein.} Winthrop’s influential role in combining civic reason and biblical revelation in American life and his shaping of the American soul cannot be understated. As Bellah et al. recount, Tocqueville saw the “‘whole destiny’” of American life in this early picture of Winthrop’s governance.\footnote{As cited in Bellah et al. (1996: 29)} Perhaps a bit overstated, they argue, “something very important about our tradition nonetheless derives from him and his fellow Puritans.”\footnote{Ibid.: 30.}

Bellah et al. argue that further examples of the role of the biblical tradition within the American republic are apparent in the American Revolution’s commander-in-chief and the US’s first president, George Washington. For an example of the way that Washington’s republicanism drew heavily on the biblical tradition, Bellah et al. consider his “Farewell Address” on religion and morality.\footnote{Ibid.: 222.} Therein, they find that Washington
referred to religion and morality together as “the indispensable supports [of] political prosperity.”” Washington, “doubted” that, in his words, “morality can be maintained without religion.”

He argued that religion and morality were not only “the great pillars of public happiness,” but also the “firmest props of the duties of men and citizens.”

We find here in Washington’s words the very resources that Bellah et al. believe the biblical tradition in America can and still does offer us in its healthy form, such as:

(a) a commitment to a transcendent set of moral principles which inspire Americans to live virtuously, (b) content to make sense of our quest for the good life, (c) visions of the public good of the body politic, and (c) resources for making sense of life together as citizens. Certain qualities of Washington’s leadership as an insider to the civic republican tradition, such as his reasoning about morality and the virtues as well as his conceptualization of common goods, were tightly interwoven with his beliefs as an Anglican-turned-Episcopalian. Important to emphasize is that Washington’s narrative understanding of his morality came, in no small part, from his community of memory as a part of the early Episcopal church in America.

That said, however, the early republic did have its dissenters who remained skeptical of organized religion within communities of memory. After all, the

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598 As cited in Ibid.

599 As cited in Ibid.
Enlightenment brought to America the important ideal of the separation of church and state – an ideal worth retaining, Bellah et al. think, but not in its hostile secular form. Bellah et al. find that not all of the “influential” “Deists and Rationalists” who emphasized a “disestablishment” of church and state leading up to America’s declaration of independence believed that religion is “prone to fanaticism and should be kept out of the public sphere except where it converged with beliefs based on reason.” Ultimately, however, this stereotype would grow, forcing the biblical tradition to retreat to the private sphere and minimizing its ability to call attention to pluralistic visions of common goods that are worth seeking in public and private life.

Most Deists and Rationalists also did not see the need for the transcendent element that the biblical tradition provided. As suggested by Bellah et al., this element contributed to moral formation within communities of memory as well as the subjection of individual desire to that community of memory, which provided a tradition-constituted narrative of common goods in public and private life. Instead, they shared the Enlightenment belief that “one’s religious views could be derived from reason alone” and therefore did not emphasize individual formation within community or ideals about common goods that were shaped by a community of memory.  

600 Ibid.: 221.

601 Ibid.
These Deist and Rationalist thinkers followed philosophers such as the French Deist, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who strengthened a strand of Lockean moral sentimentalism that situated religious morality and visions of the good within one’s emotions. Such an account, which eventually gave way to the romanticism of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman that we saw earlier in this chapter, ultimately came to epitomize the expressivist strands of individualism that are still associated with the late modern biblical tradition today, as we shall see.602

Importantly, this Deist and Rationalist sentimentalism slowly weakened the bonds of common life by rejecting the need for communities of memory. One gets the sense that these figures believed their religious project as sentimentalists entailed a deeply inward turn rather than a turn toward community. Subjection of desires and preferences within a faith tradition that habituated members in practices of formation, and which provided visions of common goods, became suspect rather than standard.

Bellah et al. find that Jefferson’s own Deism epitomizes this rejection of transcendent revelation and a kind of moral formation that depended first and foremost on sources beyond the self, such as God and one’s religious community of memory. After all, it was Jefferson, who famously stated, “I am a [religious] sect myself.”603 One

602 Ibid.: 233. For Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman as well as the expressivism of the transcendentalist movement, see pp. 199-203 herein.

603 As cited in Ibid.
sees in Jefferson a figure whom, to the extent that he held on to the biblical tradition, did so in scraps, and apart from a community of memory. Hence, we could characterize Jefferson’s religion as an individualistic project of moral sentimentalism.\(^{604}\)

Rationalist and Deist religious sentimentalism would be thrown into question greatly during the 19th century by philosophers such as Nietzsche and others who banded together in the movement of philosophical absurdism. Such thinkers threw out Rationalist and Deist attempts to rely solely on reason and to construct objective meaning and value in a universe where they believed no such objectivity could be found. That said, however, the cultural decision to carry forward with reason alone in public life, and to lean into one’s expressive emotions for moral and religious discovery, seems to have only steadily increased.

At this point in Bellah et al.’s narrative pertaining to the biblical tradition, we should again consider America’s most observant 19th century figure, Tocqueville. In many respects, Tocqueville sees in the biblical tradition precisely the resources that Bellah et al. see in it. Bellah et al. argue that he “saw religion primarily as a powerful influence on individual character and action.”\(^{605}\) As a respectful adherent to the separation of church and state, he also maintained that “its political function was not

\(^{604}\) The ‘Jefferson Bible,’ which is significantly cut up, nicely depicts the way in which Jefferson kept what resonated with him in the biblical tradition and rejected much of the biblical narrative along with any formal participation in a religious community of memory.

\(^{605}\) Ibid.: 223.
direct intervention but support of the mores [or the ‘habits of the heart’] that make democracy possible.”

Above all else, Tocqueville finds that the various sects of Christianity in the early 1830s “had the role of placing limits on utilitarian individualism, hedging in self-interest with a proper concern for others.”

What we see here are many of the resources that Bellah et al. see the biblical tradition as offering in public life, such as civic-mindedness about common goods, moral habituation, and a commitment to the good of others.

There is, however, one noteworthy contrast between Tocqueville’s account and Bellah et al.’s account of the biblical tradition. The language that Tocqueville relies on to describe the social resources provided by the biblical tradition in American life “kept him from noticing within some of the religious traditions those ‘second languages’ that provide better alternatives to utilitarian individualism than expressive individualism alone can do,” Bellah et al. argue.

Bellah et al. seem to be implying here that, in some respects, Tocqueville’s own beliefs about the role of religion in American life were impacted by his Enlightenment predecessors’ moral sentimentalism, (i.e., the strand of emotional moralism that runs from Locke to Rousseau). Tocqueville, while concerned with common goods and the individual habits of character that the biblical tradition

606 Ibid.
607 Ibid.
608 Ibid.: 223-224.
provided, tended to see religion as a civically minded force of transformation largely because of the sentimentalist emotions of “benevolence” that he associated with it. Bellah et al. find that his religious language emphasized how “utilitarian individualism could be countered with a generalized benevolence, rooted in sublime emotions ‘embedded in nature,’ that is, in an expressive individualism.”

We must remember Tocqueville’s place and time in American history, however. Tocqueville, like Jefferson before him, could not fully see how the practices of spiritual formation had instilled in Americans these benevolent emotions, and how such practices probably inspired the pursuit of common goods. Nor could he see how a further turn toward individuals’ emotions would be marked by a turn away from community in many Americans’ lives.

One can only imagine what Tocqueville might have said about later emerging movements, such as the transcendentalist movement. Ultimately, the transcendentalist movement, which also rested upon the language of expressivism, epitomized the very individualism that Tocqueville had rejected a few decades earlier. The religious life that Tocqueville observed in America was one that had been shielded in many respects from the more individualistic stripe of expressive individualism that retreated farther

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609 Ibid.

610 Ibid.

611 For the transcendentalist movement, again see pp. 199-203 herein.
inward, away from community, cocooning Americans from the ‘harder’ utilitarianism associated with later 19th century working conditions. Consequently, Bellah et al. see Tocqueville as a figure who “offers us little guidance” with “respect to ‘second languages;’” he is someone who is “better at posing the problem of individualism and showing us where to look for alternatives [i.e., civic republicanism and the biblical tradition] than at [providing] a close analysis of the alternatives themselves.”  

What this narrative history recounts is that civic concerns, such as a promotion of common goods within community, waned in American public life as the biblical tradition began making less public demands and instead started providing private comfort to an anxious working class. Religion had become acceptable in public life only as a way of complementing a moralism that asserted its rational ‘objectivity’ – a kind of objectivity that seemed increasingly absurd to many influential voices of the 19th and 20th century. Much of the earlier and more public ‘second language’ of the biblical tradition that had propped up civic republican values by (a) promoting a transcendent loyalty to the divine and to community, (b) promoting active commitment in practices with others, (c) providing visions of common goods, and (d) providing a deep sense of purpose to individuals across all spheres of life, gave way to a public scientific rationality “in the face of increasing economic and political competition.” The public resources of the  

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612 Ibid.: 224.

613 Ibid.: 221
biblical tradition had become replaced by the more dominant resources of utilitarian individualism, setting the stage for Weber’s critique of the newly emerging social role of the bureaucratic manager, while, at the same time, blurring visions of common goods.

This narrative is also intended to demonstrate that the religious individualism of the Rationalists and the Deists, which led to the disestablishment of religion in public life, subsequently provided religion with the language of sentimentalism to deal with the ‘harder’ utilitarian public conditions of the 19th century while Americans were at home. Interesting to note here is that, about the same time that visions of economic independence became divorced from civic republican visions of the common life, religion, too, became “significantly privatized.”

This language of sentimentalism sparked several newly emerging sects within the biblical tradition and, most importantly, “a new emphasis on the individual and the voluntary association.” Religion, too, was subjected to personal utility insofar as it began to take shape as a means for private comfort and personal self-expression. As Bellah et al. argue,

privatization placed religion, together with the family, in a compartmentalized sphere that provided loving support, but could no longer challenge the

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614 Ibid.: 222.

615 Ibid.
dominance of utilitarian values in the society at large. Indeed, to the extent that privatization succeeded, religion was in danger of becoming, like the family, ‘a haven in a heartless world,’ but one that did more to reinforce that world, by caring for its casualties, than to challenge its assumptions. In this respect, religion was a precursor of therapy in a utilitarian managerial society.\textsuperscript{616}

Bellah et al. find that, in many respects, this characterization of the church runs up to the 1930s. During this time, many individuals, not seeing a place for themselves within a particular denomination, followed the likes of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, trading religious communities of memory and visions of the ‘common good’ for a “morality” that became “personal, not social; private, not public.”\textsuperscript{617}

\begin{quote}
In a situation where the biblical tradition had, in many respects, devolved into a therapeutic means of feeling good, Bellah et al. find that it had lost its teeth; it had lost its ability to make the public demands that had formerly enriched visions of the goods that all human beings share in common.
\end{quote}

Certainly, there were still those “mainline Protestant churches” in the mid to late-19\textsuperscript{th} century and the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century that produced figures who tried to “relate biblical faith and practice to the whole of contemporary life – cultural, social, political, economic – not just to personal and family morality.”\textsuperscript{618} Bellah et al. argue that the same period that produced the transcendentalists also produced some of the most publicly

\textsuperscript{616} Ibid.: 224.
\textsuperscript{617} Ibid.: 231.
\textsuperscript{618} Ibid.: 237.
active Protestants that American history has ever seen. A picture of the public activism that Bellah et al. praise later in this period of mainline Protestantism is evident in the life of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, for example.\textsuperscript{619} Bellah et al. admire the way that these figures tried “to steer a middle course between mystical fusion with the world and sectarian withdrawal from it.”\textsuperscript{620}

For an example of this, let us consider briefly the work of Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr’s work within the biblical tradition does not exhibit the kind of isolationist “specialism” that Bellah et al. find threatens to make theology irrelevant today.\textsuperscript{621} Rather, Niebuhr wrote with creative and intellectual vigor, working outside of the walls of academia as well as within them. His calling as a theologian was connected to his commentary on politics and was, in many respects, also a form of public philosophy that demanded cultural, social, political, and economic change. One gets a sense of how all of these concerns come together for Niebuhr in his famous statement that “man’s capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man’s inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.”\textsuperscript{622} Here, Niebuhr’s theology of the fallen state of humanity leads

\textsuperscript{619} Ibid.: 238.
\textsuperscript{620} Ibid.: 237.
\textsuperscript{621} Ibid.: 238.
\textsuperscript{622} Niebuhr (1987: xii).
him to emphasize a political vision of democracy for the social and economic protection of human beings and the goods that we share in common.

Reflecting on the time that has passed since Niebuhr and Tillich’s activism, however, Bellah et al. wonder why mainline Protestantism has “failed to produce a Tillich or a Niebuhr who might become the center of fruitful controversy.” Without such figures, they see no possible way for the biblical tradition to “withstand the competition of the more vigorous forms of radical religious individualism” that threaten to privatize the public church and eliminate its important public role in American life.

To the extent that many sects within the public church have evolved from sentimentalism to a fuller manifestation of the culture of expressivism, Bellah et al. find that the public church has “thinned” realities such as “sin” and “redemption” from its message, replacing tradition-constituted memories of character, common goods, and human flourishing with an individualistic promise of “therapeutic self-realization.” Radical individualist religion has come to see that “God is simply the self magnified” and the self has, in many respects, abandoned the concerns of others. When an

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623 Bellah et al. (1996: 238).
624 Ibid.
626 Ibid.: 235.
individualistic concern for some mystical idea of the self replaces communities of memory within religious congregations, what Bellah et al. find is that community ties become weak and historically-constituted memories about common goods tend to regress.

In the case of many communities of memory that identify with a particular denomination of Christianity, Bellah et al. find that a tradition of therapeutic religion has arisen in place of that denomination. Therapeutic religion seems to have snuck in through the back door, disguising itself in the name of various denominations as well as stealing their communities, which have lost much of their memory and, in some cases, seem to have devolved into lifestyle enclaves. So much of the alternative ‘first language’ of American individualism has been grafted in many cases that the core rationality of particular religious congregations has been completely covered over by a feel-good message that all-too-often drops common goods and calls to public action out of the picture. Such a regression is ultimately damaging to the role of the public church and the way that it has effected change by making public demands for goods shared in common, Bellah et al. argue.

Importantly, many of the congregations that make up the public church also seem to have lost a vision of the good life as a life together, growing collectively within practices and sharing visions of what it means to set out on a quest for the flourishing human life. Religion today, they argue, still wishes to “talk about ‘relationships’ but
cannot point to the personal virtues and cultural norms that give relationships meaning and value.\textsuperscript{627}

So then, what is the “great contribution that the church idea” must provide Americans today?\textsuperscript{628} Bellah et al. argue that the idea of the public church must place “emphasis on the fact that individuality and society are not opposites but require each other.”\textsuperscript{629} Flourishing happens in common - not in isolation. As the dialogical creatures that we are, we must recognize that our identities are shaped within our communities of memory rather than constrained by them. The flourishing human life that we seek as individuals is best achieved in common, Bellah et al. argue.

What, then, do we do about this problem of therapeutic religion, or, as some call it today, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, and the way that it has invaded the aisles of religious congregations, stealing so many members and relinquishing them from a pursuit of common goods?\textsuperscript{630} Bellah et al. argue that within the public church and within our culture more broadly, “American individualism is not to be rejected but transformed by reconnecting it to the public realm” and by reviving conversations about common goods through a reliance on the narrative resources that the biblical tradition and civic republicanism have

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{627} Ibid.: 237.
\item \textsuperscript{628} Ibid.: 246.
\item \textsuperscript{629} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{630} Smith & Denton (2009).
\end{itemize}
always provided in American life. Bellah et al.’s vision of transformation is situated within their hopeful and pluralistic account of the public church, as we shall see in the following subsection.

IVc. Bellah et al.’s Vision of Inter-Traditional Gatherings & MacIntyre’s Pluralism

In what follows, we shall first examine Bellah et al.’s pluralistic vision of the public church. This is a somewhat misleading notion, as I suggested several pages earlier alongside of their definition of the term. That being said, I shall henceforth replace their term with the notion of *inter-traditional gatherings*, which is less beholden to particular sects within the Christian tradition. For this reason, it better captures the pluralistic character of Bellah et al.’s political vision of public dialogue about questions of ultimate meaning. After reviewing Bellah et al.’s vision of inter-traditional gatherings, we shall then relate it to MacIntyre’s ever-evolving picture of pluralism in late modernity. Readers of MacIntyre’s work will likely be surprised by the parallels drawn between Bellah et al. and MacIntyre within this section. Bellah et al. would likely be surprised by the claims drawn within this section about MacIntyre too, for that matter.

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632 I would like to thank two friends and fellow MacIntyrean philosophers, Caleb Bernacchio and Marco Gulla, for inspiring much of the character of this section – particularly my articulation of the evolution in MacIntyre’s pessimism and the way that MacIntyre’s work now embraces the virtue of hope amidst his persisting concerns.
It should be noted that Bellah et al.’s vision of inter-traditional gatherings relies on resources that resemble MacIntyre’s latest account of pluralism. Importantly, Bellah et al. maintain that common goods sought within their pluralistic vision depend upon the resources provided by the biblical tradition as well as the civic republican tradition. As we saw within the last chapter, MacIntyre’s account of common goods, construed “in secular [qua pluralistic] terms,” rests upon claims of civic reason and demands an openness to a plurality of tradition-constituted visions of transcendence within a diverse body politic. Hence, MacIntyre, like Bellah et al., has a pluralistic dimension to his tradition-constituted theory of the virtues, making “his understanding of practical reason and the virtues...secular,” as his friend, Stanley Hauerwas, argues. He, like Bellah et al., leaves his account of politics open-ended, or “secular,” so that “his argument that some overall good is necessary for our actions to be intelligible does not entail any theological convictions that are not available to anyone” engaged together in inter-traditional dialogue.

Further important distinctions and connections between MacIntyre and Bellah et al.’s pluralistic visions, as well as the ways that they have evolved, need to be observed,

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633 MacIntyre mostly relies on Aristotelianism and the Thomist tradition as we have seen, but his work also draws on many resources from civic republicanism as well as the Christian tradition more broadly.


636 Ibid.
however. And that is precisely what this subsection intends to do. After we tease out these distinctions, we can examine the way that the idea of ‘work as a calling’ plays an important role in Bellah et al. and MacIntyre’s nuanced vision of pluralistic, qua inter-traditional, gatherings.

Let us begin by analyzing the evolution of Bellah et al.’s vision of inter-traditional gatherings first, and then we shall examine MacIntyre’s position more closely. Before Bellah et al. spoke of such gatherings, Bellah had already begun a tale about civil religion. This was a project that Bellah undertook in the 1960s and 1970s, beginning with his 1967 essay on “Civil Religion in American Life.” 637 Within this early essay, Bellah described civil religion as “not the worship of the American nation but an understanding of the American experience in light of ultimate and universal reality.” 638 This essay drew on American history to weld a picture of the ways that civic reason and visions of religious transcendence have long worked together in American public life

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637 Bellah (1967). Earlier figures such as Tocqueville and Rousseau also spoke about the combined roles of reason and transcendence in a republic. Hence, the content which makes up the general idea of civil religion has a longer history that dates to at least Rousseau in the 18th century. Bellah, however, was heavily influenced by the 19th century figure, Emile Durkheim.

638 Ibid.: 21. Importantly, then, civil religion is distinct from religious nationalism, which tends to speak of America as ‘God’s chosen nation’ and has justified unethical forms of imperialism even in our modern era. Such an account is hostile to the very vision of pluralism that Bellah as well as his co-authors of Habits of the Heart and The Good Society wish to provide. Rather unfortunately, poor readings of Habits of the Heart as well as Bellah’s other works by figures such as Stanley Hauerwas and James Davison Hunter have conflated the notion of civil religion with nationalism. This is indeed a misunderstanding; however, it has been an influential one.
toward the end of supporting pluralistic striving for the achievement of common goods in communities and society more broadly.639

Bellah’s account of civil religion in America continued in his 1976 book, The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial, wherein he attempted to call Americans back to a pluralistic project that he believed was weaved into the fabric of the Declaration of Independence. This document, he argues, did not intend to confine “cultural symbolization” to the resources of “Anglo-Saxon descent” alone, but tried its very best, (albeit imperfectly, as no culture can fully escape its context), to speak “in the accent of mankind in general.”640 In a spirit of togetherness, Bellah pointed to an underlying vision of pluralism that has existed since the founding of the American republic. He believes that this pluralistic vision in America has been the cause of many of America’s brightest moments of cultural transformation.

Importantly, however, pluralism for Bellah did not mean that Americans shared some monolithic and complete vision of common goods. Rather, he argued something much simpler and harder to refute - that there has long been an attempt to interpret “historical experience in light of transcendent reality” as well as in light of civic reason within America’s history.641 Both civic reasoning and visions of transcendence ought to

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639 As the previous two subsections on civic republicanism and the biblical tradition illustrate, Bellah et al. continue a narrative account of this history in Habits of the Heart and The Good Society.


641 Ibid.
accompany deliberations about the good life and the good society, Bellah thinks. An openness to both features of American public dialogue, he finds, has always been intended to promote the deliberation about and achievement of common goods. So, what Bellah’s account of civil religion illustrates is a great “myth” (in the sense of an inspirational epic, or a saga) about many living religious and philosophical traditions deliberating together about common goods throughout American history, and even amidst unresolvable differences between particular sets of living traditions.642

As is the case with Bellah’s earlier works, it must be emphasized that Bellah et al. also realize that no monolithic and complete vision of common goods exists in American life, neither now nor during the founding of the American republic. There have always been disputes over common goods and sometimes these disputes have become violent (i.e., the American Civil War). So then, what would it look like, both in and beyond the workplace, to engage an increasingly diverse set of living traditions, amidst many irreconcilable differences (oftentimes with sharp disagreements even taking place within the same sects), in a mutual campaign for cultural, social, political, and economic change?

Like Bellah’s early vision, Bellah et al.’s answer entails an expanded ideal of inclusive dialogue between disparate living traditions, which continuously grows with

642 Ibid.
the new religious movements and philosophies of ultimate meaning that emerge in America.\footnote{Bellah et al. (1991: 216).} Their vision of inter-traditional gatherings encompasses the whole spectrum of religious and humanistic views in American life. Relying still on the resources of civic reason and self-transcendence (as Bellah’s vision of civil religion always has), Bellah et al. call for continued gatherings of the various sets of living traditions, and their hope is that they will work in an “interdependent” fashion to deliberate about and make public demands for goods that can be identified in common, as well as agreed upon evils that ought to be resisted.\footnote{Bellah et al. (1996: 249).}

Whenever distinct groups come together for the purpose of demanding public change, Bellah et al. argue that all groups must maintain “respect” for the differences that exist between disparate living traditions – in particular, they must acknowledge the polysemic and multivocal nature of discussions that take place at these gatherings, which requires an active effort to understand religious traditions and philosophies of ultimate meaning on their own terms.\footnote{Ibid.} Notwithstanding significant differences in the meaning of specific terms and distinctive tradition-based values, the ideal feature of these inter-traditional gatherings entails a process of “examining our habits and

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\footnote{Bellah et al. (1991: 216).}

\footnote{Bellah et al. (1996: 249).}

\footnote{Ibid.}
searching our hearts in the pursuit of common goods diverse yet practical enough to share.”

Is such a vision utopian, you might ask? Well, not quite. Bellah et al. believe that the task will be messy, and they do not believe that some monolithic and complete vision of common goods will emerge from such a project, as stated earlier. Nothing about their work appears to suggest that this project will be easy, nor do they wish to exclude any group from an active and participatory role in these gatherings, even if doing so would make the project easier. It is simply their hope that such conversations will beckon us to consider further our common humanity as we reflect together about common goods, respectfully, and in light of our different visions of ultimate meaning and purpose in the universe.

Bellah et al. argue that some of the most effective striving for change in public life has happened through nonsectarian dialogue - across religious boundaries and philosophical divides. They are charitable toward any living tradition that remains avowedly committed to a pluralistic striving for the achievement of common goods. It

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646 Bellah (1988: 288). Bellah’s final words in this volume of essays (which arose as a response to Habits of the Heart) invokes a practical vision of deliberation that he seems to think even Jeffrey Stout, an earlier critic of Habits of the Heart, calls for within his written response to the book. Indeed, within this essay, Bellah goes quite some way toward showing how Bellah et al.’s vision is far more compatible with Stout’s Pragmatic position than Stout himself initially realized.

647 Bellah et al. (1996: 238).
is equally important, however, that these inter-traditional gatherings seek to curb identifiable threats to the achievement of common goods.

_Importantly, this vision of inter-traditional gatherings means that diverse religious traditions and philosophies of ultimate meaning must also exhibit a resistance to the loss of hope in the value of inter-traditional dialogue._ “Hopelessness is not a basis for action,” they argue.\(^{648}\) A lack of hope not only results in the temptation to retreat into agitated sectarianism (an impoverished form of pluralism that Bellah refers to as “absolutist communalism,” but also, and arguably even more often, a loss of hope drives individuals into private comfort (what Bellah refers to as a “shallow” and “individualist pluralism”).\(^{649}\) Hence, Bellah et al. show that individualism also threatens the deliberation about and achievement of common goods. That being said, the active hope that Bellah and his colleagues have entails a nuanced view of pluralism that tows a middle line, which “involves balancing between the conflicting pull toward radical individualism on the one hand and ‘absolutist communalism’ on the other.”\(^{650}\)

Thus, simply rejecting agitated sectarianism, or ‘absolutist communalism,’ is insufficient, Bellah et al. argue. Americans have long curbed their individual interests by way of their participation in a diverse set of religious and civic practices of

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\(^{650}\) Ibid.
commitment, and such practices ought to be promoted. Interestingly, however, they find that the purely Pragmatist line of thinking that so often dominates political life tends to “replace” visions of “common goods” discovered within practices with “the public interest.” Pragmatists do so partially out of a legitimate fear of the dominance of both elitist values and agitated forms of sectarianism. However, Bellah argues that the public interest “turns out to be not something good in itself but merely the sum of all private interests,” and he and his colleagues, like Tocqueville, believe that “it is doubtful if a society based on [private] interest alone could even exist.” What this argument suggests is that contemporary politics seems to have thrown the baby out with the bathwater, so to speak. In the American political attempt to avoid elitist values or the values of some other oppressive sect, we have also become unnecessarily fearful of practices associated with religious traditions and other philosophical traditions, all of which can curb self-interest through the regulation of preferences and the subjection of the individual to a self-transcendent narrative of ultimate meaning. In other words, Bellah et al. find that the American political project has exhibited a fear of commitment, but they find that Americans are in need of the ‘second’ languages that such commitment provides.

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651 Ibid.: 306.

652 Ibid.
That being said, they argue throughout their work that overcoming the ‘first’ language of individualism for the achievement of common goods means that our individual preferences must become regulated through the practices that constitute our public and private lives. Practices, always tradition-constituted, garner highly specific visions of the good life and the good society that tutor our individual preferences in light of visions of good and worthy ends that are worth pursuing together. “If we can know what makes life worth living and embrace it in practice as a good way of life,” Tipton says, “then there may be enough for us to share without wanting more.” 653 Thus, Bellah et al. argue that moral formation and deliberation about common goods must happen first within particular living traditions that posit accounts of ultimate meaning and offer a picture of “a life lived together and enacted in common practices that are good in themselves.” 654 This formation in our tradition-constituted practices is a distinct and necessary first step that moves us beyond private interests, or individual preference maximization.

But we also must consider others beyond our distinct groups. An unwillingness to engage with others who do not share our same religious traditions or philosophical traditions of ultimate meaning clearly falls short of Bellah et al.’s nuanced vision of pluralism and collapses into ‘absolutist communalism.’ In addition to being formed

653 Ibid.
654 Ibid.: 304.
within our traditions of ultimate meaning, we must also come together with members of other religious traditions and philosophies of ultimate meaning to discover the goods that they too have identified in common. Perhaps, Bellah et al. argue, we will come to see during these inter-traditional gatherings that we share practical visions of good and worthy ends that are worth making public demands for. We may also share common ideas about evils that ought to be resisted, even though our language and reasoning to account for good and evil will most certainly vary across traditions engaged together in conversation.

Arguably, by moving beyond conversations about the protection of individual interests to include more thorough discussions about the achievement of common goods and a recognition of our common humanity, their vision of pluralism is more pragmatic than what many members of the Pragmatist tradition have been able to provide in recent decades. Bellah et al.’s hope in the pragmatic role of inter-traditional gatherings is evident by their association of one of the greatest pluralistic moments in the 20th century with the Second Vatican Council. This council, they remind us, inspired inter-traditional conversations about key issues in public life, such as the Civil Rights movement.655 Such moments in history define for Bellah et al. what it means for the

655 Ibid.: 238.
‘second’ languages of American life to band together for the purpose of making public demands.

However, understanding the goods and evils that we can practically agree upon requires a much more expansive vision of inter-traditional gatherings today than the gathering that occurred between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews during the Second Vatican Council. The number of distinct living traditions in America has expanded significantly with the emergence of New Age movements in America, as Bellah et al. point out in The Good Society. This means that a wider scope of inclusivity is necessary today during inter-traditional councils.

But where do Bellah et al. believe that such gatherings ought to take place? They argue that inter-traditional gatherings ought to take place within the academy and across divinity schools in America.656 For example, they propose to members of their own tradition-constituted communities that

in this effort to recover and strengthen depleted resources, these academies could help provide a more educated and articulate voice for the [inter-traditional gatherings]. Such academies could also contribute to the essential dialogue between Christians and Jews and between the biblical religions and other faiths. Religious communities can contribute to the search for the ‘common good’ only to the extent that they understand and respect different-faith communities in our pluralistic society and world.657

656 Bellah et al. (1991: 218).
657 Ibid. I am reminded of the ongoing work of divinity schools to forge the way in this ecumenical movement today, particularly Yale Divinity School and the Yale Center for Faith & Culture, which resides in Yale College.
Through such dialogues, Bellah et al. envision that these inter-traditional gatherings in America, relying on visions of self-transcendence and civic virtue, can inspire Americans to emerge again from their expressive individualist cocoons of private interests. To be clear, the role of these inter-traditional gatherings involves public deliberation followed by public demands for the practically agreed upon goods worth wanting and evils that ought to be resisted.

With Bellah et al.’s vision of pluralism now in front of us, let us relate it to its MacIntyrean equivalent. In many respects, what we find is that MacIntyre’s vision “to go as far as we can to construe politics and common goods in secular [qua pluralistic] terms” is remarkably similar in vision, but it is radically different in tone - particularly in its earlier form. That being said, MacIntyre’s pessimism has evolved significantly over the years, but many readers of his work still tend to focus on the last line of After Virtue, missing this important evolution in MacIntyre’s thinking that has happened over the past roughly four decades. First, then, let us examine his pessimism within After Virtue, which so many MacIntyrean commentators still emphasize. Then, we shall see how he has, in some respects, come to embody the virtue of hope like Bellah et al., even amidst his enduring pessimism, which we should also briefly consider.658

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658 When I speak of MacIntyre embodying the virtue of hope, I am deeply indebted to my friend, Caleb Bernacchio. In particular, see Bernacchio (2018c).
Over the past four decades, commentators on *After Virtue* have cited no section of the book more than this final sentence: “We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another - doubtless very different - St. Benedict.” To understand the character of MacIntyre’s early pessimism fully, we cannot solely focus on St. Benedict, like most scholars who reflect on this last sentence in *After Virtue* tend to do. The character of MacIntyrean pessimism requires an understanding of how waiting for another St. Benedict is a contrast to waiting for Godot. To understand MacIntyre’s pessimism within this last sentence of *After Virtue*, then, we need to reflect on what it means to wait for St. Benedict instead of Godot. This, of course, means that we must first consider why MacIntyre is not waiting for Godot.

MacIntyre’s dismissal of Godot marks a dismissal of the very same strand of thinking that he rejects when he turns to Aristotle instead of Nietzsche. To wait for Godot is to embrace the philosophical tradition of which Nietzsche is a part. Readers who are familiar with Samuel Beckett’s play, *Waiting for Godot*, know that the arrival of Godot, a character who delivers the meaning of life, humans’ relation to the divine, and moral objectivity in the universe, *never happens*. Godot never comes, forcing the characters of Beckett’s play to scramble together an individualist-existentialist vision of the meaning of life all by themselves – or kill themselves - a real and viable alternative

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within the absurdist tradition. That suicide is a viable alternative points to the fact that this project of individualist meaning-making is ultimately an empty existentialist pursuit.

Beckett’s play is embedded within the literary and philosophical tradition of absurdism, which MacIntyre very explicitly refutes when he rejects the Nietzschean claim to create meaning in a meaningless world by designing one’s own ‘tables of goodness.’ To wait for Godot, then, is to wait for meaning in a meaningless world. And the fact that Godot never comes ultimately epitomizes the absurdist tradition’s rejection of telos in late modernity. MacIntyre’s attempt to restore an account of teleology through a social account of practices, shared narratives, and living traditions is, of course, a stark contrast to this picture.

Instead of waiting for Godot, the MacIntyre of After Virtue, who emphasizes a return to teleological deliberation, awaits another kind of St. Benedict. But the way in which After Virtue ends with this line has confused many readers, leaving them thinking that MacIntyre believed another, but very different, St. Benedict would also never come. MacIntyre has since been known to express that no line of his work has ever been used for so many different and self-serving ends, making it a widely misunderstood catchphrase, but one that has sparked continued academic and lay reflection. Many

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661 See p. 109 herein for a review of this term.
people have read this line as a nostalgic longing for a sectarian return to the Christian tradition in place of secularism – an integralist turn that will probably never happen. Those who see MacIntyre providing an account of virtue that rests upon some Christian figures, and an account of virtue which ultimately found a home in the Thomistic tradition, draw this conclusion wrongfully, but understandably.

In the same way that Bellah et al. hoped for public philosophers who felt called to criticize the individualism of late modernity, such as Niebuhr and Tillich, MacIntyre was also waiting for such a figure. His wait for a different St. Benedict was intended to illustrate the way that he wished for a character in late modernity who would “inspire secular practices and institutions that stand opposed to existing social structures,” not one who called for a return to Christian monasticism or some older kind of Catholic state. Caleb Bernacchio expounds on this point, illustrating what it meant for MacIntyre to wait for another St. Benedict, better than MacIntyre himself was able to describe at the time, and better than anyone else has been able to recount in the past four decades. He clarifies this wait in the following way:

MacIntyre’s concern with the “human meaning” of Christianity provides a way of properly understanding the passage about St. Benedict at the end of After Virtue. What is salient about Benedict is the way that he contributed to the realization of the human or secular implications of Christianity: his theological vision resulted in the establishment of new forms of community that embodied a robust conception of the ‘common good.’ Without denying the explicitly

662 Bernacchio (2018c).

663 Ibid.
theological elements of monastic life, MacIntyre’s concern was with the way that a Christian spiritual vision inspired the creation of novel social structures and institutions that stood radically opposed to existing practices. Far from a ‘call to religion’ the conclusion of After Virtue pointed, albeit in a vague and somewhat confusing way, toward new opportunities to pursue common goods in modernity...As such, for MacIntyre, the primary problem of modernity is not its secularism but rather its forgetfulness of common goods. Likewise, even though these issues are closely related, the answer to the problem of modernity is not the re-Christianization of secular social structures but the political pursuit of common goods. The picture presented so far, already suggests a modification of the pessimistic reading of MacIntyre that links his position with that of the Catholic integralist [qua sectarian] critics of liberalism. For MacIntyre, secularism is not the problem, but rather the individualistic form that secularism has taken and likewise a plausible Christian response to modernity is not an attempt to overcome secularism but an effort to rediscover the “human meaning of the Christian gospel” in a way that radically critiques modern individualism and reinvigorates the pursuit of common goods.664

Importantly, MacIntyre’s wait was for another figure who, in late modernity, could do something similar to what St. Benedict had done, by inspiring the pursuit of common goods in the midst of a society that has given in to thinking that such a pursuit is absurd. MacIntyre’s rejection of the ends agnosticism of late modernity is a rejection of the liberal-individualistic ‘Morality’ of modernity that is rooted a tradition which he now refers to as expressivism, as we have seen. His call for a return to teleological deliberation is epitomized by his waiting for another St. Benedict, who would constitute practices within secular society that restored a deliberation about common goods.

MacIntyre did not expect, nor did he want a return to some Catholic state, seeing that

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664 Ibid. Emphasis added.
attempts to construe politics in any way other than “secular” is ultimately “disastrous.” As we saw in the final section of the previous chapter, the MacIntyre of After Virtue already thought that traditions with differing metaphysical world pictures could begin to reconstruct practices and reject the ‘Morality’ of late modernity in public life. At the time of writing After Virtue, however, he was very pessimistic that any figures would do so and he did not yet see the ways that some communities of memory, even within late modernity, indeed already had.

That being said, it is important to note that the MacIntyre of the early 1980s did not yet seem to embody the virtue of hope. And for this reason, Bellah et al. took a great liking to his philosophy, but a hard stance against his pessimism. Bellah, explaining the position of the authors of Habits of the Heart, stated shortly after its first publication in 1986 that MacIntyre’s work was marked by a “deep, almost absolute pessimism in the end, which we do not share.” “MacIntyre’s response to our book,” Bellah recalls, “is ‘I wish what you said were true. You make the best case possible for it. But I’m not sure I can give up my pessimism.’” Indeed, at the time it seemed that MacIntyre held on to a pessimism without much of anything to say about a hopefulness for the future of goods

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666 Bellah et al. (1986: 5).
667 Ibid.
that could be discovered in common within practices and for the good of individual lives and communities. But that was 1986.

Now, more than 30 years later, MacIntyre has not fully let go of his pessimism, but he has come to embrace the virtue of hope. Evidence of this shift in MacIntyre’s thinking becomes more apparent in 1999 with his publication of Dependent Rational Animals. Therein, as Bernacchio recounts, MacIntyre argues that human life is sustained by wide-ranging forms of care, actions that give expression to virtues such as justice, generosity, and mercy. Thus efforts by Catholics [i.e. MacIntyre] to promote the ‘common good’ may often find common ground with various [secular] networks of giving and receiving based upon solidarity and mutual care. But, MacIntyre argues, these forms of care give evidence to presence of the virtue of charity in the secular world...Thus... it is possible to conclude that the hope that sustains the micro-levels politics of households and organizations, as well as grassroots political movements focused upon common goods, might be underwritten by a genuinely theological virtue of hope that accompanies and sustains plain persons as they engage in various forms of care on a daily basis. Rather than resignation, a broad reading of MacIntyre’s work suggests that modernity has not succeeded in marginalizing common goods and because of this, there are very many opportunities for substantial [pluralistic] political engagement; likewise, hope for success in these political engagements should be sustained by observing the prominence of mercy in the daily activities of plain persons.

As evidenced by this excerpt and like Bellah et al., MacIntyre’s later work embodies the virtue of hope, which is mainly dependent upon his new creationist metaphysics that

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668 I would like to thank my friend, Marco Gulla, from the MacIntyre community, for helping me think about the relationship between MacIntyre’s pessimism and his hope.

669 MacIntyre (1999a).

670 Bernacchio (2018c).
accepts the transcendent “reality of grace,” or charity, which “purely secular rational terms cannot explain.” MacIntyre’s latest position is that the reality of grace in the world makes pluralistic politics and deliberation about common goods possible, despite significantly different metaphysical world pictures, which results in the polysemic and multivocal character of late modern political discourse. Also, his observance of the reality of grace, which allows for the discovery of common goods even within pluralistic contexts, has given him hope that there is a possibility to embrace practices and to participate in networks of dependence together with others who share an appreciation for the same common goods, but live their lives within very different traditions of ultimate meaning.

So then, like Bellah et al., MacIntyre does not assert some kind of monolithic and complete vision of common goods that are shared across all of the various living traditions today. That being said, however, it has become clear that MacIntyre sees that there is hope in the gathering together of groups within a pluralistic context to deliberate about the achievement of any goods that can be identified in common.

Within the last chapter, I suggested that MacIntyre’s later work demonstrates something which we can now see in both his work and Bellah et al.’s sociology. Both MacIntyre and Bellah et al. challenge diverse traditions, which possess different appeals

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672 For an example of this in the business context, see Bernacchio (2018b).
to transcendence, to respectfully ‘lean in’ and ‘seek to understand’ one another in a nonsectarian and non-individualist fashion and with the hope that common goods might be identified and achieved.  

The emphasis on pluralistic gatherings for all of these thinkers entails making public demands for common goods that are identified during inter-traditional gatherings. In so doing, MacIntyre, like Bellah et al., believes that members of different living religious and philosophical traditions might indeed discover aspects that point to our common humanity, inspiring different groups to band together and exhibit virtues such as justice, generosity, and mercy, inspiring the achievement of common goods.

Like, Bellah et al., MacIntyre also exhibits an enduring concern which is rather realistic, but which has not departed from the virtue of hope. MacIntyre emphasizes, perhaps more strongly than Bellah et al. at times, that inter-traditional gatherings must resist socially corrosive patterns of sectarianism and individualism, as well as evils that can be commonly agreed upon (i.e., the Second Vatican Council’s stance against segregation).

Let us look at MacIntyre’s continued work in the 21st century for an example of the hope that he has, which is not apart from his concerns in late modernity that endure.

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673 However, as we saw in the last chapter, MacIntyre places a strong emphasis on deliberation about ‘the best tradition so far.’ (See p. 172 herein). While he believes that we should make attempts to construe common goods in pluralistic terms to the best of our abilities, this does not inhibit us from critiquing the inner logic of other moral traditions.
To do this, we should examine his realist grounds for remaining pessimistic about the way that late modernity is still ‘invaded by evils.’ Ironically, MacIntyre’s pessimism is best captured in light of what he remains ‘cheerful’ about today:

What grounds then are there for cheerfulness in any social order such as our own...? Those grounds derive surely from the continuing resistance to deprivations, frustrations, and evils that informs so many everyday lives in so many parts of the world, as well as much of the best thinking about those deprivations, frustrations, and evils... To be good, to live rightly, and to think rightly... is to be engaged in struggle and a perfected life is one perfected in key part in and through conflicts. What kinds of conflicts? The relevant list includes on the one hand those engaged in by members of some rank and file trade union movements, of some tenants’ associations, of the disability movement, of a variety of farming, fishing, and trading cooperatives, and by some feminist groups, and on the other by those who are at work within schools, hospitals, a variety of industrial and financial workplaces, laboratories, theaters, and universities in order to make of these, so far as possible, scenes of resistance to the dominant ideology and the dominant social order.  

In the last section of the previous chapter, we saw that MacIntyre now believes “no account of any aspect of human life in purely secular rational terms can explain the way that human life is invaded by evils.” MacIntyre’s grounds for hope are not a result of him believing in some linear vision of cultural progress. In many respects, his latest work is a continued jeremiad about the need resist more hostile forms of pluralism that are driven by the socially corrosive strands of individualism and sectarianism that also concern Bellah et al. There is a hopeful cheerfulness in his pessimism, but not apart from his

674 MacIntyre (2006a). I would like to thank my friend, Marco Gulla, for sharing this book review with me.

pessimism. MacIntyre’s hope, much like Bellah et al.’s comes from a resistance to evils as much as it comes from a recognition of common goods discovered within secular society.

**IVd. Summarizing the Connection Between Bellah et al. & MacIntyre’s Accounts of Pluralism**

Within this subsection, I have made what will perhaps be perceived as the most contestable claim throughout this research: *MacIntyre’s philosophy since After Virtue has been marked by a philosophy of hopefulness about the future of pluralism and the restoration of a secular vision of common goods just like Bellah et al.’s work was marked by this hopefulness and a vision of striving together through inter-traditional gatherings for the restoration of common goods in the 1980s and the 1990s.* Because of MacIntyre’s perception in contemporary scholarship, it is hard for readers who are unfamiliar with the whole scope of his work to see the hope that he now has in pluralistic political projects.

**V. Chapter Four Summary**

Within this chapter, we have seen how all the important dimensions of MacIntyre’s philosophy that were mentioned in the previous chapter inspire much of Bellah and his colleagues’ concerns about individualism in American life and also motivate their corrective to these patterns in the workplace via the calling orientation.
First, we saw that the same social roles that concern MacIntyre in late modernity also concern Bellah et al., and for similar reasons. Second, we saw that Bellah et al.’s critique of these social roles is accompanied by a call to teleological reasoning within the workplace and beyond it. MacIntyre’s account of teleological reasoning provides Bellah et al. with the necessary resources for transcending subjective preferences and for regulating notions of the good in light of the virtues. Third, we saw the ways that Bellah et al. contextualize their discussion of the virtues within a MacIntyrean conception of practices, narratives, and living traditions, resulting in the achievement of the very same goods that MacIntyre identifies collectively as common goods: (a) the good and worthy ends of practices, (b) the goods of an individual life, and (c) the goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society. Nowhere is this contextualization of the virtues and the goods that they sustain more apparent than within Bellah et al.’s account of the calling orientation, as we saw throughout this chapter. Lastly, within this chapter, we saw how the resources from civic republicanism and the biblical tradition, which Bellah et al. draw upon to complete their theory of the virtues and the calling orientation, further illuminate striking parallels between the account of common goods proffered by both Bellah et al. and MacIntyre. Within the last subsection, too, we saw that all of these figures exhibit hope in the possibility of pluralistic conversations about common goods, despite frequent evils that must also be resisted. In closing, let us reflect briefly on some of the implications of this research for the ‘work as a calling’ literature. Lastly, I shall
hint at a sequel to this book, wherein I shall argue that the calling orientation can sustain the pluralistic project of achieving common goods and, in so doing, function as an extension of inter-traditional gatherings within the secular working world.
Chapter Five:  
Future Implications for the ‘Work as a Calling’ Literature

Having now conducted a philosophical investigation of the moral framework of the calling orientation, we are prepared to see what the implications are for the ‘work as a calling’ literature, assuming some portion of this group of scholars, most of them likely being virtue ethicists, indeed still wish to ‘extend’ the ‘relevance’ of Bellah et al.’s calling orientation. First, we should reflect on the need for the ‘work as a calling’ literature to better understand the social roles that concern MacIntyre and Bellah et al. Second, we should reflect on the ways that the ‘work as a calling’ literature needs to restore teleological reasoning to the calling orientation by reconnecting notions of ‘meaningful work’ to notions of ‘good work.’ Third, we should reflect on the need for this discourse to resituate callings within practices, narratives, and traditions. Fourth, we ought to reflect briefly on what it would look like for the ‘work as a calling discourse’ to return to the ‘second’ languages of American life. Fifth, and finally, I will close with a sketch of a sequel that is to come, which shall construct a vision of the calling orientation as an extension in the secular working world of what Bellah et al.’s vision of inter-traditional gatherings between religions and philosophies of ultimate
meaning. Let us first begin with the need for this literature to reconsider contemporary social characters in American life.

I. The Need to Consider MacIntyrean Social Roles

As the first chapter illustrated, much of the emerging ‘work as a calling’ literature is either implicitly linked to the culture of therapy, insofar as it praises the calling orientation for its ‘psychological benefits,’ or it is explicitly written for the therapist, and with the intent of effectively attaining patient-decided outcomes. This, of course, will have to change given Bellah et al.’s problematization of the way that the very idea of ‘work as a calling’ has been misunderstood in American life largely because of the culture of therapy.

We also saw in the first chapter how the ‘common good’ was generally praised first and foremost, and in therapeutic terms, for providing ‘psychic rewards.’ This language of therapy that the ‘work as a calling’ discourse epitomizes hinges on personal meaningfulness and ‘core’ feelings rather than a deliberation about good and worthy ends that ought to be desired in one’s work, making the very coming together as a practice-based community for the achievement of common goods harder to understand and appreciate. Insofar as the ‘work as a calling’ discourse exhibits these therapeutic trends, it seems rather undeniable that this literature has embraced the very strand of
expressive individualism that Bellah et al. as well as MacIntyre problematize throughout their work.

While the social character of the therapist presents the most significant problems for the ‘work as a calling’ literature, we should also consider the extent to which this discourse very often blindly accepts the social roles of the manager and the aesthete as well. Let us reflect on its acceptance of the manager next, and then we shall briefly consider the aesthete.

Very rarely does the ‘work as a calling’ literature seem to problematize the social role of the manager. Nor does it tend to problematize the culture of the late modern business world more generally, which often subjects human beings to the principle of economic maximization. Not seeing the ways that the manager has received ends from corporate owners who are driven by an economic principle of maximization, this discourse very often exhibits a utopian hope for the possibility of ‘making a job a calling’ without changing the underlying principles of management that inhibit visions of ‘work as a calling’ from being possible in many settings.

The ‘work as a calling’ discourse would be more fruitful if it embodied the virtue of hope while also expressing a concern for the management conditions in the late modern world that have marginalized practices, inhibited the flourishing of individual lives, and destroyed the possibility for healthy community in many workplaces. The possibility of having a calling orientation to work very often does point to the need for a
manager, but not MacIntyre’s picture of the late modern manager. The ‘work as a
calling’ discourse would be better served by considering further the need for virtuous
managers who sustain institutions by subjecting goods of effectiveness to the service of
supporting practices and the common goods that they provide. Furthermore, this
discourse needs to consider how virtuous managers exhibit the belief that our principles
of economics ought to be subservient to the higher goods of flourishing individuals and
communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society.

Finally, the ‘work as a calling’ discourse needs to consider further the disordered
desires of the aesthete. First and foremost, the aesthete helps to explain why so many
workers today embody the job or career orientation. To the extent that workers are not
actively engaged in deliberation about the good and worthy ends of their work, why
would they not work just for the money or the prestige? Moreover, the aesthete speaks
further to the consequences of bureaucratic consumer capitalism, insofar as the
aesthete’s consumerist patterns of behavior reinforce the other problematic social roles
of late modernity as well as the language of American individualism, as Bellah et al.’s
work shows us.676

Additionally, all three of these characters point to the need for teleological
deliberation in late modernity. Because Bellah et al.’s calling orientation is rooted in a

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676 For a picture of how these roles are self-reinforcing, see p. 210 herein.
theory of the virtues, the ‘work as a calling’ discourse has no choice but to engage with the virtues and the common goods that they sustain.

II. The Need to Restore Teleological Reasoning to the ‘Work as a Calling’ Literature

Much of the ‘work as a calling’ literature remains antithetical to the tradition of virtue ethics within which the calling orientation is at home precisely because notions of personal meaning have replaced a deliberation about common goods. Consequently, MacIntyrean business ethicists, such as Ron Beadle, argue the following:

The idea of ‘meaningful work’ is simply not at home in a virtue tradition. Precisely because this [virtue] tradition is concerned with the justification of claims to ‘good’ and goods as they apply to whole classes of existents, ‘meaning’ is something to be judged against such an understanding rather than being in any sense primary. To focus on ‘meaning’ is to admit precisely to that form of relativism in which preferences trump goods.677

Like Macintyre and Bellah et al., Beadle maintains that the project of meaning-making has taken the place of something more primary – namely the establishment of common goods. We cannot talk about what is meaningful until we have established a vision of the goods that are worth pursuing. In Bellah et al.’s work, meaning is never divorced from these common goods. Meaning is tightly associated with the achievement of them.

Very importantly, the ‘work as a calling’ literature needs to restore teleological reasoning to the calling orientation by reconnecting notions of ‘meaningful work’ to notions of ‘good work.’

677 Beadle, 79.
As we have seen, the philosophical framework that Bellah et al. inherit is one that, as Beadle, says, provides “a virtue-informed account of agency that changes the terms of debate around ‘meaningful work.’” Bellah et al.’s dependence on MacIntyre means that the moral vision of the calling orientation hinges on an account of common goods that the self’s preferences must be regulated in light of. Restoring a virtue-informed account of agency to the calling orientation means that notions of ‘meaningful work’ must be attached to (a) the good and worthy ends of practices, (b) the goods of an individual life, and (c) the goods of communities – or, more broadly, the interests of a good society.

Scholars writing within this tradition believe, as Beadle does, that “an account of ‘good work’ is therefore privileged over that of ‘meaningful work.’” This, Beadle continues, is because, “to engage in a dialogue around the meaningfulness of our work, rather than simply to state a preference, is to be able to account for the reasons why our work is meaningful in light of an account of good reasons as such.” In this way, MacIntyrean business ethicists such as Beadle change the terms of the debate around ‘meaningful work.’ And the ‘work as a calling’ discourse has no choice but to follow

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678 Beadle (2017: 836).

679 Ibid.

suit, if this group truly wishes to ‘extend’ the ‘relevance’ of Bellah et al.’s calling orientation.

III. The Need to Resituate the Calling Orientation Within Practices, Narratives, & Traditions

Moreover, and as we have seen in the last two chapters, Bellah et al.’s virtue-informed account of the calling orientation provides resources for understanding one’s ‘work as a calling’ as entailing practice-based work. Practices regulate individuals’ preferences in light of shared standards of excellence that are deliberated about within moral communities. Importantly, this leads to the acquisition of virtues. It will be necessary for the ‘work as a calling’ literature to begin thinking about Bellah et al.’s account of the calling orientation as entailing this virtue-informed account of ‘practice-based work.’

Additionally, the literature will have to consider the ways that ‘work as a calling’ entails historically embodied narratives that are extended across time and often across many generations. Visions of ‘work as a calling’ and the moral content associated with such visions are inherited. We have seen, also, that narratives associated with practices receive their content from still-living traditions. That being said, the ‘work as a calling’ discourse must engage with all three of these dimensions: practices, narratives, and traditions.
Finally, the ‘work as a calling’ discourse must turn to the language of the virtues, which is provided by traditions like the ones that MacIntyre and Bellah et al. emphasize in their research.

IV. The Need to Return to Resources Beyond the ‘First Language’ of American Individualism

As we saw in the first chapter, the emerging ‘work as a calling’ literature has its critics of the dominant language of individualism that bleeds throughout it. However, and as I argued earlier, many scholars within the literature remain accidental contributors to this ‘first’ language of individualism within the discourse. Many of the post-Bellah scholars miss Bellah et al.’s cautionary warning about the strands of radical individualism that have made the calling orientation “harder and harder to understand.” Bellah et al. divide radical individualism into its “utilitarian” and its “expressive” component, as we have seen. As previously mentioned, only one article within the literature even makes reference to these two strands of individualism. This is surprising considering that virtually every scholar who cites Bellah et al.’s calling

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681 Ibid., 66.

682 Ibid.

683 Bunderson & Thompson (2009b: 4). Moreover, it should be noted that their reference to these strands of individualism did not appear to be significant enough to warrant inclusion in the published version of this paper. This is the reason for my inclusion of both an extended earlier draft and the published draft of this paper in the references that follow this research.
orientation references their page defining ‘work as a calling’ - a page on which utilitarian and expressive individualism are explicitly mentioned. In other places, too, Bellah et al. blame these very strands for muddling a proper understanding of the calling orientation and refer to them as “basically incompatible with important elements in biblical religion and civic republicanism, which have always moderated its influence and which today especially we need to reaffirm.”684 The ‘work as a calling’ literature cannot rely on this language of individualism to ‘extend’ Bellah et al.’s vision. Moreover, the discourse requires narrative resources from other traditions if there is any hope in resisting the frequent evils of the late modern working world.

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684 Good society, 289.
References


Appendix:

Hope in Resistance: ‘Work as a Calling’ as an Extension of Inter-Traditional Gatherings in the Workplace

Hoping to restore a deliberation about good and worthy ends that are worth pursuing in our practices, in our lives, and as a community and society more broadly, Bellah et al. ethically reflect on how it might be possible to replace the dominant language of American individualism with resources from civic republicanism and the biblical tradition. The language from these two traditions, they argue, provide us with a vision of the good life as a life that is lived together and through practices of commitment that are rooted in rich narratives provided by still-living moral traditions. In particular, Bellah et al. exhibit a hopefulness about the future of work in late modernity to the extent that we can still draw on these resources.

We should briefly consider what we can hope for if Bellah et al.’s call to restore practices of commitment happens within the workplace. Within Bellah et al.’s research, it is the spirit of striving together for the achievement of common goods within one’s calling that causes them to argue that “the calling is a crucial link between the individual and the public world. Work in the sense of the calling can never be
private.” This is something that workers and the emerging ‘work as a calling’ discourse must come to understand. If both workers and the ‘work as a calling’ discourse dispense with the ‘first language’ of individualism - recognizing the frequent evils that tend to result from it - and instead consider ‘work as a calling’ in light of the moral framework that Bellah et al. provide, then there is hope in the resistance of frequent evils as well as the achievement of common goods through Americans’ calling orientation to work.

‘Work as a calling’ is one of the most important forms of public service in an individual’s life. It often tends to be the most common setting for the pluralistic achievement of goods in common that is available to workers today. In this respect, the calling orientation provides a noble vision of the inter-traditional possibility to hope for the achievement of goods in common and to resist the frequent evils of late modern working conditions. Along these lines, the central argument that I shall take up in my next book is that the pluralistic striving for the achievement of goods in common and the resistance to frequent evils is an important project within one’s calling. It is a project that can function as an extension of publicly active inter-traditional gatherings within the secular working world. I should, however, set the stage for this sequel by pointing to a few of the secular

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685 Ibid.
working conditions that must be resisted and by pointing to the hope we can have in some communities who are already actively engaged in this work of resistance.

First, what must we resist as a diverse religious and philosophical gathering of traditions of ultimate meaning within the workplace and how can we already celebrate this resistance in some instances today? It is not my attempt to name all the things that we ought to actively resist within the workplace here. Such an effort would make this book much longer than it has already become. However, I shall name a few examples and then wrestle with one in a bit more detail.

First, let us consider a few examples. As the strand of utilitarian individualism in the American workplace has become ‘harder,’ an observable decline in employee benefits, wellness programs, and pension plans is apparent. Many workers, grossly underpaid, also have to juggle multiple jobs. Adding to that, many employees have been shown to the exit as a result of automated jobs replacing human ones throughout various industries.\(^686\) Virtually all of these problems are, in one way or another, linked to the principle of economic maximization, which has essentially become the guiding principle of utilitarian individualism.

Hence, the principle of economic maximization must be the central point of concern for inter-traditional gatherings within the workplace. Efforts to maximize profit

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\(^686\) I would like to thank Steven M. Tipton for turning my attention to these matters.
in many industries have also resulted in a ‘revolving door workplace’ and a vision of human beings as expendable when they get burnt-out. When burnout happens, concerns for the good of workers tends to be extrinsically motivated rather than rooted in a vision of the good human life. Having been a part of many conversations with fellow burnt-out American workers in various industries, such as technology and engineering, for example, it has come to my attention that corporate concerns about ‘happiness in the workplace’ are largely motivated by the price tag on workers’ heads, such as the cost of recruiting efforts to replace those workers. Sometimes the concern comes down to the public relations liability of a worker’s story, insofar as managers exhibit concern about what a worker might say regarding their company on popular job-review sites, like Glassdoor.com, when a worker ‘just can’t take the pressure anymore.’

Related to these concerns, a particular passage within The Good Society speaks to the active resistance that inter-traditional gatherings must engage in with respect to the principle of economic maximization in the workplace. Frankly speaking, private equity companies have exhibited extreme greed in recent decades, particularly within the ‘hot’ sectors of the technology industry. The pattern of merging companies and massively laying off employees in the interest of profit maximization, and without concern for the flourishing of committed workers, is a frequent evil that must be resisted and ought not
to be considered ‘just the way things are in Corporate America.’ Bellah et al. make this point profoundly, so I shall quote them at length:

Economic ideology that turns human beings into relentless market maximizers undermines commitments to family, to church, to neighborhood, to school, and to the larger national and global societies. In *Habits of the Heart* we documented what this kind of thinking does to our capacity to sustain relationships in every sphere, private as well as public. But the final irony is that this apparently economic conception of human life turns out to be profoundly destructive to our economy itself. If thinking of ourselves as members of a community made us poorer [as a society], there would still be reasons to advocate it; but the fact is that commitment to a community turns out to be a much stronger basis for an effective economy than the individualistic pursuit of self-interest…The productivity of a high-tech company resides in the quality of its workforce, in the competence and responsibility of individuals, but also, critically, in the trust they have in each other to nurture creativity and innovation. These companies need not ‘hands,’ labor in the old sense of routine manual performance, and not just brains, but persons, persons who trust each other and genuinely enjoy working together…[But] what is happening to companies under the logic of interest maximization? We have…seen an advance of what is called the commodification of the corporation. Any effective company will be looked at hungrily by people who want to make a profit by buying it, stripping it of its assets, firing managers and employees, and reorganizing it for immediate gain…The commodification of the corporation…destroys the corporation as a community. The prospect of such takeovers creates an atmosphere in which everyone is suspicious, ready to bail out, looking out for number one, trying to make the next quarterly statement look good at whatever long-term cost so as to advance the prospects of getting another job. By strip-mining our most valuable economic asset-namely, the creative interaction of people who have grown to understand and trust each other-we sink our long-term economic viability, while we appoint another commission on ‘competitiveness.’ ⁶⁸⁷

As sustainability has been overshadowed by a utilitarian calculation of economic maximization, humans remain means to this calculus rather than ends in themselves. In

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this respect, the MacIntyrean manager is still very much alive and the MacIntyrean therapist is consulted now more than ever. Upon reflection, some questions emerge that I shall consider further in the sequel to this book. (a) Why do generally good people, many of them deeply religious, exhibit moral compartmentalization and passive participation in these atrocities within the workplace? (b) What does it look like for inter-traditional gatherings within the workplace to demand that the principle of economic maximization become subjected to common goods wherever they may be agreed upon? (c) Is it possible for inter-traditional gatherings within the workplace to deliver a rational case that the principle of economic maximization is, in the end, self-defeating?

Indeed, there are frequent evils in workplaces around the world today that warrant our concern. That being said, however, there are good reasons for remaining hopeful in the midst of this corporate climate where utilitarian individualism reigns. For example, let us consider Adelante Shoe Company.\footnote{For a full case study on Adelante Shoe Company, see (Sison et al. 2018: 92-98).} Adelante demonstrates the principle of sustainability while placing primacy on the flourishing of individuals and the flourishing of the workplace community. Also, they make great shoes!

American-owned and operated out of Central America, the CEO of Adelante exhibits a calling to design excellent leather products. The company’s shoes are
designed based on a long-living tradition of Central American leather craftsmanship. In addition to promoting the practice of leather craftsmanship and the internal goods of excellence that have been passed down for generations by Central Americans, the CEO also places primary concern on the flourishing of his workers, in and beyond the workplace. This is why the CEO of Adelante pays his employees in Central America a living wage instead of a minimum wage. He is known for asking his employees how much they need to provide for their families at home. Finally, the CEO promotes a healthy culture within the workplace. He and his colleagues understand that they work best together as one community, united in a common vision of excellence within their shared calling.

Adding to these common goods, the CEO has ‘leaned in’ and ‘sought to understand’ differences between himself and his community. In so doing, he has created a respectful and interdependent gathering of members from distinct religious and philosophical traditions of ultimate meaning. This gathering feels comfortable expressing together public demands for changes that are necessary in their corporate culture and in their society more broadly. The workers know that they possess various appeal to transcendence, but they have come to see their common humanity, allowing them to identify values that they share irrespective of their different religious beliefs, and inspiring them to change more than just the culture at Adelante Shoe Company.
Adelante Shoe Company, functioning as flourishing business and an inter-traditional gathering of members from different religious and philosophical traditions, has identified goods in common beyond the tradition of leatherworking that the employees share. Recognizing their common humanity within their disparate appeals to transcendence, Adelante Shoe Company is making a loud public demand for change by resisting the principle of economic maximization and instead investing in the flourishing of (a) the practice of leatherworking, (b) employees individual lives, and (c) their corporate culture, and hopefully the business culture of other shoe companies who are paying attention to their flourishing business and corporate culture. Adelante Shoe Company is presenting a picture of what change would look like to other shoe companies that employees can work for, and ones that consumers can buy from.

The CEO of Adelante Shoe Company prioritizes common goods over external goods and people over profit. Reflecting on his flourishing business, the CEO says that “the shoes are a vehicle for a simple, powerful idea that can change the world: if business shifts its objective from profit maximization to responsible profit, the private sector can become an unparalleled force for good.”689 “When asked what leadership means,” the CEO replied: “It means choosing partnership rather than exploitation, and transparency over opacity. It means recognizing that treating foreign workers with

689 Ibid.: 94.
respect is more than ethical – it is laying the groundwork for future peace and stability in an increasingly globalized world.’’\textsuperscript{690} This, I think, is a hopeful message that speaks for itself. It is one that we should end on.

\textsuperscript{690} Ibid.