4-1-2003

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THE PROBLEM OF HAVING ONLY ONE CITY:
AN AUGUSTINIAN RESPONSE TO RAWLS

Peter C. Meilaender

John Rawls, in his book *Political Liberalism*, mentions Augustine
only in a throwaway remark including him among those who
would oppose political liberalism. In fact, however, there are sur-
prising similarities between Rawls's book and the kind of politics
suggested by *The City of God*. Augustine and Rawls confront a
similar problem: How can one achieve stability and unity in the
face of ineliminable pluralism? And they respond in similar fash-
ion: by rejecting appeals to a comprehensive understanding of
"justice" or the "whole truth," which inevitably divide citizens,
and instead seeking a basis for political unity in those things
which all citizens hold in common—an overlapping consensus on
a political conception of justice (Rawls), or shared loves
(Augustine). Despite his stated intentions, however, Rawls
reveals hidden hopes for a politics loftier than one might expect;
and, through the device of public reason, he seeks to ensure that
such a politics is realized. Augustine, on the other hand, though
he too may harbor such hopes, does not insist upon a nobler poli-
tics, and in the end it is his thought which provides the firmer
foundation for political liberalism.

The index to John Rawls's *Political Liberalism* lists only one reference to
St. Augustine. It appears in chapter three, on the idea of an overlapping
consensus, in a section entitled, "How Is Political Liberalism Possible?" In
the first paragraph of this section, Rawls distinguishes between two funda-
mentally different approaches to politics: "One of the deepest distinctions
between conceptions of justice is between those that allow for a plurality of
reasonable though opposing comprehensive doctrines each with its own
conception of the good, and those that hold that there is but one such con-
ception to be recognized by all citizens who are fully reasonable and ratio-
nal."[1] Political liberalism is of the first sort, those that allow for a plurality
of reasonable comprehensive doctrines. Rawls then mentions some
thinkers holding the opposite view: "Plato and Aristotle, and the Christian
tradition as represented by Augustine and Aquinas, fall on the side of the
one reasonable and rational good" (134). Presumably we are to conclude
from this that Rawls would number Augustine among the opponents of
political liberalism.

This may seem like a fairly safe assumption. After all, what could the

Christian saint and father of the church have in common with the foremost contemporary defender of a neutral liberalism that deliberately abstracts from comprehensive world-views like Augustine's? The question's simplicity, however, is deceptive, for Augustine's views may not be as hostile to political liberalism as Rawls's remark suggests. Scholars such as Herbert Deane, Jean Bethke Elshtain, and Robert Markus have all argued, in different ways, that Augustine's political thought has important affinities with liberalism.[2] Indeed, Edmund Santurri has recently argued specifically that Augustinians ought to embrace the Rawlsian program laid out in *Political Liberalism*.[3] My conclusions are more cautious than Santurri's, but I do wish to argue here that the structural similarities between the argument of *Political Liberalism* and an Augustinian understanding of politics, implicit in *The City of God*, are extremely striking—whether Rawls himself is aware of it or not. Though Rawls's offhand comment may discourage the attempt, both Rawlsians and Christians alike have an interest in exploring these possibilities for common ground, as the first two sections of this paper attempt to do.

This might well be sufficient justification for a careful comparison of the odd couple of Rawls and Augustine. In the final section of the paper, though, I shall move beyond mere comparison to suggest that Augustine's thought actually provides a foundation for political liberalism superior to Rawls's. At points in Rawls's account, I believe, especially in his introduction of the concept of public reason, we can discern a vague dissatisfaction with his own argument. Reflection upon the source of this dissatisfaction reveals that Rawls is ultimately right to sense a difference between Augustine's approach and his own. That difference is not a weakness of Augustine's, however, but a strength.

I. Surprising Similarities?

I wish to emphasize an underlying structural similarity between the approach to politics in *Political Liberalism* and that in *The City of God*. Thus I do not intend to argue, for instance, that Augustinians and Rawlsians need agree on specific principles, such as Rawls's famous two principles of justice, or that they will always endorse the same kinds of policies. Rather, I want to suggest that the two books present a similar conception of what politics is. In particular, I shall argue that, though they describe these phenomena in different language, both imagine political life as a response to a certain kind of problem, reject one possible solution to that problem, and ultimately endorse the same alternative solution to it.

First, Rawls and Augustine both confront a similar problem at the basis of political life: a condition of permanent pluralism. Rawls understands this pluralism as a result of the liberty protected by modern liberal democracies. Free enquiry inevitably results in a plurality of reasonable "comprehensive doctrines," or ways of understanding life as a whole. As long as free enquiry is permitted, this situation will continue. "[A] plurality of reasonable yet incompatible comprehensive doctrines," as Rawls puts it, "is the normal result of the exercise of human reason within the framework of the free institutions of a constitutional democratic regime" (xvi). Stability

thus becomes a crucial problem for the political philosopher. If people disagree fundamentally about things as important as justice and the good life, how can they resolve their political disputes in a mutually satisfactory way and live together in harmony? Just as those who experienced the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries finally developed a principle of religious toleration, Rawls suggests, we must develop a principle of toleration for clashing metaphysical doctrines of all kinds (pp. xxi-xxix). Rawls states repeatedly that this question of stability is the central problem he seeks to solve. As he puts it at the beginning of his first chapter: "[H]ow is it possible for there to exist over time a just and stable society of free and equal citizens, who remain profoundly divided by reasonable religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines" (4)?

Augustine also faces the problem of ineliminable "pluralism," which is central to *The City of God*. All humanity, according to Augustine, is divided into two cities, the *civitas Dei* and the *civitas terrena*, whose members will ultimately be sorted out at the end of time. Until then, though, they live among each other. "In truth, those two cities are interwoven and intermixed in this era, and await separation at the last judgement."[4] Nor is the pluralism confronting Augustine simply metaphorical. Augustine is every bit as familiar as Rawls with philosophical pluralism and disagreement. Indeed, he opens Book XIX of the *City of God* by recounting the various philosophical sects—288 in all!—that had been analyzed by Varro. (He does point out that these are "possible" sects, not necessarily ones "already in existence" [844], but clearly Varro's account did not arise from a setting of philosophical homogeneity.)[5] Among the philosophical disagreements noted by Varro are ones crucial to social and political life, such as whether virtue is pursued for its own sake or for the sake of other goods, whether the good is desired merely for one's self or also in fellowship with others, and whether or not one should engage in politics. Even this extraordinary philosophical diversity pales in comparison to the stark and fundamental divide Augustine discerns between Christians and non-believers: "all these philosophers have wished, with amazing folly, to be happy here on earth and to achieve bliss by their own efforts" (852), whereas the City of God holds that "eternal life is the Supreme Good, and eternal death the Supreme Evil" (852). Like the philosophical pluralism described by Varro, this theological "pluralism" of the two cities also creates concrete social divisions that affect the legislation appropriate for a polity: "[T]he result of this difference has been that the Heavenly City could not have laws of religion in common with the earthly city, and in defence of her religious laws she was bound to dissent from those who thought differently and to prove a burdensome nuisance to them" (878).

Both Rawls and Augustine, then, face a similar problem: What holds a radically diverse people together politically? One possible way out of this difficulty would be to pick one available vision of the good life to serve as the "official" one. Political arrangements would promote that particular view, which citizens would be expected to adopt whether it was their own or not. Rawls clearly rejects this solution. One cannot appeal to any particular comprehensive moral doctrine as a basis for politics, he argues, because none is generally shared. Thus he writes,

> The aim of justice as fairness, then, is practical: it presents itself as a conception of justice that may be shared by citizens as a basis of a reasoned, informed, and willing political agreement. It expresses their shared and public political reason. But to attain such a shared reason, the conception of justice should be, as far as possible, independent of the opposing and conflicting philosophical and religious doctrines that citizens affirm. In formulating such a conception, political liberalism applies the principle of toleration to philosophy itself. (9-10)

A theory of justice based on some particular comprehensive doctrine, in other words, would be rejected by many citizens, who would regard it as illegitimate. Thus no particular vision of the good life can serve as an adequate basis for political unity.

Augustine argues similarly that we cannot all agree on an understanding of justice, because justice means rendering to each his due, and the earthly city does not render God his due. This is the point of Augustine's disagreement with Cicero over the definition of a commonwealth. Cicero, Augustine points out, had defined a commonwealth as "a multitude 'united in association by a common sense of right and a community of interest'" (881), and had further explained that a "common sense of right" requires the presence of true justice. Augustine responds: "If, therefore, a commonwealth is the 'weal of the people,' and if a people does not exist where there is no 'association by a common sense of right,' and there is no right where there is no justice, the irresistible conclusion is that where there is no justice there is no commonwealth" (882). And since our earthly cities do not give God his due, they—according to a definition which rests upon justice—are not commonwealths! In other words, if a commonwealth is thought to require an agreement about justice, none has ever existed or can ever exist. Because of the permanent "pluralism" of the two cities, the state does not (and cannot) be based upon a common understanding of justice.[6]

Perhaps, though, Rawls and Augustine are doing different things in rejecting this possible solution to the problem of political unity. After all, Rawls rejects "comprehensive doctrines" as the source of unity, whereas Augustine rejects an agreement about "justice;" moreover, Rawls goes on to argue that it is precisely a "political" conception of *justice* about which we *can* agree. This difficulty is more apparent than real, though, caused by using different verbal labels to describe the same difficulty, as well as by a difference in perspective: Augustine writes from within his own comprehensive doctrine, whereas Rawls attempts to describe such doctrines from a vantage point external to them all. But this should not obscure the similar dynamic of both arguments. Rawls, for instance, describes "comprehensive doctrines" as moral doctrines that apply to the whole of life and order all values. As he puts it,

> A moral conception is general if it applies to a wide range of subjects, and in the limit to all subjects universally. It is comprehensive when it includes conceptions of what is of value in human life, and ideals of personal character, as well as ideals of friendship and of familial and associational relationships, and much else that is to inform our con-

duct, and in the limit to our life as a whole. A conception is fully comprehensive if it covers all recognized values and virtues within one rather precisely articulated system.... Many religious and philosophical doctrines aspire to be both general and comprehensive. (13)

In light of this passage, consider Augustine's description of the proper order of the universe:

The peace of the body, we conclude, is a tempering of the component parts in duly ordered proportion; the peace of the irrational soul is a duly ordered repose of the appetites; the peace of the rational soul is the duly ordered agreement of cognition and action. The peace of body and soul is the duly ordered life and health of a living creature; peace between mortal man and God is an ordered obedience, in faith, in subjection to an everlasting law; peace between men is an ordered agreement of mind with mind; the peace of a home is the ordered agreement among those who live together about giving and obeying orders; the peace of the Heavenly City is a perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and a mutual fellowship in God; the peace of the whole universe is the tranquillity of order—and order is the arrangement of things equal and unequal in a pattern which assigns to each its proper position. (870)

This broad vision of the just order of the universe in terms of various kinds of peace is an excellent example of what Rawls means by a "comprehensive doctrine." It includes political values ("peace between men"), but extends beyond them to include "all recognized values and virtues within one rather precisely articulated system." Augustine concludes his description by noting that order requires assigning everything its proper place, an echo of Aristotle's classical definition of justice. And at the top of this properly ordered universe serving as a model for all the lesser varieties of peace that together compose the "tranquillity of order," is fellowship with God in his heavenly city. In the Augustinian vision, justice—"that virtue which assigns to everyone his due" (882)—extends to the very fount of all existence.

But if it is fair to call this passage a summary of an Augustinian "comprehensive doctrine," in Rawls's terms, then it should be clear that Augustine, no less than Rawls, rejects the possibility of such a doctrine's serving as the basis for political order. For, as we have seen, Augustine rejects Cicero's notion that justice could serve as the basis for a commonwealth precisely on the grounds that the earthly city does not give God his due, does not, that is, fulfill the requirements of justice from a Christian perspective: "[W]hen a man does not serve God, what amount of justice are we to suppose to exist in his being?" (883). The earthly city cannot embrace Augustine's comprehensive Christian doctrine, because doing so would require understanding justice more broadly than it is prepared to do. Thus Augustine's rejection of "justice" as a possible basis for political unity does not differ fundamentally from Rawls's rejection of "comprehensive doctrines." They use different language, because for Augustine "justice" ultimately involves the order of the universe as a whole, whereas

Rawls speaks in terms of the much more restricted "political" conception of justice, a "publicly recognized point of view" that can be endorsed by all citizens (9). Nevertheless, Augustine, working from within his own comprehensive doctrine, also concludes that such a doctrine cannot serve as the basis for public order and stability, precisely because he does not think it can ever be shared by all the members of a political community. Thus he, like Rawls, rejects the possibility that one particular vision of the good life as a whole could provide a shared foundation for political unity.[7]

But if citizens cannot agree on a comprehensive doctrine or the meaning of justice broadly understood, perhaps they can agree on something less. Rather than appeal to a comprehensive doctrine as the basis of political unity, Rawls argues, we should develop a "political" conception of justice. The crucial feature of a political conception is that it is "freestanding," that is, presented independently of any particular comprehensive doctrine (though for any given person, its legitimacy will depend on its compatibility with his own comprehensive doctrine). As Rawls puts it, "While we want a political conception to have a justification by reference to one or more comprehensive doctrines, it is neither presented as, nor as derived from, such a doctrine applied to the basic structure of society, as if this structure were simply another subject to which that doctrine applied" (12). A political conception of justice is also "expressed in terms of certain fundamental ideas seen as implicit in the public political culture of a democratic society" (13); that is, its principles are drawn from the culture for which it is to serve as a conception of justice. Finally, the conception is, as Rawls puts it, "constructed," or arrived at through an appropriate procedure which draws upon the public culture to create a conception which relies upon no particular comprehensive doctrine. Since this conception is not derived from or dependent upon any particular comprehensive doctrine, all reasonable members of society can endorse it, because it does not contradict their fundamental beliefs. Their various comprehensive doctrines thus converge on the political conception, forming what Rawls calls an "overlapping consensus," an agreement on a limited range of principles appropriate for arranging fundamental political matters. Thus, if the political conception of justice can be correctly constructed, "citizens should be able to accept its principles and conceptions along with their reasonable comprehensive doctrine" (97).

Augustine pursues a similar strategy. After rejecting the Ciceronian definition of a commonwealth, he offers his own, alternative definition, which does not rely on an agreement about justice. He writes, "A people is the association of a multitude of rational beings united by a common agreement on the objects of their love" (890). This definition replaces reliance upon justice, about which people cannot agree, with the realistic suggestion that, to observe the source of a people's political unity, one must look to its culture and see what loves its citizens share. Another way of saying this is that our earthly cities are not the City of God; and this, understood broadly, is to say that politics cannot encompass comprehensive doctrines about the good life. Thus Augustine writes, "So also the earthly city, whose life is not based on faith, aims at an earthly peace, and it limits the harmonious agreement of citizens concerning the giving and

obeying of orders to the establishment of a kind of compromise between human wills about the things relevant to mortal life" (877).

Where Rawls speaks of an "overlapping consensus," then, Augustine refers to a "compromise between human wills about the things relevant to mortal life." Rawls looks to the public political culture to construct a free-standing, political conception of justice compatible with the various comprehensive doctrines present in society; Augustine to the "shared loves" that people have in common to establish a limited "harmonious agreement of citizens concerning the giving and obeying of orders." But the point is the same. Both seek a basis for political unity that does not depend on controversial world-views, but rests instead on those things about which citizens can agree. Thus, in Rawls's terms, citizens should not appeal to "the whole truth" (218-19, 224-5, 242-3), should not insist upon universal agreement across the whole range of moral issues; or, in Augustine's terms, citizens should not seek to inaugurate the City of God here and now. Both thinkers, one might say, restrain the ambitions of politics. Politics cannot resolve all issues or achieve full justice. It deals with a limited range of concerns, rooted in those things which citizens are united in regarding as fundamentally necessary or desirable.

II. Rawls the Moral Philosopher and Augustine the Realist: An Objection

One might object, though, that what Rawls means by an "overlapping consensus" and what Augustine has in mind by "shared loves" are not really the same at all. Rawls—the objection might run—seeks to present a conception of justice which, though freestanding, is nevertheless a moral conception; he is engaged in normative moral philosophy. Augustine, on the other hand, is doing nothing of the sort; in referring to "shared loves," he is offering a purely positive or descriptive account of political unity and stability—what constitutes a people is simply whatever loves they happen to have in common, and there is nothing more to be said about it. A slightly different way of stating the objection would be that Rawls explicitly claims to be constructing more than a mere *modus vivendi*, whereas Augustine really seeks only a *modus vivendi*, to be produced through a kind of pluralist bargaining, and any such *modus vivendi* will do. Rawls, as it were, aims higher than Augustine does.[8]

There is some truth to this objection. Augustine is prepared to settle for less than Rawls is. In his view, any set of shared loves can serve as the basis for a polity: "I shall not make that a reason for asserting that a people is not really a people or that a state is not a commonwealth, so long as there remains an association of some kind or other between a multitude of rational beings united by a common agreement on the objects of its love" (890). If the only things that people really love in common are, say, Gargle the Conqueror and the booty he provides, they presumably constitute "a people" under Augustine's definition, even if only the crudest sort; their agreement need not reach the level of shared constitutional principles envisioned by Rawls's overlapping consensus.[9] One of the points of distinguishing between the two cities, after all, is to make it clear that from the standpoint of eternity earthly politics is of no ultimate or sacred signifi-

cance, that our salvation in no way rests upon whether our polity prefers Gargle or ordered liberty. Nevertheless, this objection simultaneously overstates the descriptive element of Augustine's account and understates it in Rawls's case. Exploring some reasons why this distinction ultimately fails will help flesh out the comparison made in section one.

First and foremost, Rawls's own account is positivist and descriptive in essential ways. In saying that we look to ideas in the public political culture in order to construct our political conception of justice, Rawls concedes that his conception is culture-specific, appropriate only for certain people, times, and places.[10] This appeal to the public political culture is analogous to Augustine's suggestion that we seek the basis of a people's political unity in its shared loves.

Nor should we exaggerate the particularism or relativism of Augustine's focus on shared loves. Though he may be prepared to accept (almost) any set of shared loves as a sufficient foundation for politics, for example, he is nevertheless willing to make evaluative judgements about better and worse regimes. After defining a people as an association "united by a common agreement on the objects of their love," Augustine goes on to say that "to observe the character of a particular people we must examine the objects of its love.... And, obviously, the better the objects of this agreement, the better the people; the worse the objects of this love, the worse the people" (890). He makes precisely this sort of judgement when he rebukes his fellow Romans for their luxury, corruption, and vice (41-2), holding up to them the example of their nobler ancestors, men like Regulus, who, though far from saints, "served their country for the sake of honour, praise and glory...looked to find that glory in their country's safety above their own and...suppressed greed for money and many other faults in favour of that one fault of theirs, the love of praise" (202).

Furthermore, although Augustine directs us to look at the particular shared loves exhibited by a given people, which will differ from place to place, he also argues that at least some shared loves are universal and will be found among all peoples. This is clearest in the case of the most important shared love, peace. Augustine writes that "just as there is no man who does not wish for joy, so there is no man who does not wish for peace" (866). All people, wherever they may be and whatever city they may ultimately belong to, desire some of the same things, such as peace, order, and security. In light of this, it is possible—though I can do no more here than raise the possibility—that a developed Augustinian account of shared loves, combined with the idea that politics is the site where the two cities meet (rather than where the City of God is to be built), might generate a set of basic rights or liberties similar to (though probably not identical with) those found in liberal theories such as Rawls's. One basic right, for instance, seems clearly required by Augustinian principles: religious liberty. Because of the difference between the two cities, Augustine writes, "the Heavenly City could not have laws of religion in common with the earthly city" (878). Under no circumstances may the state require the Christian to violate his religion:

> [The Heavenly City] takes no account of any difference in customs, laws, and institutions, by which earthly peace is achieved and pre-

served—not that she annuls or abolishes any of those, rather, she
maintains them and follows them (for whatever divergences there
are among the diverse nations, those institutions have one single
aim—earthly peace), provided that no hindrance is presented thereby
to the religion which teaches that the one supreme and true God is to
be worshipped. (878)

Our earthly cities end, as it were, where the *civitas Dei* begins, and there-
fore the two cities cannot have common laws governing religion. And it
seems plausible to think that Augustine's expansive understanding of
peace, which I quoted earlier, could generate other rights or liberties as
well. Would genuine peace not require at least some security in one's pos-
sessions? Would it not require some of the basic civil liberties of due
process, such as protections against self-incrimination, double jeopardy,
and the like, rights which constitute a fundamental distinction between
free and totalitarian polities? Since it protects religion against political
encroachment, an Augustinian politics is already a limited politics.
Perhaps it would be limited in additional ways if one were to spell out the
full implications of the idea of peace, understood in the broad Augustinian
sense. At any rate, if this idea has promise, then an Augustinian politics
seems to allow activity with as good a claim to the title of normative phi-
losophizing as Rawls's project has.[11]

Finally, Rawls attempts to distinguish a *modus vivendi* from an overlap-
ping consensus in this way: in the former the conception of justice is
embraced only out of expediency, based on a calculation of interest in par-
ticular, contingent circumstances, whereas in the latter all the various com-
prehensive doctrines embrace the conception on moral grounds, as justi-
fied on the basis of their own principles, and therefore will not withdraw
their allegiance even if circumstances should change (145-9). But even if
we accept this distinction, it seems clear that an Augustinian would
endorse a limited politics of shared loves—a purely "political" conception
of justice—as not only expedient, but also right.[12] Augustine provides a
real reason for being committed to a limited politics. This is because the
sorting out of the two cities is an eschatological affair. That politics cannot,
and should not try to, instantiate the City of God here and now frees our
earthly cities to focus upon those temporal concerns that its citizens share
in common. Indeed, a government of this limited kind is quite rightly val-
ued by the Augustinian, because it provides things, such as peace and
order, which are genuine goods. As Augustine puts it, in a passage worth
quoting at some length,

While this Heavenly City, therefore, is on pilgrimage in this world,
she calls out citizens from all nations and so collects a society of
aliens, speaking all languages. She takes no account of any difference
in customs, laws, and institutions, by which earthly peace is achieved
and preserved—not that she annuls or abolishes any of those, rather,
she maintains and follows them (for whatever divergences there are
among the diverse nations, those institutions have one single aim—
earthly peace), provided that no hindrance is presented thereby to

the religion which teaches that the one supreme and true God is to be worshipped. Thus even the Heavenly City in her pilgrimage here on earth makes use of the earthly peace and defends and seeks the compromise between human wills in respect of the provisions relevant to the mortal nature of man, so far as may be permitted without detriment to true religion and piety. (878)

The members of the City of God defend and cherish the "compromise between human wills about the things relevant to mortal life" because it provides extremely valuable human goods. So the Augustinian bears an allegiance to the "political conception," the "shared loves," which is not just contingent or expedient, but which arises from the eschatological nature of the two cities themselves.

One cannot, then, distinguish between Rawls and Augustine simply on the grounds that the former, engaged in moral philosophy, aims higher than the latter's merely descriptive account. A more nuanced reading reinforces the claim that there is a surprising structural similarity between Rawlsian political liberalism and an Augustinian politics of the two cities. At this point, though, one might raise a second objection, the mirror image of the first: that Augustine aims higher than Rawls does. Like the first, this objection also misses the mark, but considering it will point toward what finally does separate Augustine from Rawls, and why Augustine's approach offers a surer foundation for liberalism than Rawls's.

III. Rawlsian Fear and Ambitious Politics

Perhaps I am right—perhaps Rawls does not really aim higher than Augustine. But does not Augustine in fact aim much higher than Rawls? To be sure, Augustine may be willing to settle for whatever shared loves happen to be present in a community, for a mere *modus vivendi*. But wouldn't he really like something much more than that? Unlike Rawls, after all, Augustine reasons on the basis of a particular comprehensive moral doctrine, one with definite beliefs about morality and the good life. And just because all earthly cities are equidistant from eternity hardly means that Augustine would not prefer one in which some substantive vision of the good life were shared. As we have seen, his contrasting judgements about the ancient Romans and his own contemporaries indicate his willingness to evaluate the goodness of different polities. Nor does Augustine's famous description, in Book V of *The City of God*, of ideal rulers, who "rule with justice...put their power at the service of God's majesty, to extend his worship far and wide...fear God, love him and worship him...[and] take vengeance on wrong because of the necessity to direct and protect the state" (220), sound like that of a man whose ideal commonwealth is held together by a minimal *modus vivendi*.

But this does not quite capture the difference between Augustine and Rawls, either. For Rawls too would like something more than we might at first suspect. We can see this by considering a concept that Rawls develops at great length: the idea of public reason. Public reason defines the bounds of acceptable public discourse and debate, and it includes all those forms of

argument and inquiry whose compatibility with the political conception of justice is evident to the citizenry as a whole. It is thus intended to purify or cleanse public political debate of certain dangerous ideas, those principles and values that we could not reasonably expect our fellow citizens to endorse. Public reason's guidelines for inquiry are generated in the same way as the political conception itself, without relying on a particular comprehensive doctrine, and they direct citizens to offer in public debate only arguments which do not rely on their individual comprehensive doctrines (225). If they are to accord with the ideal of public reason, then, public arguments should be based on reasons other citizens can accept and regard as justified. Like the political conception of justice, public reason is designed to preserve stability by excluding from public debate arguments that are inevitably divisive and that would challenge the overlapping consensus itself.[13]

Augustine elaborates no such idea. This is not to say that he could make no sense of it; on the contrary, he opens Book XIX of *The City of God* by saying that he will explain the great difference between the two cities "not merely by appealing to divine authority but also by employing such powers of reason as we can apply for the benefit of unbelievers" (843). And, of course, the claim that earthly politics is about "shared loves" implies that it will be conducted largely in terms somehow accessible to all citizens. Nevertheless, Augustine does not take the time to develop this concept in anything like the detail that Rawls does, and one might well suspect that Augustinian political debate is likely to be pretty wide open—if politics is about shared loves, people will have to argue about exactly what those loves actually are.

Rawls's inclusion of an entire chapter explaining the concept of public reason is, or at least ought to be, quite surprising, for two reasons. First, it is not clear that public reason is consistent with the rest of Rawls's argument. Political liberalism, in his view, rests upon an overlapping consensus on certain core political principles. But unrestricted debate—in which we examine the common ground between various competing comprehensive doctrines, explore the "fit" between our own larger view and different possible statements of shared public values, and inquire whether we and others indeed understand the linguistic labels given to putatively common values to mean similar things—is the only way in which we can ever discover whether an overlapping consensus actually exists or not, or whether a previously achieved consensus continues to hold. The ability to guide our public discussions according to the ideals of public reason, by offering only arguments we could reasonably expect all citizens to endorse, presupposes that we already know what people believe and what the possible range of reasonable agreement might be. But this knowledge can only arise from public discussion; it cannot precede it.[14]

A second conundrum in Rawls's account of public reason arises from his chief illustration of how it might work: the Supreme Court, which Rawls refers to as the "exemplar of public reason" (231). In a constitutional democracy, Rawls suggests, the constitution fixes certain core principles, the subject of the overlapping consensus, which provide a framework and guide for political activity (232).[15] The Supreme Court decides particular

controversies only in light of these agreed-upon public principles: "public reason is the sole reason the court exercises" (235). In doing so, the Court models the exercise of public reason for the citizenry at large (it "educates citizens to the use of public reason and its value of political justice" [239-40]). Indeed, Rawls even says that citizens should use the Court's example as a way of testing whether they, in their own political activity, are adhering to the limits of public reason: "To check whether we are following public reason we might ask: how would our argument strike us presented in the form of a supreme court opinion? Reasonable? Outrageous?" (254)

This is surprising because the Court itself has generally taken a quite different view of the matter. Even a casual examination of the Court's First Amendment jurisprudence reveals an extraordinarily fierce commitment to unfettered public debate, particularly with regard to political speech, the kind of discourse to which Rawlsian public reason is supposed to apply. In its unanimous decision in the famous libel case *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, for example, the Court declared that the "profound national commitment" underlying the First Amendment is "the principle that debate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust, and wide-open" (376 U.S. 254, 270). Nor is the Court here only reluctantly conceding that the First Amendment protects speech that, ideally, citizens would refrain from making, as though we would all be better off if citizens voluntarily limited their discussions according to an ideal of public reason. On the contrary, the Court suggests—in a manner entirely typical of its jurisprudence in this area—that such restraint would deprive the public of that free and open clash of contesting ideas (even false ones!) that informed deliberation upon public affairs requires. Thus it approvingly quotes *Cantwell v. Connecticut*, an early case involving the free exercise of religion:

> In the realm of religious faith, and in that of political belief, sharp differences arise. In both fields, the tenets of one man may seem the rankest error to his neighbor. To persuade others to his own point of view, the pleader, as we know, at times, resorts to exaggeration, to vilification of men who have been, or are, prominent in church or state, and even to false statement. But the people of this nation have ordained in the light of history, that, in spite of the probability of excesses and abuses, these liberties are, in the long view, essential to enlightened opinion and right conduct on the part of the citizens of a democracy. (310 U.S. 296, 310, cited at 376 U.S. 254, 271)[16]

On this view, citizens' attempt to pursue an ideal of public reason and refrain from stating their views on important matters would actually do the polity a disservice by diminishing the overall quality of their public debate. Thus Rawls's "exemplar of public reason" does not seem to share his view that it would be desirable for all citizens to approach public discourse as if they sat on the Supreme Court.

Rawls's account of public reason, then, is puzzling, both because it has at best an uneasy relation with his larger argument, and also because it appears to diverge significantly from the chief illustration he offers of how it might work. Noticing this, I should emphasize, in no way depends upon

our being able to settle such complex and disputed questions as precisely how restrictive public reason is, what range of views it is intended to exclude, or whether it is systematically unfair to any particular group of citizens, such as religious believers.[17] Nor does it depend, for the same reason, upon whether or not Rawls's more recent elaborations and modifications of public reason have in fact made the concept less restrictive and more inclusive than its initial presentation was.[18] Clearly public reason in all its versions is supposed to exclude at least some views, since it would otherwise be nonsense, and I leave it to others to dispute the scope and value of those exclusions. My purpose here is simply to explore what public reason can suggest to us about the difference between a Rawlsian and an Augustinian liberalism, which we have seen to be in many other respects strikingly similar. That purpose is sufficiently served by the observation that public reason, regardless of its precise boundaries, is a strange and surprising innovation on Rawls's part: unexpected for its precarious relation to the rest of his theory, puzzling for its divergence from the example Rawls chooses as his model for its operation. In light of this puzzle, what should we make of Rawls's decision to devote an entire chapter to the issue of public reason? What leads him to develop such a concept? The answer, I want to suggest, is a kind of fear. A certain anxiety pervades Rawls's argument: he is unnerved by the prospect of "uninhibited, robust, and wide-open" debate. His argument about public reason is distinguished by a kind of nervousness, manifested in public reason's desire to exclude. This fear gives rise to the attempt to fix a conception of justice, at least in broad outline, in advance, to draw limits around acceptable arguments and modes of debate, and to ensure that discussion proceeds along the proper channels.

Why this fear, this deep anxiety—an anxiety which Augustine, who develops no concept of public reason, evidently does not share to the same degree? In a sense, no doubt, this is a silly question: as we have already seen, the desire for stability is the central motivation of Rawls's project. Political liberalism is generated by the need to achieve peace out of a situation of pluralism and potential conflict. Perhaps, though, there is a deeper reason for this anxiety. For Rawls too wants more from politics than one might initially expect—indeed, he has fairly high hopes for it. The idealized restraints of public reason—restraints which the Supreme Court has consistently thought would decrease the vitality of public debate and weaken the protection of liberty—are the most important, but not the only evidence of this. Several other references in his book suggest that Rawls's liberal order aspires to certain features of classical republicanism. He speaks, for example, of the political conception as "educator," a phrase which suggests that the political conception forms a real bond among citizens in a way reminiscent of classical republicanism: "Thus, the account of justice as fairness connects the desire to realize a political ideal of citizenship with citizens' two moral powers and their normal capacities, as these are educated to that ideal by the public culture and its historical traditions of interpretation. This illustrates the wide role of a political conception as educator" (85-6). Later, in discussing the ways in which political society is itself a genuine good, valued for more than instrumental reasons, Rawls explicitly (though

briefly) discusses classical republicanism, which he calls "the view that if the citizens of a democratic society are to preserve their basic rights and liberties, including the civil liberties which secure the freedoms of private life, they must also have to a sufficient degree the 'political virtues'...and be willing to take part in public life" (205). He concludes, "With classical republicanism so understood, justice as fairness as a form of political liberalism has no fundamental opposition" (205). Rawls even indicates, in a highly suggestive aside, that the ideal of public reason is similar to Rousseau's concept of the general will: "[P]ublic reason with its duty of civility gives a view about voting on fundamental questions in some ways reminiscent of Rousseau's *Social Contract*. He saw voting as ideally expressing our opinion as to which of the alternatives best advances the common good" (220). Rawls strikingly reaffirms these aspirations in his recent elaboration of public reason, where he emphasizes that it expresses the political relationship among citizens as one of "civic friendship."[19]

These verbal cues may seem slender evidence upon which to build a case. And indeed they would be, were the purpose to prove that Rawls endorses all the features of Rousseau's ideal republic, with its ambitious censors and sumptuary codes, or that he is a latter-day Harrington drawing up the blueprint for a future Oceana. But that, of course, is not the point. Especially in a writer as notoriously slippery and hard to pin down as Rawls, attending to subtler linguistic cues can be informative; and the value of these particular cues is that they throw light upon a partly concealed longing that helps explain the otherwise puzzling phenomenon of public reason. For they reveal to us Rawls's apparent hope that a well-ordered society governed by an overlapping consensus on a political conception of justice would in fact turn out to be a source of fulfillment for its citizens, who could become not only citizens, but friends. This hope accounts for the muted sense of urgency with which he responds to the communitarian critics of his earlier work, seeking to persuade them that he offers more than a mere *modus vivendi*. In other words, the fear that motivates the development of public reason is not simply a fear that political liberalism won't work, but that it won't work *well*, that it will fail to provide any deeper bonds that would hold us together and commit us to each other. It is this anxiety that creates the need to fix a conception of justice in advance and to provide guidelines restricting debate and excluding potentially destabilizing ideas.

But this, again, should be surprising. For this effort stands in stark contrast to the overall motive of the Rawlsian project as a whole. The original aim of political liberalism was to be as inclusive as possible, to construct a public agreement about justice shallow enough that it would not need to exclude any reasonable people. Political liberalism is thus appropriately characterized as a politics of limited ambitions, an unpretentious politics. Yet the ideal of public reason indicates some lingering dissatisfaction with that goal. It represents a longing for a loftier politics, one in which citizens are joined in agreement on a vision of justice and achieve some measure of genuine fulfillment from the pursuit thereof. These two different movements in Rawls's thought—first towards limiting our understanding of what must hold us together, and then towards raising the standard once

again—are perhaps not flatly contradictory, but at the least they stand in powerful tension with one another.

The difference between Augustine and Rawls, then, is not simply that Augustine wants more from politics than Rawls does. Rawls too has high hopes. The difference is that Rawls, unlike Augustine, introduces into his theory a mechanism designed to ensure that those high hopes are not doomed by the pluralism within society. Augustine, on the other hand, need develop no concept of public reason because he is prepared to accept a limited politics of low ambitions. Not that all polities are simply equal; as we have seen, Augustine can make comparative judgements about better and worse regimes, and he surely has preferences of his own. But viewed in the light of the Heavenly City, all of our earthly cities are wanting, and this perspective frees him—and us—from asking too much of politics. Thus, whereas Rawls asks whether it is "possible for citizens of faith to be wholehearted members of a democratic society,"[20] Augustine, aware that believers will never be "wholehearted" members of *any* earthly society, need not impose upon citizens the moral obligations of public reason. In Book III of *The City of God*, in a line of great poignancy and insight, Augustine says of Sallust and other Roman historians that, in writing about Rome, "in many places they have been constrained to praise in terms of the highest eulogy, since they have not another City which is a truer one than theirs" (112). It may well be that, without another, truer City, one inevitably praises the cities of earthly politics too highly and asks too much of them. One may seek to lower the aims of politics to a minimal level; but if this city is all one has, how long can one remain satisfied with that?[21]

By suggesting in this way that Augustine's perspective may ultimately provide a superior foundation for political liberalism, I do not mean to diminish Rawls's achievement. His book is without question an extremely insightful presentation of liberalism's central purposes and method. Yet perhaps its most valuable contribution is to encourage us to ask once again whether a flourishing liberal politics in our cities may not ultimately require awareness of another city. Even devoted liberals may find themselves losing confidence in their own limited aims—as Rawls does in developing the idea of public reason—if they feel themselves responsible for achieving, in the only city they know, an ever "more perfect justice," as Rawls misstates the aim of the American Constitution's Preamble (41).[22] To value politics appropriately for the very real goods it provides, while asking of it no more than it can actually offer—which is, after all, the balance liberalism seeks to strike—is a task which may well require that we have another, truer City.

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NOTES

1. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 134. Further references will be given by page number in parentheses within the text.

2. Herbert A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963); Jean Bethke Elshtain,

Augustine and the Limits of Politics (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). For an extremely stimulating attempt to apply Augustinian liberalism to the field of constitutional theory, see Graham Walker, *Moral Foundations of Constitutional Thought: Current Problems, Augustinian Prospects* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

3. Edmund N. Santurri, "Rawlsian Liberalism, Moral Truth and Augustinian Politics," *The Journal for Peace and Justice Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 1-36.

4. St. Augustine, *The City of God* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1984), p. 46. Further references will be given by page number in parentheses within the text.

5. Augustine was equally familiar, of course, with theological pluralism: "The Devil...stirred up heretics to oppose Christian doctrine—though they bore the Christian name—as if they could be retained indiscriminately in the City of God without reproof, just as the city of confusion retained indifferently the philosophers who held diverse and contradictory opinions" (833).

6. In a sense this oversimplifies Augustine's claim by conflating his statement of Cicero's position ("where there is no justice, there is no commonwealth") with a slightly altered version of it ("where there is no agreement about justice, there is no commonwealth"), since there could presumably be justice without agreement and agreement without justice. Making this distinction would not affect the argument, however, since Augustine's position in effect denies the possibility of either of these alternatives. There cannot be justice without agreement, because, as explained in the text, justice would require rendering God his due, which the earthly city (always "intermixed and interwoven" with the heavenly in this life) by definition does not do. Similarly, there cannot be agreement without justice, because, again by definition, the two cities, differing as they do about the purpose of human life and the source of happiness, can never agree about what justice is. More precisely, there *can* (as I shall argue) be agreement about a variety of things, but there cannot be agreement about *justice* (understood in the broad, Augustinian sense of a comprehensive doctrine—see the discussion which follows in the text), which is the possible solution to the stability problem under discussion here, and which both Rawls and Augustine reject.

7. Obviously, one way of solving the problem of pluralism would be simple coercion (a way, I suppose, of trying to achieve either "agreement without justice" or "justice without agreement," depending on your perspective; see previous note). Rawls clearly rules this out as unacceptable. With Augustine the case is more complicated: during the Donatist controversy, to take the obvious example, he eventually came to support, after initially opposing, the coercion of heretics. This matter is too complex for me to sort out here; for the purposes of my argument, let me merely say that in my view the best interpretation of Augustine's principles as they are expressed in *The City of God* would not permit religious coercion. For one sympathetic attempt to explain Augustine's conflicting positions, an attempt that supports the argument offered here, see Markus, *Saeculum*, ch. 6.

8. I am indebted to Paul Weithman for encouraging me to consider this objection.

9. Recall Augustine's memorable comparison of kingdoms to robber bands: "Remove justice, and what are kingdoms but gangs of criminals on a large scale? What are criminal gangs but petty kingdoms? A gang is a group of men under the command of a leader, bound by a compact of association, in which the plunder is divided according to an agreed convention" (139). This

does not mean, of course, that the objects which a people loves in common cannot extend higher, even to the level of abstract principles. Indeed, I believe Augustine's discussion suggests that they generally do. Even the comparison to robber gangs just quoted makes clear Augustine's view that any sort of human association requires certain kinds of agreements and rules, especially a shared desire to maintain peace among the associates (itself a rough principle), in order to function. I elaborate on these points in the following discussion. It is also worth noting that neither *how* people reach agreement nor *what they value* about that agreement seems particularly important in either the Rawlsian or the Augustinian account. Rawls explicitly says that people will support an overlapping consensus for different reasons, grounded in their various comprehensive doctrines; and Augustine does not imagine that Christians and non-Christians, though they all value the shared good of civic peace, do so for the same reasons.

10. In calling Rawls's conception culture-specific, I do not mean that it could never apply anywhere other than, say, contemporary Western democracies. Nevertheless, it is applicable only in places where it can successfully appeal to the public political culture for support. It is crucial to Rawls's approach that the political conception of justice be thus drawn from the public political culture, because only in this way can it remain "freestanding" and win the allegiance of people with diverse views; the attempt to get "behind" the public political culture and make a direct argument *for* political liberalism itself would need to invoke a comprehensive doctrine and could therefore not serve as the basis for political unity. Thus a Rawlsian political conception of justice, like Augustine's shared loves, is always derived from the common culture of a particular people, and in that sense it is clearly culture-specific.

11. Arguably, peace is also the cornerstone of Rawls's "overlapping consensus." Because the need for stability motivates his project, one might say that this desire for peace ultimately generates the Rawlsian set of basic rights and liberties.

12. I doubt that we should accept the distinction. Cf. Jean Hampton, "Should Political Philosophy Be Done without Metaphysics?", *Ethics* 99:4 (July 1989), pp. 791-814; see esp. pp. 802-7. To her critique I would add the suggestion that the attempt to distinguish between a *modus vivendi* and an overlapping consensus actually obscures the strengths of Rawls's own theory by oversimplifying the relationship between endorsing a certain consensus as "expedient" and endorsing it as "right." One of liberalism's great insights—reaching back to the struggles over religious toleration that Rawls cites as a model for his own theory—has been the understanding that, given certain realities of human existence (such as pluralism), principles endorsed primarily for pragmatic reasons can turn out (precisely because, as Rawls sees, they avoid trying to settle the matter of justice in the comprehensive sense) to produce the most just results— thus demonstrating that they were not only pragmatic but right. In other words, the same conditions which make a *modus vivendi* necessary may also make it just. The attempt to show that his conception represents more than a "mere" *modus vivendi* is therefore both confusing and unnecessary. Rawls's dissatisfaction with a *modus vivendi* and desire to elevate it to the level of an overlapping consensus is relevant to the broader questions I raise in section three.

13. Rawls does state explicitly that public reason is a moral and not a legal ideal (213, 253); that is, we are not to be legally forced to restrict our public discourse via public reason, though we should generally wish to do so of our own accord. I should also note that, strictly speaking, the constraints of public reason apply only to debates over "constitutional essentials" (214). Still, Rawls does suggest that ideally public reason would apply to all public arguments if possible ("it is usually highly desirable to settle political questions by invoking

the values of public reason" [215]). And discerning exactly what issues do or do not concern "constitutional essentials" is, I suspect, likely to be much more difficult than Rawls seems to assume.

14. For a discussion of whether or to what extent public reason rigidly fixes a conception of justice in advance, see the debate between Jeremy Waldron, "Religious Contributions in Public Deliberation," 30 *San Diego Law Review* 817 (Fall 1993), and Lawrence B. Solum, "Novel Public Reasons," 29 *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* 1459 (June 1996). I take it as obvious that, if public reason is actually to offer any guidance for public debate, it must fix in advance at least the broad outlines of acceptable conceptions of justice.

15. This, incidentally, might appear to be a way out of the dilemma described in the preceding paragraph: we know the values of public reason even prior to debate because they have been publicly stated in a constitution (at least in many liberal democracies). But this would only solve the problem if the phrases of the Constitution were so clear that we all knew more or less what they require. In reality, though, those phrases are abstract and need interpretation; and therefore only open discussion can tell us whether we really agree on a consensus as to their meaning (or possible range of meaning) or are simply adopting the same linguistic labels to refer to very different things.

16. The Court also cites with approval Mill's *On Liberty*, to similar effect: "...To argue sophistically, to suppress facts or arguments, to misstate the elements of the case, or misrepresent the opposite opinion...all this, even to the most aggravated degree, is so continually done in perfect good faith, by persons who are not considered, and in many other respects may not deserve to be considered, ignorant or incompetent, that it is rarely possible, on adequate grounds, conscientiously to stamp the misrepresentation as morally culpable; and still less could law presume to interfere with this kind of controversial misconduct" (cited at 376 U.S. 254, 272, n. 13).

17. For criticisms that public reason unfairly excludes religious believers from public debate, see Philip L. Quinn, "Political Liberalisms and Their Exclusions of the Religious" (pp. 138-61), and Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Why We Should Reject What Liberalism Tells Us about Speaking and Acting in Public for Religious Reasons" (pp. 162-81), both in Paul J. Weithman (ed.), *Religion and Contemporary Liberalism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997). The literature on just how exclusive public reason is (and whether this is objectionable) is extensive. Among other writings, I have profited from the following: Lawrence B. Solum, "Inclusive Public Reason," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 75: 3-4 (double issue, September/December 1994), pp. 217-31; Weithman, "Rawlsian Liberalism and the Privatization of Religion: Three Theological Objections Considered," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 22:1 (Spring 1994), pp. 3-28; Timothy P. Jackson, "*Prima Caritas, Inde Jus*: Why Augustinians Shouldn't Baptize John Rawls," *The Journal for Peace and Justice Studies* 8:2, pp. 49-62; Jeremy Waldron, "Disagreements about Justice," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 75:3-4, pp. 372-87; and Samuel Scheffler, "The Appeal of Political Liberalism," *Ethics* 105:1 (October 1994), esp. pp. 14ff.

18. Rawls's first attempt at such elaboration can be found in the "Introduction to the Paperback Edition" of *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. xxxvii-lxii, and his most recent, fullest statement is in "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," in Rawls, *The Law of Peoples, with "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited"* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 129-80. The most important revision of Rawls's views in these writings is his move from the "inclusive" to the "wide" view of public reason. In his original account, in *Political Liberalism*, Rawls endorsed what he called the "inclusive" view of public reason, according to which citizens are allowed, "in

certain situations, to present what they regard as the basis of political values rooted in their comprehensive doctrine, provided they do this in ways that strengthen the ideal of public reason itself" (247). Under the "wide" view, by contrast, "reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious or nonreligious, may be introduced in public political discussion at any time, provided that in due course proper political reasons—and not reasons given solely by comprehensive doctrines—are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines introduced are said to support" ("PR Revisited," p. 152; Rawls refers to the latter condition as "the proviso"). Though the wide view is in one sense more permissive, because it allows comprehensive doctrines to be introduced into public debate more frequently, note that it is also in an important respect *more restrictive* than the inclusive view: in Rawls's initial presentation, those who wish to present their comprehensive doctrines are justified, "in certain situations," if their doing so strengthens the ideal of public reason; now, however, under the more recent "wide" view, they face the new burden of having to provide additional public reasons for their views, which they previously did not have to provide! This ironic result is evident from Rawls's treatment of his two test cases, the abolitionists and the civil rights movement, both of whose appeals to comprehensive (Christian) doctrines he wishes to regard as justified. In his initial presentation, in *Political Liberalism*, Rawls was able to write, "On this account the abolitionists and the leaders of the civil rights movement did not go against the ideal of public reason; or rather, they did not provided they thought, or on reflection would have thought (as they certainly could have thought), that the comprehensive reasons they appealed to were required to give sufficient strength to the political conception to be subsequently realized" (251). For practical purposes, on this view, it appears to suffice if we can supply hypothetical public reasons to which the people in question might have appealed, even if they did not. The new, wide view, however, with its "proviso," clearly requires that the citizens in question actually supply additional public reasons for their views themselves, reasons they did not have to supply under Rawls's earlier view. As a result, there must surely have been at least some abolitionists and civil rights supporters who were justified under the old, "inclusive" view, but are not any longer under the new, "wide" one. Thus it is not suprising that Rawls now concedes rather lamely in a footnote, "I do not know whether the Abolitionists and King thought of themselves as fulfilling the purpose of the proviso" ("PR Revisited," p. 154, fn. 54). And he continues with this shockingly patronizing comment: "But whether they did or not, they could have. And had they known and accepted the idea of public reason, they would have" (*idem.*). Had Rawls only developed the idea of public reason earlier, he might have saved King and his comrades from the ignominy of possibly violating the moral duties of public reason! Careful comparison of very slight changes in wording from "Preface," p. lii, fn. 27, to "PR Revisited," p. 154, fn. 54, in connection with the accompanying text, suggests, to me at least, that Rawls is aware of this difficulty, though evidently not sufficiently disturbed by it to alter his views.

    19. "PR Revisited," pp. 137, 155. See also "Preface," p. li.

    20. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

    21. As Timothy P. Jackson writes, "Without ['the acceptance *as true* of certain basic propositions about human nature and community'], it seems impossible not to divinize (our) society..." ("To Bedlam and Part Way Back: John Rawls and Christian Justice," *Faith and Philosophy* 8:4 [October 1991], p. 437; the quotation in brackets, as well as the emphasis, are his).

    22. Rawls does not explicitly claim to be citing the American Constitution in particular, but the content and language of the entire sentence make the verbal echo, whether intentional or not, unmistakable.