

SPIRITUALITY AND CITIZENSHIP: SACRAMENTALITY IN A PARABLE

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The author finds resonance between the hitherto largely unrelated discourses of spirituality and citizenship. Drawing on Rahner's transcendental anthropology and Moltmann's sacramental theology of history, he proposes a spirituality that emphasizes the anonymous action of the Holy Spirit within a strong Christology. This proposal embraces the Social Quality model of citizenship and integrates Chantal Mouffe's notion of Radical Democracy. This model, with its emphasis on individuals' self-realization and their formation of collective identities in a social context, conceptually bridges the domains of spirituality and citizenship without sacrificing the integrity of either.

There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me." And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father." (Lk 15:11–18)

CITIZENS ARE PERSONS IN A NATION who wrestle with one another individually and in groups over competing claims to economic, political, and cultural resources. Anger toward those seeking employment and welfare benefits may be directed at an anonymous, and perhaps nonexistent, "tide of migrants," but it is actual people who feel the emotion. Self-dignity

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that refuses to be marginalized or discriminated against is experienced, often intensely, by men and women whose sexuality, ethnicity, or religion is not that of the majority of people in their wider community. Rights to develop or halt development of the natural environment involve hills, valleys, rivers, and deserts upon which individuals live or to which they claim ancestral links. The experts who harness technology impact the lives of particular people. Shoppers, making decisions that cumulatively enhance or degrade the income of piece-meal workers on the other side of the world, are themselves fathers, mothers, sons, or daughters. Discussions of citizenship are properly conducted at a conceptual level but can lose sight of the raw reality that citizens are people who are going about their business, for better or worse, with hopes and fears that intersect with, but are not subsumed within, their identity as “citizens.”

People are spiritual. The men and women who are angry at economic migrants know moments of infinite longing. The objects of their anger, people seeking financial betterment in a host country, have instances of radical optimism. The homosexual woman, marginalized by the community who refuses to treat her employment opportunities fairly, knows an inner and unresolved discontent that has little to do with her sexuality but everything to do with being human. Watching developers deracinate a traditional clan countryside is, for the indigenous farmer, only one dimension of his profound anguish at the insufficiency of material things. The medical scientist struggling to harness biotechnology to combat a disease goes home each day, leaving behind just one site of her protest against death. On that journey from the laboratory she passes through the shopping mall and is surrounded by images of bodily perfection and enticements to purchase “what you cannot live without.” Deep within she senses again the absoluteness and silence of a love that her mortality cannot bear. Thousands of miles away a young man, who crafted the purse she is wondering about buying, is conscious of guilt but, contrary to his more rational side, remains hopeful of release. “Being spiritual” is not another identity that sits alongside “citizen.” It is fundamental to what it means to be human and therefore to what it means to be a citizen.

Citizenship, as a concept as well as a practice, is wrestling with claims for recognition by religious communities. Its grounding in secular political and sociological theory renders it ill-equipped to understand the dynamics of religiously motivated behavior. This article makes no attempt to identify patterns of citizenship motivated by either religious or spiritual outlooks. It is a much more modest endeavor: to recognize that a bridge between the two very different discourses of citizenship and spirituality already exists, namely in the socioeconomic concept of social quality. Those whose concern is spirituality will find points of resonance and the potential for further conversation with those whose field comprises not only recognizing the

challenges of contemporary citizenship but wrestling with how its development might be motivated.

SPIRITUALITY

Readers familiar with Karl Rahner's theology will probably have recognized his understanding of spirituality behind this article's introduction, as it cites the spirituality of, for example, an economic migrant, a homosexual woman, and a medical scientist and attributes to each a different aspect of Rahner's definition of the human experience of grace. He rejects any dualism between nature and grace wherein there are two goals for humanity, a natural to which is then added a supernatural goal. It is in the self-realization of the human spirit that God is always present, although not as an object:

The beginnings of . . . fulfilment already exist—the experience of infinite longing, radical optimism, discontent which cannot find rest, anguish at the insufficiency of material things, protests against death, the experience of being the object of a love whose absoluteness and whose silence our mortality cannot bear, the experience of fundamental guilt with hope nevertheless remaining etc. Because these beginnings are brought to absolute fulfilment by the power of God's grace, this means that in them we experience *both* grace *and* nature. For we experience our nature where we experience grace; grace is only experienced where by nature there is spirit. And vice versa, in fact, as things are, when spirit is experienced it is a supernaturally elevated spirit.¹

Our being human is a gift of grace, and being human is to be spiritual. Spirit is:

that entity which is characterized by an openness toward being and at the same time by an awareness of what itself is and is not. The two fundamental aspects of spirit correspond to these two opennesses, to universal being and to itself: transcendence and reflexivity (self-possession in self-consciousness and freedom).²

Philip Endean offers a helpful paraphrase of Rahner's theological use of "transcendence":

An alternative jargon might speak of identity, of the subjective conditions which shape our every mental and physical act, and of moments when it is this identity itself, rather than any object outside the self, on which our awareness focuses. Such moments may transform the patterns of significance and value we find in the external world, and thus lead to particular choices. A biblical model comes in the

¹ Karl Rahner, *Nature and Grace* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963) 137.

² Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, *Concise Theological Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1983) 485.

parable of the prodigal son. In his pigsty he “came to himself” (Lk 15:17), and he took a decision accordingly.³

It is this “coming to oneself” that is transcendence and reflexivity. “Spiritual practices” or “spirituality” both dispose people and are responses to such moments. “Coming to oneself” is possible because of grace, the gratuitousness of God in the sense of God’s absolute freedom and the absolute freedom of God’s giving of Godself to humanity.⁴ It is truly a coming to *oneself* because it is a coming to realize one’s nature as graciously created by God.

Sandra Schneiders follows in this tradition and defines spirituality as “the actualization of the basic human capacity for transcendence . . . the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives.”⁵ Whenever this actualization occurs, it is as a result of God’s grace, not some intrinsic human capacity. Nor need it be an experience that a person consciously attributes to God.⁶ Some will dismiss these moments as unsettling irritants to be avoided as much as possible. Others will embrace the moments and nurture themselves in spiritual practices. Still others will recognize that it is indeed the work of the Spirit of Christ, “for this liberation of the spirit,” Rahner notes, “is attained on the whole and in the long run only by the grace of Christ in faith. Where he liberates this spirit, however, he liberates it by supernatural grace which introduces the spirit into the life of God himself.”⁷

Such an approach to spirituality displaces the church from any presumed status as the sole channel of the Holy Spirit’s work. This is not to say that the church becomes insignificant, merely that it is unable to monopolize the Spirit.

Jürgen Moltmann helps us articulate this paradigm shift. The church is

³ Philip Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality* (New York: Oxford University, 2001) 115.

⁴ See also Karl Rahner, ed., *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology* (London: Burns & Oates, 1969) vol. 4, s.v. “Nature” 171–75, at 174.

⁵ Sandra M. Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) 16.

⁶ See also Karl Rahner, *The Practice of Faith: A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1983) 47: “In all these situations God, as the condition which makes all this possible, is already experienced and accepted, even if this is not expressly and objectively formulated. This is true even if the word ‘God’ is never heard and is never used as the term for the direction and goal of the transcendental experiences known in this way.”

⁷ Karl Rahner, *Theology of the Spiritual Life*, Theological Investigations 3 (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1967) 89.

but one element in the history of God's dealings with the world: God's being glorified includes the liberation of creation so that, wherever this liberation happens, it is the Holy Spirit who is at work: "If the church understands itself, with all its tasks and powers, in the Spirit and against the horizon of the Spirit's history, then it also understands its particularity as one element in the power of the Spirit and has no need to maintain its special power and its special charges with absolute and self-destructive claims."⁸

Where Moltmann is often thinking primarily of the liberation of the poor, I take a broader link through the presence of the Holy Spirit to recognize that in experiences of liberative self-transcendence, it is the one and the same Spirit of God in Christ who is at work. Moltmann invites us to understand God *in* the world and history as a sacrament,⁹ "a reality qualified by God's word and made the bearer of his presence."¹⁰ Returning to the biblical paradigm of the man coming to himself in the pigsty, the events surrounding his moment of self-transcendence are events in his history, as are his responses (of family reunion). The pigsty is, for this man, a sacrament—but so too was his journey to a far-off land.¹¹

Moltmann offers us more than assistance with a paradigm shift. Self-transcendence, if indeed it is a gracious gift of God as part of our being human, is firmly placed within a christological and pneumatological framework in which the horizon is the glory of God (that includes the liberation of creation). Self-transcendence is not left to be self-referential, but an individual need not be aware of the Spirit of God in Christ who is drawing all creation toward completion in God. Where explicit consciousness of the Spirit (i.e., Christian faith) arises, this is the activity of the same gracious Spirit. From this perspective, it is the Spirit who is anonymous rather than a person being "an anonymous Christian."

Rahner has enabled us here to discuss the material object: spirituality as existential phenomenon. Moltmann's perspective has engaged us with its formal object: spirituality as liberative experience. In adopting this approach we are faced with the question of how overtly christological must be our theology of spirituality. This is the warning that Karl Barth voices in his treatment of "religion," which I take to refer to spiritual practices. Barth refuses to consider divine revelation and human religion as "comparable spheres," as if one could define their mutual relationship. To do so assigns religion an "autonomous being and status over against revelation" which is,

⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1977) 64–65.

⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London: SCM, 1974) 321.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 337.

¹¹ I do not intend to imply that this story is anything other than a parable—I use it to illustrate the grounded nature of self-transcendence in history.

according to Barth, merely “the melancholy reminder of a war which was lost at the very outset.” He challenges us to consider religion in the light of revelation, not *vice versa*.¹² In fact, the theologian has no warrant to discuss humanity (and in our case, spirituality) independently of understanding ourselves as “the possession of Christ.”¹³ For Barth, religion is first and foremost unbelief—where “belief” is trust in God’s promises rather than a doctrinal perspective.¹⁴ Religion (and thus spirituality) cannot, in Barth’s view, convey the truth that God is God and thus is the Lord of humanity. Importantly, Barth distinguishes between revelation coming to us as people who *are* religious, but it does not come to us in the *activity of being* religious (or, to use my term of concern, spiritual).¹⁵ What humanity gains through spirituality is, in Barth, “never the truth,” it is “a complete fiction,” an “anti-God.”¹⁶ Put more positively, revelation of Jesus Christ is revelation of God’s active, redemptive self-offering and self-manifestation—achieving what humanity attempts, but fails to achieve, in religion.¹⁷

A religion, for Barth, cannot *be* true, but it can be *made true* by revelation:

Like justified man, religion is a creature of grace. But grace is the revelation of God. No religion can stand before it as true religion. No man is righteous in its presence. It subjects us all to the judgement of death. But it can also call dead men to life and sinners to repentance. And similarly in the wider sphere where it shows all religion to be false it can also create true religion. The abolishing [sublation] of religion by revelation need not mean only its negation: the judgement that religion is unbelief. Religion can just as well be exalted in revelation, even though the judgement still stands.¹⁸

The translation of *Aufhebung* as “abolition” has been challenged in favor of “sublate” and “sublation.”¹⁹ This approach more clearly articulates Barth’s twofold assertion that Christians say both “no” and “yes” to religion where the Christian religion is viewed as the “true religion.”²⁰

Two steps are necessary in my response to a Barthian challenge. First, I consider spirituality as material object and, with Hans Urs von Balthasar, reassert that humanity is spiritual by graciously-God-given-nature: “For

¹² Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956) 294.

¹³ *Ibid.* 296.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 299–300.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 301.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 303.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 309.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 326.

¹⁹ See Joseph A. Di Noia, “Religion and the Religions,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (New York: Cambridge University, 2000) 243–57; and Garrett Green, “Challenging the Religious Studies Canon: Karl Barth’s Theology of Religion,” *Journal of Religion* 75 (1995) 473–86.

²⁰ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/2, 326.

nature was never without spirit in humanity, just as the human child never climbs onesidedly from lower nature to become a spiritual being, but always awakes out of spiritual depths to consciousness and freedom."²¹

Balthasar defended the intrinsic transcendence of humanity in the face of Barth's extrinsic analogy of attribution by arguing that it is God's gracious act to have so constituted humanity: "it is the very expression of the creature's essence that it be God's creature."²² By working, as it were, backward from humanity's vocation to participate in the life of God Balthasar articulates what it means to talk about human *nature*. He subtracts the natural from the supernatural instead of trying to find what needs to be added to the natural:

Nature is to be sought in that *minimum* that must be present in every possible situation where God wants to reveal himself to a creature. And that minimum is expressed by the term *analogia entis*. . . . We are stuck with the tension that comes from asserting that nature has on its own no access to the world of grace, even though it has finally been created only because of grace and for grace and cannot be understood apart from grace.²³

Second, in my response to Barthian concerns I consider spirituality as formal object. Spirituality as lived experience will, to a greater or lesser extent, relate to a tradition that itself may be ancient and stable (as in the case of institutionalized religion) or new and ephemeral (as in the eclectic and ephemeral constellations of practices loosely grouped under the "alternative" or "new age" banner). My criteria for liberative spirituality are not derived from Christian spirituality where that is understood as disciplines or practices of the Christian faith community. (Like Barth, I would treat Christianity, as religion, to be equally under the judgment of God like any other religion.) My criteria are grounded in the liberative action of God-in-Christ where, following Moltmann, it is the Spirit of Christ who draws creation toward completion in God, for the glory of God. I concede Barth's point by agreeing that forms of spirituality can only be *made true*. However, it is the liberative actions of God in history that serve as my paradigm. In other words, a transcendental theology of the person and a sacramental theology of history together give scope for an anonymous Spirit of God and an eponymous Christ of God. To hold that God is

²¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The von Balthasar Reader*, ed. Medard Kehl and Werner Löser, trans. Robert J. Daly and Fred Lawrence (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 78.

²² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992) 110.

²³ *Ibid.* 285, 301.

making forms of spirituality true is not to sever a christological understanding when one's attention is upon the anonymous Spirit of God in Christ.

At the outset of this discussion, I stated the obvious in my reminder that citizens are people. I have argued that people are spiritual, so I now turn to what it means to consider people as citizens: those wrestling with one another in groups, disputing others' rights to welfare support, fighting to retain their self-dignity when excluded by the majority, etc.

CITIZENSHIP

The liberal rights-based model of citizenship (e.g., the models of Hobbes, Locke, and, more recently, Marshall and Rawls) has been under pressure from a variety of transformations in the economy, culture, and society.²⁴ Just as institutional religion finds its former anchor-points destabilized, multiplication of lifestyles and social differentiation have challenged the assumed foundations of citizenship for the rational, autonomous individual. The nation state comes under pressure from above (in global awareness) and below (in demands for local or group representation) and can no longer be the locus for protecting and developing citizenship. A static model of what it means to be a person is inherent to liberal citizenship. With moves toward celebrating difference, in the context of the globalization of culture through telecommunications, pressures toward homogeneity and benchmarks of "normality" are resisted. An emphasis on flexibility and reflexivity in lifestyle and a decline in the idea of coherence as a norm of personality are cultural developments that have urgently demanded efforts to rearticulate the concept of citizenship.

In essence the problem of liberal citizenship is that the very real conflicts in power relationships continue to be obscured even when justice as fairness is set as the rational process of negotiation.²⁵ A communitarian appeal to republicanism is not the solution, because it mistakenly supposes a "pre-modern view of the political community as organized around a single substantive idea of the common good."²⁶ Nevertheless, the institutions of liberal democracy that embody principles of economic liberalism and individualism are too valuable to be swept away. A better way forward is offered by Chantal Mouffe's model of Radical Democracy, which keeps the notion of a common good but as a "vanishing point." We reach toward it,

²⁴ Engin F. Isin and Patricia K. Wood, *Citizenship and Identity* (London: Sage, 1999) chap. 1.

²⁵ Chantal Mouffe, "Radical Democracy or Liberal Democracy?" in *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship, and the State*, ed. David Trend (New York: Routledge, 1996) 23.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

appreciating that it can never be grasped.²⁷ Its tantalizing dimension energizes us to present action without its necessarily collapsing into delayed gratification (“pie in the sky when you die”). It is imperative, however, that one refer to “vision” rather than “a vision,” lest one regress to ideas of homogeneity and the consequent usurping by one group of what “the common good” means in practice. Mouffe’s radical pluralist approach acknowledges the impossibility of a fully realized democracy and the total elimination of antagonisms. She views all forms of agreement as partial and provisional. Her objective, the creation of a “chain of equivalence among the democratic demands found in a variety of groups,” emphasizes numerous social relations where subordination exists and must be challenged, and encourages not mere alliance but rather modification of identity so as to bring about a new political identity.²⁸

In any emphasis on social relations and “the common good” as a vanishing point, we are faced with the problem of a “precarious and temporary” agent.²⁹ Our identities and differences are delegitimated as stable foundations for claiming citizenship rights. At the same time, our cultural context is one in which we are often expected to celebrate all differences (as in pluralist multiculturalism). The dialectic of asserting/valuing difference while also depending on a measure of common identity to ground a stable model of rights as citizens is uncomfortable. The practice of the right to difference is predicated upon a liberal polity that occludes these very power differentials. Our voyage together as citizens may come to resemble a ship at sea where each group of passengers is offered equal time controlling the rudder while steering toward a point on the horizon that itself is continually replotted by a committee of navigators, with the added complication that the passengers keep regrouping under seemingly endless variations of membership criteria. Unless our model of citizenship can allow, and even encourage, normative judgments it will fail to serve us in practice.

Nancy Fraser argues that cohering citizenship around a core of social equality can result in progress rather than merely movement in citizenship and requires us to reconnect the problematic of cultural difference with that of social equality. To do so involves linking a cultural politics of identity with a social politics of justice and equality. When faced with having to valorize differences, it will be in relation to inequality that we

²⁷ In this sense the common good is not unlike “hope” or “vision” as used in a spirituality discourse, although some spiritual hopes are posited as achievable even if in some persons it happens only beyond this life.

²⁸ Mouffe, “Radical Democracy” 24.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 25.

make normative judgments.³⁰ This valorizing is not to foreclose any debate around various understandings of “social equality,” but it constrains the extent of movement in our “common good” as a vanishing point. (In the terms of our metaphorical passengers at sea the options for regrouping and gaining time on the rudder are reduced and the navigators given tighter parameters within which to plot a course.)

Models such as these are valuable because they acknowledge that in working out our citizenship we cannot avoid operating as groups. This requires us, argues Iris Young, to hold a clear conceptual difference between two meanings of universality in citizenship. On the one hand, universality can refer to generality—what we have in common as opposed to how we differ. On the other, it can mean equal treatment.³¹ A vanishing point of social equality may often require unequal treatment toward specific groups. These will be groups who are facing oppression and disadvantage—some with greater substantive capacities to resist than others. In proposing group representation, Young is willing to circumscribe what qualifies as a group rather than leave this at the mercy of every claim to be a group: “Not any collectivity of persons that chooses to form an association counts as a candidate for group representation. Only those groups that describe the major identities and major status relationships constituting the society or particular institutions, and that are oppressed or disadvantaged, deserve specific representation in a heterogeneous public.”³²

Within Young’s model, groups deserving recognition are “comprehensive identities and ways of life,” yet resist promoting their own specific interest without due regard for the social justice of others.³³ This willingness of group members to look beyond their own needs contributes to a polity of group representation that is in contrast to a more agonistic or competitive interest-group pluralism. Group representation, on the other hand, requires making judgments as to the relative value of groups. A model of citizenship must enable us to recognize our multiple memberships and help us navigate the diverse roles, rights, and responsibilities that emerge at their points of overlap or collision. Engin Isin and Patricia Wood refer to radical citizenship as “an ethos of pluralization” in that, although we are not all members of

³⁰ Nancy Fraser, “Equality, Difference, and Radical Democracy: The United States Feminist Debates Revisited,” in *Radical Democracy* 197–222, at 207.

³¹ Iris M. Young, “Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship,” in *The Citizenship Debates: A Reader*, ed. Gershon Shafir (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1998) 263–90.

³² *Ibid.* 280.

³³ *Ibid.*

each group, citizenship is now multifaceted.³⁴ Radical citizenship opens up many new possibilities, including diaspora citizenship of displaced distinctive communities and, as cultural citizenship, posits us as producers and consumers within particular cultural fields, enabling us to explore our consumer citizenship, ecological citizenship, sexual citizenship, technological citizenship (harnessing and limiting technologies), and urban citizenship (recognizing cities as active participants in accelerating trends).³⁵

In a Radical Democratic model of citizenship, and one in which social equality is the “vanishing point” of the common good, the citizen is simultaneously a member of many groups, some of which can qualify for representation in the field of citizenship rights and responsibilities. Not only is a citizen a member of groups but, as an individual, is constituted by the relationships with others who share these multiple and overlapping identities. From these groups the citizen also derives horizons of ultimate value toward which each pursues his or her project of life-integration (Schneiders). When engaging in this project (as distinct from letting it simply happen around one), the citizen is self-transcendent and self-reflexive, that is, being spiritual. I do not, however, wish to frame spirituality as but one additional aspect of cultural citizenship, a site of contested identity and development. It is true that for some people their religious identity (through their participation in a particular, usually stable, religious tradition) is of uppermost importance and constitutes their primary identity. (Whether or not it is substantially their principal identity is another question altogether. Some may believe that being “a Christian” is the identity they place first and foremost in their self-description, but an observer might legitimately conclude that it is their nationality, ethnicity, or some other qualifier that is much more influential, even determining of their selfhood.) By defining spirituality in terms of self-transcendence and self-reflexivity, I establish it as a way of being that crosses and cannot be contained within any one identity. In one sense *spirituality transcends citizenship, but it is also embodied or actualized within it*. Of course, citizenship does not exhaust the sites of actualized self-transcendence and reflexivity. Radical Democratic models and the development of a cultural politics of identity linked to a social politics of justice and equality so extend the boundaries of citizenship that much of life and thus spirituality are encompassed within it. Procedural models of liberal citizenship, although bracketing out appeals to particularist (often

³⁴ Isin and Wood, *Citizenship and Identity* 153.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 158–60.

religious) knowledge, offer little conceptual space for spirituality. I would, however, contend that even within such models people's motivation to play the liberal democratic game is a site of spirituality (as long as we retain the definition of self-transcendence and self-reflexivity).

When we approach citizenship from the perspective of spirituality, common dimensions are not, as I have shown, too difficult to discern. My task is now to consider whether there are resources within the field of citizenship that might offer travel in the opposite direction. In other words, is there conceptual scope already within citizenship that resonates with spirituality? For this, I turn to explore the relatively new concept of Social Quality.

SOCIAL QUALITY

Social Quality is a peculiarly European term seeking to reflect a balance between collective and individual responsibilities. It arose from concern that the social dimension in policy formation within the European Union appeared to be increasingly in conflict with the economic dimension. The lack of balance resulted, so it is believed, in giving priority to monetary considerations in policy-making to the detriment of human sociality. Social Quality has been formally defined as "the extent to which citizens are able to participate in the social and economic life of their communities under conditions which enhance their well-being and individual potential."³⁶ It is focused on social relationships and examines them critically.³⁷

³⁶ Wolfgang Beck, Laurent van der Maesen, and Alan Walker, ed., *The Social Quality of Europe* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1997) 267.

³⁷ The concept was launched during the Dutch Presidency of the EU in June 1997 (see also Wolfgang Beck et al., ed., *Social Quality: A Vision for Europe* [The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2001]) and seeks to move beyond previous approaches to the evaluation of quality such as, for example, "quality-adjusted life years" (in the medical field) and the United Nations Development Programme's index of social life, the Human Development Index. It is in the selecting of quantitative measures on the basis of qualitative principles that Social Quality can be differentiated from Quality of Life discussions. Proponents of Social Quality find the theoretical framework of Quality of Life to be "often weak and individualistic" (Alan Walker and Laurent van der Maesen, "Social Quality and Quality of Life," (paper presented to the ISQoLS Conference, Frankfurt, Germany, July 2003) 17, http://www.socialquality.nl/site/ima/SQvsQoL_AW_July%202003.pdf (accessed May 31, 2007).

The Subjective Conditional Factors of Social Quality

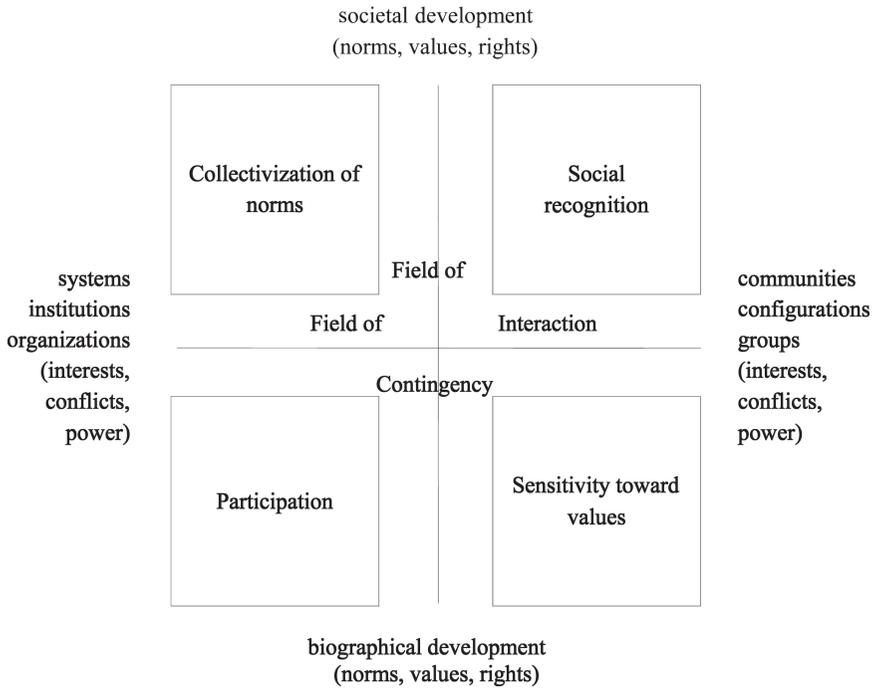


Figure 1³⁸

The “social” “concerns the self-realization of individuals as social beings in the context of the formation of collective identities.”³⁹ Four objective conditions must be fulfilled for people to have an acceptable level of Social Quality: socioeconomic security, social inclusion, social cohesion, and empowerment. The social world is constituted, on the one hand, through the dialectic between structure and agency (societal development and biographical development)—the vertical axis (see Figure 1), and, on the other hand, between the formal and informal (institutions and organizations, and communities, groups, and individuals)—the horizontal axis. Because the model assumes the dynamics of interacting individuals (who orient themselves based on self-reference) it, crucially, considers the subjective dimensions of Social Quality: “we also have to consider the cognitive, motiva-

³⁸ Van der Maesen and Walker, *ibid.* 14.

³⁹ Laurent J. G. van der Maesen and Alan C. Walker, “Social Quality: The Theoretical State of Affairs” (Amsterdam: European Foundation on Social Quality, 2002) 11, http://www.socialquality.nl/site/ima/theory_state_of_affairs.pdf (accessed May 31, 2007).

tional and affective aspects of self-interpretation as they are in definition crucial aspects of interacting human beings.”⁴⁰

It is here that Social Quality gives prominence to individuals’ self-realization and formation of collective identities in a social context. Both axes (see Figure 1), and the tensions they represent, produce “points of gravitation” in which the social is concretized. The horizontal axis enables analysis of interests, conflicts, and power. The vertical opens opportunities to engage with norms, values, and rights. The practice of power by an institution viewed from the perspective of developing values for society produces a point of gravitation identified as “collectivization of norms.” The similar practice of power, from the outlook that is concerned with personal (biographical) development of norms, generates a gravitational point in which “participation” is of significant concern. When the practice of power is by a community, we find substantive issues of “social recognition” (as regards societal development) and “sensitivity towards values” (from a personal perspective).

Although a diagrammatic representation using vertical and horizontal axes suggests a theoretical context in which they are orthogonal (i.e., uncorrelated),⁴¹ the original authors concede a more dynamic process: “maybe the axes are not dimensions but, rather, define a field in which distinct social forces operate. Then the components could be understood as different articulations of these forces or their outcomes.”⁴²

“Quality” is found in the circumstances of daily life in which people are engaged in permanently changing interactions. The process of policy-making requires that criteria of citizenship and objective and subjective components of social relations are all taken into account in making judgment. Each has its own appropriate data. There exist formal criteria of citizenship rights in EU treaties. The objective components may be measured by quantitative indicators. The subjective components can be elucidated by means of qualitative profiles (addressing, for example, the role of life scripts and the biographical stories of the social actors).

CITIZENSHIP AND SOCIAL QUALITY

Social Quality asks questions of policy-makers that are grounded in the practice of negotiating citizenship. It interrogates policy in terms that are at the heart of claims for identity recognition, for example, social cohesion, empowerment, and access to socioeconomic security. Yet, Social Quality

⁴⁰ Ibid. 11.

⁴¹ David Phillips and Yitzhak Berman, “Definitional, Conceptual, and Operational Issues,” in *Social Quality* 125–46.

⁴² Wolfgang Beck, Laurent J. G. van der Maesen, Fleur Thomése, and Alan Walker, “Reflections on the Social Quality Initiative,” in *ibid.* 158.

also invites analysis of the effects of policy on people's affective responses, for example, the respect they experience for the particular values and how collectivizing of norms is taking place.

Social Quality offers a way of understanding our forging of identity in the midst of a variety of forces and a way of evaluating the results against objective and subjective criteria. It has scope for a "vanishing point" of the common good to which the experience of the social (i.e., substantive citizenship) can continue to reach toward. It has strong normative and ideological content in, for example, its use of "sufficient" within a definition of socioeconomic security.⁴³ The precarious identity of the social agent is respected in the interaction between the two axes within Social Quality. A cultural politics of identity and difference plays out also within this complex field. The subjective gravitational points alert us to outcomes (e.g., sensitivity or social recognition) while the objective factors offer the possibility of quantitative measures of inclusion or empowerment. As a result, unequal treatments can be formulated that are not normalizing but attuned to plural circumstances. This outcome will not be unproblematic because Social Quality theorists hope to find a "new configuration characterizing and stabilizing the diversity of "European" identities."⁴⁴ They are consciously following critics of the postmodernist commentary on ideology. Rather than not concerning themselves with a coherent vision of the common good, Social Quality theorists: "aim at a theory of social quality that can build on consensus and by these means can influence democratic norms and values. In terms of Bauman, it means that social quality has to be a goal, or a moving target, offering something positive to all the major forces of Europe."⁴⁵

The Social Quality model moves us beyond a dichotomized analysis that relies on binary oppositions. Instead of valorizing agency over structure, self over other, or individual over community, it presents subjectivity as dynamic and complex.⁴⁶ It is also valuable for its making the circumstances

⁴³ "Socio-economic security is the degree to which people have sufficient resources over time"; for a discussion of the consciously normative aspect, see Margo Keizer, "Social Quality and the Component of Socio-economic Security," 4th draft, working paper (Amsterdam: European Foundation on Social Equality, 2004) 6. The normative and ideological content is recognized at a conceptual level by van der Maesen and Walker quoted in David Phillips, "Social Cohesion, Social Exclusion, and Social Quality," ESPAnet Conference, 2003, <http://www.sfi.dk/graphics/ESPAnet/papers/Phillips.pdf> (accessed May 31, 2007).

⁴⁴ Van der Maesen and Walker, "Social Quality: The Theoretical" 7.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 10, referring to Zygmunt Bauman, *In Search of Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999).

⁴⁶ For a discussion of subjectivity in the context of citizenship see Elizabeth

of daily life the main point of reference for quality.⁴⁷ As a result the model requires us to reach beyond mere tolerance of others and face up to a much more substantial ideal of equality. Such a response would be not far from how some commentators understand political critique to be a form of political action.⁴⁸ Similarly, the holistic approach to quality inherent in the model recognizes that respect includes dimensions of passion and affect. We have interest in the impact of policy formation upon persons' appreciation of their value, connectedness, and purpose. These are vital forces recognized particularly within calls for cultural citizenship.⁴⁹ The ideological content recognizes, with Mouffe and particularly Fraser, that a substantive content is demanded when a politics of identity is linked to a social politics of justice and equality. This understanding of the social is not "what is common" but "processes of self-realization within a context of collective identities."⁵⁰ Such an approach is far removed from the supposed neutrality of liberal polity, which itself masks differentials in power relationships and resource allocation. It is more dynamic that a communitarianism of one substantive vision of the common good. Social Quality is sufficiently nuanced to address the pluriformity of human identity while grounding it in everyday socioeconomic concerns.

SOCIAL QUALITY AND SPIRITUALITY

Recall that my understanding of spirituality is the self-realization of the human spirit in self-transcendence and self-reflexivity toward one's horizon of ultimate value—what otherwise might be "coming to oneself" as suggested in the parable of the prodigal son and forgiving father. Social Quality is a socioeconomic model of participation under conditions that enhance well-being and individual potential. I have already recognized citizenship as transcended by spirituality and at the same time a field of embodying or actualizing what it means to be spiritual. My first direction of approach was from spirituality to citizenship. Here I continue to move from citizenship to spirituality, having come part of the way in recognizing the strong link between a Radical Democratic model of citizenship and the concerns of Social Quality. My task now is to articulate the link from Social Quality to spirituality.

There is an overt parallel in Social Quality concerning itself with human self-realization that makes a strong link with spirituality as I am defining it,

Frazer and Nicola Lacey, *The Politics of Community: A Feminist Critique of the Liberal-Communitarian Debate* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993) 176–77.

⁴⁷ Van der Maesen and Walker, "Social Quality: The Theoretical" 13.

⁴⁸ Frazer and Lacey, *Politics of Community* 205.

⁴⁹ See Nick Stevenson, "Cultural Citizenship in the 'Cultural' Society: A Cosmopolitan Approach," *Citizenship Studies* 7 (2003) 331–48.

⁵⁰ Keizer, "Social Quality" 5.

following Rahner. The dynamic tension represented in the axes of Social Quality are not far removed from transcendence when, following Endean, I translate its categories into talk of “identity.” The conditions under which our moments of self-transcendence occur are included within Social Quality—we are spiritual in concrete situations. Staying with the metaphor I have gained from the parable of coming to oneself in the pigsty, I present the model of Social Quality that articulates not simply a description of the pigsty but the complex socioeconomic dynamics of life actualized within its constraints. I am not claiming that the component fields and indicators of Social Quality are synonymous with the dynamics of spirituality or that they can be predictors of spirituality. What I am saying is that, by introducing self-realization into a substantive content of the common good, the Social Quality model opens a conceptual space within an otherwise secular discourse for understanding citizens as people who are spiritual.

The possibilities of a conceptual conversation are not only from spirituality to Social Quality. Our understanding of spirituality co-opted Moltmann’s criteria of liberative actions of God as a christological anchor. Where Social Quality raises the socioeconomic in normative expectations of social inclusion and empowerment, spirituality talks of the liberating action of the Spirit of the Christ of God and history as a sacramental venue for God’s actions. In other words, what Social Quality renders in socioeconomic and political terms, spirituality can articulate as events that might bear the hallmarks of the Spirit’s action toward the horizon of creation being brought to completion to the glory of God. Because I have retained an element of anonymity to the work of God’s Spirit in these moments of actualization of life-integration or self-transcendence, I do not violate the theoretical basis of Social Quality (or citizenship for that matter). Moltmann’s concept of God in history through the Spirit, who is indeed the Spirit of Christ, enables us to allow freedom to Social Quality to describe human actualization and to endeavor to ameliorate policy decisions otherwise made on wholly, or more limited, economic grounds. From a standpoint that recognizes a transcendental theology of the person and a sacramental theology of history I am free to develop a perspective on the socioeconomic factors that both liberate and enslave people in their efforts to further their spirituality. Such a perspective strengthens spirituality as including, but as never exhausted in, socioeconomic and political dimensions.

What is missing within Social Quality is the dimension of human hope—against a horizon of the infinite. Although Social Quality has a social understanding of actualizing self in a dynamic process of construction, meaning-making, and seeking of identity, this actualization takes place against a finite horizon. Hope is fundamental to living as an authentic self and to spirituality as self-transcendence. We anticipate the future, cognizant of both our freedom to actualize our potential and the responsibility

of shaping our future.⁵¹ We are constantly engaged in the process of organizing our past, present, and future into a “a holistic perspective that constitutes the temporal context for shaping our identity.”⁵² We are pulled into the future by purposes of survival; to these purposes we attach meaning. We make sense of our multitensed existence by imposing order through narratives, in particular stories whose plot or trajectory points to one or more possible futures. Andrew Lester defines hope in terms of its configuration of both “cognitive and affective responses to life that believes the future is filled with possibilities and offers a blessing.”⁵³ The capacity to hope is twofold. It reaches into an open-ended future but also gives specific content in terms of goals—be these objects, events, or relationships. This twofold structure Lester simplifies into the categories of transfinite and finite hope. In terms of spirituality, our security is in a relationship (with the transfinite) not in objects of finite potentiality only. We are thus enabled to risk finite hoping. Whether in a cultural politics of identity linked with a social politics of justice and equality or more specifically within the dynamics articulated in Social Quality, hope is vital but can be placed in finite objects that cannot bear the load. Spirituality, again with Moltmann’s sacramental view of history, itself predicated on a sophisticated understanding of hope, provides a corrective to Social Quality. It is beyond the scope of this article, but the question arises as to how a person’s experience of hope, whether with a finite or infinite focus, might be included within the measures or indicators of social quality. Such a component might offer substantial insight into the particularly religious dimensions of spirituality under conditions of socioeconomic marginalization or, at the other end of the spectrum, assertions of dominance.

CONCLUSION

I have demonstrated how the fields of citizenship and spirituality have a conceptual point of contact in the notion of Social Quality. Contentions over the allocation of limited resources, be these political, welfare, or cultural, can result in simplistic and oppressive categorization—for example, between long-standing residents and newly arrived migrants. My model reminds us that in whatever groups we may find ourselves—willingly or unwillingly—we all may know moments of infinite longing and radical optimism. In our shared humanity, we know moments of infinite longing and of radical optimism. Regardless of on which side of a fence we fall when groups form, we are all spiritual, for to be so is intrinsic to our

⁵¹ Andrew D. Lester, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995).

⁵² *Ibid.* 14.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 62.

humanity as God-given in graciousness. Our claims to citizenship are, at least in part, mediated by the dynamic of self-actualization I have presented as Social Quality, which gives a socioeconomic perspective to dimensions of human spirituality. It would be naïve in the extreme to think that shared spirituality could be a meeting point for actual individuals. To do so would be to misuse the theological model of self-transcendence and self-reflexivity by collapsing the material into the formal. As lived experience, spirituality may offer resources and examples that reach across socioeconomic or cultural divides. From a Christian theological perspective, I would hope that such an attitude of hospitality would prevail even as we acknowledge the divisions that conflicted expressions of spirituality can bring.

I do not intend to portray spirituality as a lowest common denominator of human experience, akin to a universal religion. In fact, it is the particularity of expressions of spirituality that must be respected and valued when considering it as formal object. Nor do I wish to present the lived experience of spirituality as always benign. With a strong substantive content of liberative action (theologically grounded in a trinitarian Christology and Pneumatology) legitimate discrimination between wholesome and toxic spiritual practices can and must be undertaken.

From the field of citizenship, particular spiritual traditions are called to reflect upon their own foreclosure on notions of the common good, in favor of a “vanishing point” that is always partial and provisional. Despite their claims and aspirations to all-encompassing and integrative worldviews, spiritual traditions must accept that they form one (perhaps often the predominant) meaning-making framework for people. This is not to mistakenly consign spirituality to its own field of citizenship as if it were parallel to a particular cultural identity. I am not advocating a new category of “spiritual citizenship” to join “consumer citizenship,” “sexual citizenship,” or the like.

A transcendental theology of the person and a sacramental theology of history avoid reductionism that makes spirituality a product of socioeconomic (and, although I have not considered it, psychological) forces, because it retains an indispensable place for the numinous and mysterious, albeit often anonymous, grace-ful actions of God. To feel the need to publicly claim historical events (including those of ordinary people’s spirituality) as the work of the Spirit of Christ is perhaps more an expression of a need to control the agenda than it is an expression of a faith that can live with an often “anonymous God.” In my model, our own pigsty can be a sacrament of God’s presence, the confluence of experiences in which we “come to ourselves.” Our pigsty is not the work of the Spirit of Christ because it is recognized and claimed as such. Our pigsty is sacramental because God has graciously made us self-transcendent and makes our spirituality of the pigsty true for us by the Spirit of Christ.