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## BAD CIVIL SOCIETY

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**O**n July 4, 1999, Benjamin Smith, a member of the World Church of the Creator, went on a shooting rampage targeting Jews, African Americans, and Asian Americans. Despite the Church's disavowal of any connection or support for his actions, one look at the Web site of the World Church of the Creator makes it quite clear where Mr. Smith nurtured his hatred and fear. The World Church of the Creator promotes and fosters many of the "goods" associated with civil society, however. Participants learn cooperation and trust. They acquire a sense of belonging and perhaps meaning in their lives. They develop the virtues of civility and sacrifice, at least among themselves. They are asked to rise above narrow self-interest and take on a perspective of the group. But the World Church of the Creator, even without the mad acts of one deranged individual who merely brought this group to our attention, is an example of bad civil society. Its existence and the existence of many other similar groups asks us to rethink and perhaps take a different perspective on the "civil society argument."<sup>1</sup>

The gist of the civil society argument, which has received a great deal of attention of late, goes something like this: a robust, strong, and vibrant civil society strengthens and enhances liberal democracy.<sup>2</sup> But a civil society full of World Churches of the Creator clearly would not perform this function. Is this a serious worry? Although it is not likely that American civic life is going to be overrun by such organizations, we do feel that not enough attention has been paid to the theoretical and empirical dilemmas that the existence of such

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groups raise.<sup>3</sup> One possible reason for the lack of interest and concern about bad groups in the civil society literature can be found in the genesis of the civil society argument.<sup>4</sup>

There are many versions of the civil society argument, often diverging on the issue of exactly how civil society and associational participation enhance liberal democracy. Defenders of many versions of the argument are in agreement, however, concerning the negative hypothesis: the destruction or disappearance of associational life signals the demise of democracy. The negative thesis arose out of two opposite but eerily similar pathologies facing democratic orders (or potential democratic orders) in the late twentieth century: atomistic individualism, on one hand, and isolating totalitarianism, on the other. The former is thought to undermine democracy by denuding citizens of any of the skills, interests, and dispositions necessary to make liberal democracy work. The latter destroys the potential for democracy by forcing citizens to retreat into isolation from fear of the state.

In both cases, we see civil society addressing the debilitating affects of depoliticization and withdrawal that are potentially devastating for democracy. If the question is, Which is better for democracy, self-absorbed individualism or associational participation? the answer seems to be clear: associational participation holds more promise for democracy. The answer is not just clear but glaringly obvious in the case of totalitarianism. We must choose autonomous self-organization over frightened isolation as the friend of democracy every time. But what if this is no longer the question? Certainly in Eastern Europe it is no longer the obvious question. In America, it is not clear if it was ever the right question, as Americans have always been joiners and it is now hotly contested whether that pattern of participation is in decline.<sup>5</sup> The more important question facing us is what *type* of civil society promotes democracy. In other words, the choice is not really between isolation and participation but rather between different types of participation. But in this debate, few are talking about types of participation that undermine democracy. Although many acknowledge that participation is no panacea, the debate often proceeds as if it were. We want to talk about civic participation that weakens liberal democracy. We want to talk about bad civil society.

In this essay, then, we make three claims. (1) The problem of bad civil society is more serious for the civil society argument than is usually acknowledged even in stable democracies like the United States. (2) The problem of bad civil society requires the introduction of a comparative analysis to get the right angle on the problem. We will argue that the right angle involves asking the question, Why do people join "bad" organizations? and this is partially answered by looking at places where a lot of people do join such organizations. (3) We will argue that socioeconomic factors are very important in

understanding why people join “bad” organizations, and this in turn means that we need to put civil society theory back into contact with some traditional issues of social justice.

We begin with a section (I) outlining some examples of civil association that appear to undermine the civil society argument. We then very briefly introduce a comparative perspective on civil society that highlights socioeconomic factors influencing group membership choice (II). The four sections that follow discuss possible responses to bad civil society including arguments that see bad civil society as an issue of containment (III), as a freedom of association issue (IV), as a moral education issue (V), and finally as an issue of democratic efficacy (VI). We argue that although all these approaches offer interesting insights into the role and significance of associations, they often fail to acknowledge and address the problem either by way of a discussion of the causes of bad civil society or the solutions to bad civil society. We conclude with a call for theorists in their discussion of civil society to reengage economics and questions of basic welfare and material security that were once core elements of political philosophy (VII).

A final word about what we mean by bad civil society. For the purposes of this essay, we understand bad civil society to refer to something narrower than general illiberal and antidemocratic tendencies. In the first place, we do not want to deny that a legitimate and indeed positive role of associations sometimes involves resisting and contesting the liberal state. We do not want to insist on what Nancy Rosenblum has called “congruence”—the idea that only groups that actively and directly promote liberal values are valuable.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, we do not want to enter the debate about what promotes liberal democracy at all. Thus, we do not offer a full theory of civil society that would, among other things, catalogue all the ways that associational life in all its guises can support and strengthen a political culture or be valuable to individuals or offer some good. We will leave this to others.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, we do not offer a full definition of civil society beyond saying that whatever else it includes, it includes voluntary associations. Again, many others have taken the lead in this.<sup>8</sup>

We have chosen a minimal and negative approach to the question of bad civil society. It is minimal because we only investigate one value that we argue is a necessary but far from sufficient condition for the long-term viability of liberalism. We call this value the value of reciprocity. Reciprocity involves the recognition of other citizens, even those with whom one has deep disagreement, as moral agents deserving civility. Our approach is negative because we do not investigate all the ways to promote this value so much as look at associations that actively and publicly challenge this value through the promotion of hate, bigotry, racism, anti-Semitism, and aggressive xeno-

phobia. The question here is not whether groups discriminate in their membership, although it is hard to imagine a group that publicly advocated some form of hate that did not discriminate. The question is about whether their stated values, beliefs, creed, agenda, ideology, or platform is clearly incompatible with a belief in equal moral consideration.<sup>9</sup> We are investigating the causes of one particular pathology of civil society: groups that advocate hate and bigotry. We are justified in taking this narrow case because, although many things may undermine liberal democracy, nothing destroys it (or makes it impossible to build) faster than hate.

### *I. BOWLING WITH FARRAKHAN*

In 1995, Robert Putnam published a now famous article titled "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," which has been recently expanded into a book under the same title. In both studies, he defends a Tocquevillian view that stresses the "importance of a strong and active civil society to the consolidation of democracy."<sup>10</sup> Whereas many scholars had accepted Tocqueville's assessment that American democracy had experienced a successful consolidation precisely because of its strong and active civil society, Putnam argues that "there is striking evidence . . . that the vibrancy of American civil society has notably declined over the past several decades."<sup>11</sup> He cites much evidence in defense of this claim, but the example that furnished the title of the article and book has become the poster child of civic decline: "Between 1980 and 1993 the total number of bowlers in America increased by 10 percent, while league bowling decreased by 40 percent." The social significance of the rise of solo bowling "lies in the social interaction and occasional civic conversations over beer and pizza that solo bowlers forgo."<sup>12</sup> Bowling alone does not produce "social capital"; that is, it does not produce the "networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit."<sup>13</sup>

We have no quarrel with this argument. It probably is the case that the rise of solo bowling signals a social shift that has implications for the character of civil society. Our problem with Putnam is on the other side of the argument. It is the assumption that bowling in a league will produce the sort of social capital that will strengthen rather than undermine democracy. As the title of this section implies, that depends on who makes up one's league and what sort of substantive beliefs are being reinforced in the "occasional civic conversations" that go on while one bowls. In his earlier work, Putnam argued that as long as associations are not vertically organized, they foster the right sort of social capital. He now admits that he failed to acknowledge that a "whites

only" bowling league would not create the same kind of social capital as an integrated one. The lessons of trust and solidarity, of developing an "I" into a "we," do not strengthen democracy when the trust, solidarity, and the "we" are such that they do not go beyond the group in question. As Amy Gutmann has succinctly put it,

Among its members, the Ku Klux Klan may cultivate solidarity and trust, reduce the incentives for opportunism, and develop some "I's" into a "we" . . . (but) . . . the associational premises of these solidaristic ties are hatred, degradation, and denigration of fellow citizens and fellow human beings.<sup>14</sup>

We need to recognize the difference between particularist civility and a more democratic civility. Particularist civility contains all the goods that are associated with participation (trust, public spiritedness, self-sacrifice), but only between members of a particular group, and it often encourages the opposite sort of attitude to members outside of the group. Democratic civility, in contrast, extends the goods learned in participation to all citizens regardless of group membership.

Putnam has since revised his theory of social capital in an attempt to address some of these problems. We do not feel the revisions are completely satisfactory, however. In the introductory chapter of *Bowling Alone*, Putnam admits that "Social Capital, in short, can be directed toward malevolent, anti-social purposes, just like any other form of capital. . . . Therefore it is important to ask how the positive consequences of social capital . . . can be maximized and the negative manifestations . . . minimized."<sup>15</sup> Putnam then notes a number of distinctions that are helpful in this regard, the most important being between social capital that stresses bridging and social capital that emphasizes bonding. Bonding involves looking inward and tends to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups. Bridging, by contrast, involves making connections across social, ethnic, and political cleavages.

This is, as Putnam notes, an important distinction; it is not able, however, to distinguish bad from good social capital any more than his original undifferentiated model could. Bonding includes such diverse groups as "church-based women's reading groups, ethnic fraternal organizations, and fashionable country clubs."<sup>16</sup> While admitting that bonding and bridging may be in tension, Putnam insists that bonding is as important as bridging, and many of his examples of good social capital are heavy on the bonding function, for example, neighborhood or church ties. To deal with the problem of "malevolent" social capital, one would have to look more deeply into bonding and ask which bonding actively discourages what we have called *democratic civility*. We believe that this cannot be assessed without taking up the

ideological content and substantive messages that members receive. Knowing that a church-based women's reading group is an essentially bonding experience does not tell you whether they are reading *The Turner Diaries* or *The Color Purple*. In any case, Putnam never takes up these sorts of questions or even the general theme of bonding versus bridging, because, finding "no reliable, comprehensive, nationwide measures of social capital that neatly distinguish 'bridgingness' and 'bondingness' . . . this distinction will be less prominent [in the book] than I would prefer."<sup>17</sup> And indeed, it is not discussed in any analytic or sociologically rigorous way.<sup>18</sup>

While more and more scholars, like Putnam, are recognizing that a vibrant civil society can contain elements that are an anathema to democracy, there remains a lingering, neo-Tocquevillian enthusiasm for participation as such, especially when it is conceived, as Putnam conceives it, as a choice between civic engagement and individual apathy. Even Nancy Rosenblum, who is skeptical of a general political effect of associational membership, nevertheless notes a general moral significance: "the chief and constant contribution of associations to moral development is cultivating the disposition to cooperate."<sup>19</sup> But the moral significance of cooperation must be tied to the question, Cooperation with whom? Cultivating the disposition to cooperate with members of one's own race might be better described as moral decline than as development. Rosenblum, like so many others, including those she criticizes for their Tocquevillian excesses, sees civil society through traditional liberal/communitarian categories: civil society is an antidote to anomie, apathy, and isolation. What we argue is that this perspective fails to see that *sometimes* the cure is worse than the disease. In addition to looking at associations from the point of view of participation versus nonparticipation, we suggest that the political and moral significance of associations also requires that we look at associations from the point of view of the substantive values that are promoted within associations. From this perspective, the political value of civil society for democracy clearly becomes a contingent affair. As two critics of civil society literature put it, "if civil society is a beachhead secure enough to be of use in thwarting tyrannical regimes, what prevents it from being used to undermine democratic governments?"<sup>20</sup>

The Weimar Republic had a vibrant and well-organized civil society that gave birth to and nurtured the Nazi movement.<sup>21</sup> High levels of associational participation in post-1918 Italy correlate very nicely with support for Mussolini.<sup>22</sup> The new civil societies of Russia and Eastern Europe are home to groups like the Russian National Unity and the Romanian National Union that organize large numbers of citizens around proto-fascist ideologies. During the Communist era, the former Yugoslavia arguably had the most developed civil society of any Eastern European country. Yet this did little to pre-

vent the post-Communist era being inaugurated with ethnic cleansing, civil war, and the worst massacres in Europe since World War II.<sup>23</sup> Conversely, some have argued that one of the factors protecting Russia from an antiliberal takeover is the relative weakness of its civil society, making it difficult to organize a large-scale social movement.<sup>24</sup>

One response to what has already been said is to suggest that perhaps the problem of bad civil society is only a problem for nations such as post-World War II Germany or post-Soviet Russia that lack stable democratic traditions. It is not likely that illiberal forces will triumph within the American context in any near future. Nevertheless, the United States is full of groups that advocate illiberal and antidemocratic causes.<sup>25</sup> Should we be worried? We argue that the smaller scale of illiberalism in the United States compared to, say, Russia, is not a reason to dismiss the dangers of bad civil society in the American context. Nor is it a reason to dismiss the relevance of comparison. Clearer cases of bad civil society can shed light on less clear cases.

A great deal of the debate about civil society assumes a type of American exceptionalism that makes comparison seem irrelevant. This is sometimes warranted. The constitutional tradition of the United States does point to an idiosyncratic set of arguments and considerations in the American case. But it also sometimes leads to complacency. The complacency goes like this: illiberal forces are small, marginalized, and contained within a strong rights tradition. It is inconceivable, given our strong constitutional tradition, that the liberal state should fall to such forces. Thus, we do not need to learn any lessons from nations where the state does appear to be jeopardized, or where there are no strong liberal traditions.<sup>26</sup>

This view is shortsighted for two reasons. First, even if it is the case that illiberal forces are small in number today, it is not a waste of time to try to understand the phenomena of bad civil society. This might allow us to identify warning signs of the growth of bad civil society in the future. But second and more important, the danger contained in bad civil society is not exclusively about the ability to directly destabilize the state through the mobilization of large numbers of people. Illiberal forces need not set their cap on the state to undermine liberalism. Because illiberal forces cannot destabilize the state does not mean that they cannot contribute to an insidious erosion of values that leaves liberalism vulnerable to all sorts of threats.<sup>27</sup>

The most important of these threats is the potential spillover of extremist rhetoric into the mainstream of political discourse. Hate groups not only feed off of divisions in a given society, they also nurture them. One need only read the Web sites of extremist groups such as the Freemen or the Hammerskin movements or listen to the talk radio of G. Gordon Liddy and then read the speeches of Pat Buchanan with his references to the Congress as "Israeli



Occupied Territory” or Pat Robertson with his cabals of “international bankers” to understand how hate rhetoric can be repackaged by clever mainstream politicians and how it filters its way into popular discourse. Hate groups are the ideological nurseries of ideas that can form the core of much more pernicious larger associations. It is not unreasonable to say that the Freemen and the Christian Identity movement provide the theory and that people like Timothy McVeigh provide the practice. But even when this does not occur, even when hate groups do not grow in size or carry out violent acts, their ideas often infect the political mainstream and diminish the reservoir of good will between citizens that is essential to any healthy democracy.<sup>28</sup>

The Nation of Islam is good example of this. What is worrisome about the Nation of Islam is not simply, or even mainly, the number of recruits and converts it gathers into the organization. What is worrisome is the number of African Americans outside the Nation of Islam who find Louis Farrakhan an inspirational and positive figure.<sup>29</sup> Louis Farrakhan and the leaders of the Nation of Islam, it is safe to say, are purveyors of hate. Although they have attempted of late to moderate their message and head toward the political “center,” they continue to propagate paranoid anti-Semitism (that in tone and content is ironically similar to Robertson’s) and insulting views of Catholics, gays, and white people. We do not deny, indeed it is important to our argument that we acknowledge, that in addition to racist messages, the Nation of Islam provides some very important goods to its members as well as African Americans in general. These goods appear to outweigh the fact that Louis Farrakhan stands for all the things that liberal democracy abhors. “Ordinary” African Americans can ignore, overlook, or just not care about the fact that Farrakhan fans the flames of bigotry. This general support is evidence that the necessity of supporting democratic reciprocity fails as a trump card for a significant sector of the population. One must ask oneself why this is this case. Why is the value of reciprocity not strong enough among a significant number of African Americans to induce a majority of them to repudiate Louis Farrakhan? The answer must be found in a general weakness, perhaps failure, on the part of liberal democracy. Liberal democracy has failed to find a strong enough place within the hearts and minds of a sector of African Americans because liberal democracy has failed many African Americans. This is a serious problem that we should care about and that is manifest in many examples of bad civil society.

The Nation of Islam is a troubling case, a hard case, and a case that it is not impossible to imagine replicated in other sectors of society. It is a troubling case for the reasons we just sketched. It is a hard case partly because it is not a case of freedom of association. There is no question here about whether the state should limit or even prohibit this group. Such an interference would vio-

late the very values of toleration and respect (not to mention religious freedom) we wish to defend. This is not a case in which the group has no or very few redeeming qualities. The Nation of Islam has many such qualities. It imparts a sense of discipline, self-worth, and trust among its followers. It carries out important local functions of crime fighting and security in areas where the government has repeatedly failed. The Nation of Islam performs many of the functions and roles for which we value associational life. But nevertheless, we want to say that its growing popularity and strength would be a bad thing for democracy, for it promotes particularist civility at the expense of democratic civility. It would be better if recruits and supporters alike could find all the “goods” offered by the Nation in other organizations that did everything the Nation did but without the hate.

## II. THE ECONOMICS OF HATE

We are not alone in recognizing that civil society often stands in a much more complex relationship to democracy than supporters of the civil society argument tend to acknowledge. Most notable in this regard is Nancy Rosenblum’s thorough study of American civil society and her call to scale back the political claims made on behalf of civil society and look at the “personal uses of pluralism in America,” to quote her subtitle. Furthermore, many students of civil society acknowledge that civil society can be the home of dangerous illiberal elements and develop strategies to deal with these groups. In the remainder of this essay, we evaluate these strategies. We come to two conclusions. The first is that in acknowledging that not all associational life supports (or ought to support) democracy, many theorists, but especially Nancy Rosenblum, undervalue the danger posed by hate groups. Second, strategies to deal with hate groups often fail to take into consideration socio-economic factors that contribute to the attractiveness of such groups. It is not so much the existence of bad groups that worries us. It is the existence of (sometimes good) *reasons to join bad groups* that worries us. In contrast to political theory, empirical scholars in the past two decades have turned away from the emotional and toward the social and economic conditions that foster hate groups and political extremism.

One way to get a grasp on this problem is to look comparatively at places where people are joining bad groups and ask, Who joins? Let us start with the most famous case: the Nazis in Germany. Although inferring political behavior from economic position is always a hazardous endeavor, the evidence from the Nazi case is quite convincing. Recent scholarship on who became Nazis after 1925, based on thousands of individual-level membership

records, indicate that the decision to become a Nazi was tied to concrete material deprivations of the people who joined and the specific proposals for their amelioration put forward in the Nazi program.<sup>30</sup> This is not to say that material deprivation was the only cause of, or even a sufficient condition for, the rise of Nazism; but we can say with some assurance that the core of the Nazi membership (those who joined before 1932) came from regions and occupations most severely affected by economic hardships. It can be assumed that not all joiners adhered to Nazi racial ideology. Like the Nation of Islam, however, supporters could overlook the party's failure to support principles of reciprocity in the pursuit of more concrete goods.

In contemporary Russia and in much of post-Communist Eastern Europe, right-wing skin heads and other extremist groups, as well as supporters of right-wing parties such as Barkashov's Russian National Unity, tend to be drawn disproportionately from the downsized industrial suburban regions.<sup>31</sup> Zyuganov's national communists are drawn disproportionately from downwardly mobile elderly voters, impoverished rural voters, and unpaid industrial workers.<sup>32</sup> In short, post-Communism's globalization crisis has provided the fuel for its antiliberal movements.<sup>33</sup> The point here is that it is not growing inequality alone that has fueled the support for antiliberal movements in the post-Communist world. Significant inequality always existed in the Soviet Union. What is new, however, is the upheaval associated with the prospect of unemployment and the potential for radical downward mobility, something that was virtually unknown in the Communist era.

Evidence of the relevance of this lesson in the American context is not hard to find. According to a recent report of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), in the 1990s, extremists succeeded best in recruiting among the young in "edge cities," where parents worked long hours, faced the prospects of downsizing, and did not have the time to build the integrative structure that would provide alternatives for young people.<sup>34</sup> Although Donald Green and his collaborators have recently argued that macroeconomic performance does not correlate very well with anomic hate crimes, the same is not true, they admit, for *organized* group behavior, precisely the kind of behavior that should interest students of bad civil society.<sup>35</sup> As Robert Wuthnow has shown in a recent study, to the extent that "good" social capital has declined in the United States over the past two decades, "this decline has occurred among marginalized groups whose living situations have become more difficult during this period."<sup>36</sup> International relations scholars have long maintained that there is an intimate relationship between international inequality and antiliberalism between societies at the level of the international system.<sup>37</sup> It is not unreasonable to argue that such a relationship also exists within national societies.

The most extensive and systematic research on participation and political support for extremist parties movements and groups, however, has been carried out on Western Europe. Multiple studies of Western European countries have convincingly and repeatedly demonstrated the close link between high unemployment (as well as a host of other institutional, demographic, and nonsocioeconomic causes) and support for extremist groups and political parties.<sup>38</sup> Of course, this simple statistical association is not easily interpreted. For one thing, most research does not show that it is only the unemployed who are joining these groups or voting for extremist parties.<sup>39</sup> Nor does it show that people with low incomes incline to extremism any more than those with higher incomes.<sup>40</sup> Most important, even if unemployment is a *necessary* cause of support for extremist movements, it is clearly not a *sufficient* cause (indeed, for any important political phenomenon there is unlikely to be a single sufficient cause). What it does suggest, however, is that in societies where people define their self-worth in terms of their ability to obtain work and secure a living wage, the very threat of downward mobility is often enough to move a growing segment of the population toward extremist views and entice them to follow extremist leaders. Unemployment is but one indicator—to be sure an important one—of social dislocation or threatened dislocation, especially the kind of dislocation that is generated in advanced capitalist societies, even those that are experiencing long-term aggregate growth.

We believe that rather than dismiss a search for the socioeconomic roots of bad civil society as inherently unknowable or indeterminate, and therefore retreat into a fuzzy explanation of “anomie,” theorists could contribute a great deal to unpacking the etiology of group membership and reconnecting the analysis of good versus bad social capital to traditional issues of social justice. It is important to note here that the empirical research that establishes the connection between unemployment and bad civil society is not purely materialist in its implications. Nor do we raise it to “refute” the anomie thesis as put forward by Nancy Rosenblum and the long tradition in social psychology that informs her analysis. Both processes, socioeconomic dislocation and anomie, may be at work simultaneously. In the industrialized West, deprivation and the threat of downward mobility is most frequently experienced over long periods of time, and within families, as a profoundly cultural matter. Instead, contemporary cross-national studies of extremist groups suggest that political theory could help clarify the complex connections between the cultural valence of material life and the sources of anomie in modern society. This suggests that, rather than setting off analyses that emphasize anomie against those that stress threats to material security as

mutually exclusive explanations, the two modes of analysis need to be reintegrated.

Persistent material insecurity makes it difficult to take the promise of liberal democracy seriously. Inequality, if defined not in a static manner as social stratification but, rather, dynamically as the result of changes or threatened changes in life chances, cannot but contribute to the creation of bad social capital. We need to understand the forces that play off the cultural reserves of hate in a society to try to effect change at the level of cause. To repeat: we are not putting forward a hardcore materialist argument to the effect that all ideas are produced by material conditions, but we are arguing that discussions about how to promote and inculcate the values necessary to maintain a healthy liberal democracy need to take more heed of the relationship between material conditions and ideas. Such a discussion should also consider the relationship between material conditions and the *kind* of social capital that is created and destroyed.

Essentially the lesson of East Europe, Russia, and other democratizing areas is that the cogency of the civil society argument is much more dependent on material factors such as economic prospects and changing class position of members of civil society than the theoretical debate would seem to acknowledge. There is no reason to doubt—indeed, there is a great deal of evidence to support—the proposition that this is also true for the West European and American case. Thus, the general thrust of our argument goes something like this: although we applaud the “moral turn” in liberal and democratic theory that concerns itself with the cultural and dispositional requirements of a stable liberal democracy, we argue that this turn should not distract us from some of the material conditions relevant to the production of ideas. Citizens’ beliefs and values, including the beliefs and values that support or undermine liberal democracy, are shaped through a very complex web of factors. Communication, deliberation, education, civic involvement, and so on are surely important components of this web. But also important, and often overlooked in our postmaterial frame of mind, are basic material interests and needs. Poverty, downward social mobility, diminished economic expectations, and even basic inequality as we have defined it here can create illiberal citizens that no amount of deliberation will convince otherwise. This is the lesson of democratizing countries, and we need to take note.

### III. CONCEIVED AS A PROBLEM OF CONTAINMENT

Nancy Rosenblum suggests that hate groups, paramilitary organizations, and militias can serve an important function in a liberal society:

None of these associations are schools of civic virtue, even potentially. But they may serve the purpose of containment. They can provide safety valves. Associations can circumscribe exhibitions of hate and hostile outbreaks of envy. Loathsome groups can be lifelines.<sup>41</sup>

Rosenblum quotes Minutemen leader Robert DePugh, who notes that it is better to have nuts and kooks inside organizations than on their own and as unpredictable as loose canons.

If they decide to blow somebody up, Okay they go blow somebody up. But if they are part of a group . . . well, then there's a good chance someone in the organization will know about it and they're going to take steps to bring this person under control.<sup>42</sup>

This is no doubt sometimes true, but it is not clear how often it is true or even how important such a fact would be. If the containment argument is supposed to ease our mind concerning the presence of bad elements in civil society, then there are three considerations worth keeping in mind. First, and the most obvious observation, is that the containment argument is a contingent argument that only works so long as it works. That is, groups contain violence only so long as they contain violence. They sometimes promote, organize, and execute violence. We should try and find out when they are likely to contain it and when they are not. The United States has had its own taste of terrorism that has made many people wake up to the possibility that our society contains wells of potential violence of which we were unaware. If it were the case that today groups do, to some extent, contain violence, will they always? Rosenblum's predominantly psychological approach is not always helpful in answering this question.

A second concern is that it is not always clear from Rosenblum's argument what is being contained. The quote from DePugh implies that it is violence that is being contained, but at other times Rosenblum implies that the hate itself is being contained. Is the argument that as free-floating individuals, angry and envious citizens will engage in exhibitions of hate, the expression of which would be contained within the group if they only joined up? This view of containment seems less plausible than the one about violence. The very existence of these groups, with their Web sites, literature, and activities, broadcasts their views. The organization of hate into groups can perhaps "circumscribe exhibitions of hate" within the limits of the legal, but they do not circumscribe exhibitions of hate within the limits of the hurtful.

Finally, although the containment argument is sometimes true, it is not always true. It is not clear how one would test it in any empirical way. The World Church of the Creator, although repudiating Benjamin Smith's actions, speaks quite fondly of "Brother Smith" on their Web site and regrets

only his death, nothing else. Is this group containing other potential Benjamin Smiths? Or did it give Smith the reinforcement and confidence he needed to act on his paranoia? Hard to tell. Even though it would be difficult to test the containment hypothesis, it is important to get some kind of a handle on the conditions under which it might or might not be true. Indeed, Rosenblum herself sometimes supports an opposite hypothesis to the effect that, rather than gathering in preexisting extremism into a somewhat moderating environment, many of these groups gather in individuals, particularly youth, who have no particular ideology and “make” them into racists. This is the story that Raphael Ezekiel tells in *The Racist Mind*.<sup>43</sup> It is also the story found in the SPLC study, “Youth at the Edge.” Here a picture emerges of talented and enterprising recruiters who are “having a field day” recruiting disaffected white youth. These are individuals who become seduced by the simplistic messages of hate and blame. They are looking for villains and scapegoats. As we noted earlier, the causes are often tied to economic factors. A spokesperson for the SPLC noted, “With the development of a two tiered economy, we’re seeing the rise of a new underclass susceptible to the lure of hate groups.”<sup>44</sup> It is true that the current economic “boom” has increased wealth at the aggregate level. But it is also true that inequality between the richest and the poorest has been growing for the past decade not only between rich and poor countries but also within the industrialized nations of the West, especially the United States. This cannot but contribute to the insecurity of perceived life chances.

Of course, racists are never completely made. One needs a historic and cultural reservoir to dig up familiar stories and narratives. We are not claiming that economic and social circumstances create hate out of nothing. This is obviously not true in Eastern Europe, where ethnic divisions have a strong hold independent of economic factors. The American context also has its own tradition of hate, racism, and anti-Semitism that was not simply produced by economic injustice or insecurity. Economic insecurities exploit racial and ethnic divisions. They make it difficult if not impossible to overcome historic divisions and differences. They offer fertile ground for stereotypes and scapegoats to blame.

Rosenblum, although willing to acknowledge that economic factors may play a role in the popularity of hate groups, notes that the empirical results are inconclusive.<sup>45</sup> And even if they were conclusive, she is skeptical that we could do anything about it, because addressing such problems “would involve nothing less than eliminating economic insecurity, relieving status anxiety, and configuring policies to legitimize traditional values and communities (without depreciating contemporary liberal one’s).”<sup>46</sup> She assumes that

this is an outrageous agenda, but why? Isn't this what liberal social equality is supposed to strive for?

Rather than social causes, Rosenblum prefers the psychological language of isolation and anomie. Again we see an image, so familiar in contemporary theory, of the unattached individual cast adrift by modernity, seeking meaning and belonging in her life. Sometimes when the causes of anomie are extreme, the sought-after solace is equally extreme. Rosenblum often implies that if the choice is between individual isolation and group membership, who are we to deny the proto-racist or diehard anti-Semite a home? But these are not necessarily the options. Rosenblum herself notes that associational life is very varied and diverse. The choices are sometimes between different types of belonging. Again, we need to work on the causes that give people reasons to join bad groups. The psychologizing approach is often fascinating and insightful. We do not want to deny that anomie is a large part of the story. Our quarrel with Rosenblum is really twofold. First, she does not take the threat of bad civil society seriously enough. She dismisses the threat because (a) if anything, hate groups contain hate; (b) even if they do not, they are small and marginalized anyway; and (c) given American traditions and institutions, they are likely to stay that way. We have argued that (a) the containment thesis is far from proven; (b) even small and marginalized, they can do damage to public trust; and (c) assuming that, say, some version of ethnic cleansing could never happen in America assumes a deep analytical bias in favor of continuity, something we believe it is not prudent to assume. Second, she is too quick to dismiss the role of socioeconomic factors in the story about why people might be attracted to organized hate groups. The evidence does not support her dismissal.

#### *IV. CONCEIVED AS A PROBLEM OF FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION*

One of the natural and obvious questions to ask with regard to bad civil society is, When is the state justified in limiting an association for the sake of promoting liberal democratic values? In the American context, this is most often discussed as a constitutional question for the courts, and ultimately the Supreme Court, to decide. For this reason, much of the interest in bad groups, militias, Nazi groups, and so on is an interest in the legal and moral issue of freedom of association versus state interests and where the line should be drawn.<sup>47</sup> In this context, there is much discussion of Supreme Court rulings and hard or controversial cases establishing precedent. Often the issue at



hand is discrimination, as with the much discussed *Roberts v. United States Jaycees* or *Bob Jones University v. United States* cases. Sometimes the issue is free speech, as with many Nazi cases or the separation of church and state. These cases often raise very important moral questions involving how we balance the good of freedom of association and other goods like equal opportunity. To answer them, theorists must spell out what is so good about freedom of association and what other concerns could possibly trump such a good. Answers to these questions can push us forward in untangling thorny ethical dilemmas associated with a liberal way of life. But these sorts of questions can also distract us from other sorts of questions.

With its strong focus on legal challenges and constitutional cases, the academic literature often gives the impression that once we solve the interference versus noninterference question, we will have solved the problems of bad civil society.<sup>48</sup> Sometimes, however, we want to say that although the state is not justified in limiting a certain association, the activities of that association are worrisome nonetheless and we want to do something about it. Amy Gutmann brings up an interesting counterfactual that speaks to this worry. In talking about *Bob Jones University v. United States*, she argues that the state was within its legitimate right in denying tax exempt status to Bob Jones University on the grounds that the university's policy forbidding interracial dating was a case of racial discrimination that the state could not support. She is not so sure that the same argument would hold if Bob Jones University were a church that forbade miscegenation (the Nation of Islam prohibits miscegenation). Gutmann writes,

Liberal democracies legitimately depend on universities for providing fair educational opportunity in a way that they do not (and should not) depend on churches. . . . In the case of the church, the state could not as clearly claim to have a compelling interest in regulating as a direct means of securing educational and economic opportunity that is free from racial discrimination.<sup>49</sup>

This seems right. Many liberals end the discussion here, however. That is, many theorists end the discussion after justifying the distinction between a university and a church and the role that that distinction ought to play in our reasoning about state action. This is where we want to start the discussion. Just because there are compelling reasons why the state ought not to regulate a church because of its beliefs does not mean we should not care and worry if a church that preaches against miscegenation experiences growing membership.<sup>50</sup> This would still be a problem for liberal democracy even if we were in agreement that the solution was not to place limits on the association. Solving

the where-to-draw-the-line problem does not solve the bad civil society problem.

Some argue that freedom of association itself might combat bad civil society. Bad civil society can be mitigated by ensuring pluralism. We need to promote a civil society that is diverse and varied. In this way, citizens can form attachments that cross-cut the social, ethnic, and racial divisions that feed hate and racism. Although strong freedom of association is a necessary condition of associational pluralism, we want to suggest that it does not by itself necessarily combat bad civil society. As Rosenblum notes, it is not the existence of plural organization that is important; it is the *experience* of pluralism.<sup>51</sup> Stephen Macedo echoes this by noting “the crucial thing is to *foster* memberships that are not tribalistic but pluralistic.”<sup>52</sup> But Rosenblum and sometimes Macedo imply that the existence of a market in associations will in and of itself “foster” the “experience” of pluralism. We do not see why this must follow. Just because there is a relatively open market in associations does not mean that citizens will *choose* cross-cutting memberships. There are other forces at work, including organizations’ own interest in monopolizing their members’ attention.<sup>53</sup> Free markets offer consumers many options, but in and of themselves they do not guarantee that consumers will break out of well-established patterns. What more needs to be done to promote cross-cutting memberships in addition to safeguarding a free market in associations? Or, the question that interests us more: how does one discourage membership in bad organizations without violating basic principles of freedom of association? This question is obliquely addressed by theories interested in the opportunities for civic education offered by a vibrant civil society. However, we argue below that there are nevertheless important shortcomings to this perspective as well.

#### V. CONCEIVED AS A PROBLEM INTERNAL TO CIVIL SOCIETY

A great deal has been written on the ways associational membership can shape citizens’ dispositions, attitudes, and character. Of particular interest are the ways in which associational membership can shape and inculcate the dispositions necessary to maintain a healthy liberal democracy. Although Tocqueville is often the inspiration in these arguments, there is a striking range and variety of democratic effects attributed to associations.<sup>54</sup> Tolerance, respect (both for self and other), cooperation, an interest in the common good, autonomy, communicative and deliberative competence, knowledge,

industriousness, public spiritedness, even governmental effectiveness are just some of the goods said to be attainable through civil engagement.

The variety of goods that can be found in associational life attests to the richness and diversity of civil society. But this should send a warning signal. If we can find liberal, deliberative, and republican goods in civil society, then this must mean, among other things, that civil society is somewhat neutral with regard to the type of political order that it could promote. It is not completely neutral. We know that it is incompatible with totalitarianism. But is it compatible with authoritarianism? The soft-authoritarianism of Wilhelmine Germany, the interwar regimes of east-central and southeastern Europe, and cold war Latin America indicate that the answer is yes. Something similar could be said about parts of Asia where a vibrant and active civil society is developing minus the central value of pluralism.<sup>55</sup> The Islamic tradition is also developing its own conception of civil society that differs significantly from a liberal conception although still stressing voluntary associations.<sup>56</sup>

Civil society, it would appear, can be many things to many people and take many shapes in many cultures. This implies that we should consciously choose the type of civil society we want. And, indeed, we now see an active debate about the ways in which the state should be shaping civil society. Interestingly enough, much of this debate is not spawned by the recognition that civil society is variable and can serve as a home for a vast array of political ideals including illiberal ones. Instead, the debate comes out of the argument that civil society is on the decline in many Western democracies, especially in the United States. The relevant contrast in the literature is not between an associational life that promotes liberal democracy and one that might promote, say, nativism. Rather, it is between an associational life that promotes liberalism and democracy and no associational life at all, or one that is moribund and minimal. Galston is much quoted as saying that "the greatest threat to children in modern liberal society is not that they will believe in something too deeply, but that they will believe in nothing very deeply at all."<sup>57</sup> This does not seem completely right. Certainly, from a political point of view, it would be better for citizens to believe in nothing very strongly than to be swept by a wave of xenophobia or ethnic hate. Which is the more serious threat in liberal democracies? Apathy or hate? Apathy is surely more widespread, but hate is more devastating and can grow to levels that perhaps do not threaten the state's existence but that do threaten the legitimacy and the quality of liberal democracy for those who are the targets of that hate. This is not to say that we should not be combating apathy. It is to say we should not be too confident that hate becomes politically relevant only in places like Kosovo. In any case, the "shaping of civil society" literature can

be helpful with regard to the problem of groups that actively disparage and undermine reciprocity.

The idea here is that states can promote good civil society through policies explicitly designed to strengthen organizations that produce the right sort of moral effects. Such policies would include a vast array of subsidies, tax exception, preferential treatment, partnerships, and the like. We think that the reshaping strategy has promise up to a point. By itself, the tinkering and nudging of civil society in “good” directions will not succeed in keeping bad civil society at bay unless other conditions are met. But is reshaping even possible?

More and more people are taking note of Nancy Rosenblum’s observation that there is no evidence that positive lessons learned in associational life will always have spillover effect in the political realm. This is surely correct, and our example at the beginning of the essay bears witness to this. Members of the Church of the World Creator learn cooperation and trust, but this does not mean that they then become cooperative and trusting democratic citizens. This general observation should not lead us to conclude, however, that we can never come to conclusions about the democratic effects of participation. First of all, we can come to some very clear conclusions about the types of associational membership that do not promote democracy. Rosenblum herself says “social scientists have had more success in demonstrating the moral (typically ill) effect of incongruence between associational life and liberal democracy in particular instances than the logic of incongruence.”<sup>58</sup> If we can identify groups that have clear negative spillover effect, then this does seem to offer targets of indirect policy. In the case of the Nation of Islam, for example, this might involve subsidizing groups that effectively combat drug use and crime in residential areas as well as offer other services provided by the Nation. Furthermore, although spillover does not take place in all cases, it does take place in some cases. Thus, a reshaping agenda calls for studies like Rosenblum’s and Mark Warren’s that can chart the variety of associations out there and the types of things they do and how much they are likely to have a spillover effect. It does call for something like what Macedo talks about—“a science of group life.”<sup>59</sup> It is unlikely ever to be a very precise science, however. We cannot always predict with certainty what the effects of a reshaping policy will be.

In Russia, for example, since 1991 there have been many creative, externally funded programs designed to promote associational life. Dubbed “civil society for export” by one scholar, programs run by such philanthropic organizations as the Ford Foundation, the Eurasia Fund, and the Soros Foundation have altered the organizational landscape in unexpected ways. In addition to

some very positive effects for participants, however, donors have, in some cases, undercut the social bases and support for good organizations through their largesse. In particular, heavily funded groups tend to hew closely to the donors' concerns and lose contact with their constituencies in their own society. The outcome is a patron/client relationship between outside foundations and domestic groups that would otherwise be associating with each other. Groups that do not receive outside funding, by contrast, tend to be less democratic and often are even "bad," but they frequently have a closer connection to society. Creating civic groups with external funding is extraordinarily difficult and, at best, a partial solution to the problem of bad civil society.<sup>60</sup>

Although only suggestive, this illustration of the unintended consequences of shaping indicates that we are far from having a "science of group life." We should be conscious of the ways public policy can affect civil society and, indeed, actively pursue those policies that appear to promote good associations. But our power to predict and control civil society, especially if we adhere to even minimal liberal standards of freedom of association, is tenuous at best. Scholars like Yael Tamir worry that the shaping strategy allows the government to remake civil society in its own image, thus destroying the autonomy of self-organization.<sup>61</sup> Our worry is the opposite (not that we would like to see government remake civil society in its own image). The state has limited power to bring about desired effects. The state is neither neutral nor omnipotent. Civil society is shaped and determined by state policy but not in a very predictable and reliable way. We have a responsibility to try to nudge civil society away from devastating paths, but this should not be our only strategy. Subsidizing "good" groups will not work if individuals are disaffected, and, as the case of Russia shows, in resource-poor environments such a strategy will tend to create small, isolated islands of liberalism and tolerance. The uncertainties of the reshaping approach again indicate that we should also be looking at larger socioeconomic factors that contribute to the rise of bad civil society.

#### *VI. CONCEIVED AS A PROBLEM OF DEMOCRACY*

So far we have argued that bad civil society is, among other things, a problem of social justice. Certain economic insecurities weaken commitment to core liberal democratic values by giving people reasons to distrust the promises of liberal democracy and to seek out scapegoats and targeted groups. Some would regard this as a problem to be addressed by deliberative democracy. The argument might go something like this: joiners are angry not just about their life chances but about their inability to do anything about their life

chances. Bad civil society is really a problem of democracy. It is a problem having to do with political efficacy and voice. Like the moral education argument, there is something to this view. However, it again tends to slide exclusively into an institutional design argument avoiding hard problems of life chances.

Like many civic republicans, deliberative democrats are interested in what Sandel has called the “formative project,” that is, the ways institutions, social structures, and economic forces shape identity, affect interest-formation, and influence value orientation. Theories of deliberative democracy differ from civic republicanism, however, in that they usually take a procedural rather than perfectionist approach to interest formation. For example, in distinguishing deliberative from communitarian approaches to modernity, Seyla Benhabib acknowledges that both approaches identify a pervasive discontent on the part of social actors.<sup>62</sup> Communitarians attribute that discontent to a loss of a sense of belonging, which results in a loss of civic virtue. The cure they prescribe is active associational life. In contrast, Benhabib attributes discontent to a lack of political efficacy. The “malaise” of modernity can be traced to a loss of control over one’s life and the conditions that determine one’s chances. The cure is an accessible and efficacious public sphere.

Where do people turn when their frustration is not addressed? Benhabib, along with many other theorists of deliberative democracy, is primarily concerned with the retreat into apathy and passivity. There are other options, however. Dissatisfied citizens may turn to groups that appear to offer answers to their frustrations but in fact offer only scapegoats. In these situations, the political efficacy argument does speak to the problem of bad civil society. Indeed, there is some empirical research that connects a lack of efficacy in the public sphere with gravitation toward antidemocratic groups. This is Sheri Berman’s conclusion, for example, about the Weimar Republic:

instead of responding to the demands of an increasingly mobilized population, the country’s political structures obstructed meaningful participation in public life. As a result, citizens’ energies and interests were deflected into private associational activities, which were generally organized within rather than across group boundaries.<sup>63</sup>

Our argument is not that a vibrant and effective public sphere will magically transform racists into liberal democrats. It is not about civic reeducation. Nor are we saying that the public expression of antidemocratic sentiment should be encouraged so that it does not infect private associations. The argument goes more like this: there will always be a certain number of people who reject the core principles of liberal democracy. There is nothing much we can do about this hard core. It is the “swing-vote,” if you will, that should

interest us. These are the people *who come to be persuaded* that Jews, immigrants, African Americans, or Croats are to blame, or that liberal democracy as a whole is to blame, for their predicament. An effective and democratic public sphere will not make any difference to people like the Communist Deputy Albert Makashov, who in 1998 stood up in the Russian Parliament and lamented that

life in our country is getting worse and worse. Never before has it been this bad in Russia. . . . Who is to blame? The executive branch, the bankers, and the mass media are to blame. Usury, deceit, corruption, and thievery are flourishing in the country. That is why I call the reformers yids. Who are these Jews?<sup>64</sup>

What is worth investigating is, How many will find Makashov's explanation convincing, and why?

Although the causes of the frustration and discontent that Makashov hopes to exploit are economic, his "explanation" targets a group as the villainous force behind all the bad things that are happening. Although often tapping into deep reservoirs of bias and prejudice, this type of explanation is more likely to persuade the "swing vote" if they have no other reasonable alternative, that is, if all efforts to understand and get a hold of the economic and social circumstances of their life fail. Powerlessness makes people susceptible to solutions that, at the very least, offer the satisfaction of venting one's anger and frustration on a clearly identified villain. Focused hate can be empowering. This conclusion is supported by some research on social movements. For example, Foley and Edwards argue that

where the state is unresponsive, its institutions are undemocratic, or its democracy is ill designed to recognize and respond to citizens demands, the character of collective action will be decidedly different than under a strong and democratic system. Citizens will find their efforts to organize for civil ends frustrated by state policy—at some times actively repressed, at others simply ignored. Increasingly aggressive forms of civil association will spring up, and more and more ordinary citizens will be driven into active militancy against the state or self-protective apathy.<sup>65</sup>

Deliberative democracy has an important contribution to make to this debate because it focuses on empowerment and the forces that block empowerment. But, as with the moral education argument, the risk is that in focusing too narrowly on institutional design, proponents will fail to tackle hard questions of economic insecurity that cause the frustration in the first place. The Habermasian version of deliberative democracy is prone to this problem for two reasons. The first can be tied to the important distinction between system and lifeworld while the second can be found in a stringent proceduralism.

The system/lifeworld distinction spills over into a state/civil society distinction that contributes to a blind spot with regard to the possibility of bad civil society. Although Habermasians acknowledge that the state creates the conditions for a healthy civil society and public sphere, especially in the form of rights guarantees, they mistrust state power. States are “system.” They do important and worthwhile things, but ultimately they operate on the logic of power and must be kept within the control of a popular will autonomously developed out of the self-organization of the lifeworld, that is, out of civil society.<sup>66</sup> The system/lifeworld distinction is very useful in identifying and explaining certain pathologies that plague liberal capitalist democracies. It can, however, lead to the impression that the autonomous self-organization of citizens is always good. Failure to discuss the cases when citizens organize for bad causes strengthens this impression. The tendency is to see threats to democracy exclusively in the form of impediments to self-organization.

The second and thornier reason why Habermas emphasizes institutional reform of democratic practices over distributional reform is that he favors a highly procedural model of liberal democracy. Unlike Rawls, who put forward a theory of justice, Habermas claims that it is up to participants to work out the details of a fair system of justice. This leads to a familiar circle. How do you democratically bring about the conditions of a healthy and authentic democracy? What happens when resentment due to unequal life chances severely undermines the quality of democracy but there is no popular democratic will to address those inequalities, partly because those inequalities distort participation? We have no magic solution to this problem, but we are convinced that it is not a reason to stop talking about the politics of economic insecurity or give up on states as effective actors in the battle against social injustice.

## VII. CONCLUSION

In this essay, we have argued that rights, civic education, promotion of good associations, and an expanded public sphere will not be enough to build liberal democracies (or maintain the quality of established liberal democracies) if failure in social justice leads to disillusionment with the promise of liberalism. The rights approach to bad civil society is important but insufficient because it only works as long as bad civic groups remain marginal. In general, rights arguments have a *laissez passer* view of the problem, and interest only “kicks in” once the problem is threatening to the order as a whole. Not only may this be too late to save democracy in extreme cases, but it may be insufficient to prevent the quality of democracy from being under-



mined in not so extreme cases. The civic education argument is also laudable but insufficient because there is very little evidence that it can work in situations of scarcity. Even under conditions of relative abundance, the power to shape associational life from the outside is tenuous at best. Finally, the expanded public sphere argument lies closest to our own normative preferences. But even here it is, like the rights and civic education solutions, essentially an institutional fix, the efficacy of which presupposes a level of social justice that may not exist. The shortcomings we have just discussed pose more serious problems for transitional democracies than well-established ones. Nevertheless, this should not make us complacent about the dangers.

The preceding discussion also provides the justification for shifting and broadening the focus of civil society studies back to issues of socioeconomic justice, equality, and the social prerequisites of civic development. From Aristotle to Rousseau to Lipset, the history of political thought time and again suggests that society does not remain very civil and democracies do not do very well under conditions of deep and persistent material and status inequalities. Tocqueville himself worried that in the modern world, material and status inequalities remain just as deep as under the *ancien régime* but are more keenly felt than ever. Addressing the problems of bad civil society will mean returning to the issues of social justice that have been at the core of political theory since its inception.

The point may sound banal but it is not. In the past two decades, political theory has gradually ceded the ground on themes of material life, equality, and the possibility of realizing one's life plan to the economists. Increasingly, questions that go to the heart of political membership have become the exclusive territory of technocratic and mathematical thinking. There may be good reasons for this. Economics enjoys more prestige than at any time in its history. Yet, social science has also shown that the gains associated with the rapidly changing division of labor are also associated with social upheaval, dislocation, and even growing inequalities not only between rich and poor nations but also within wealthy ones, all of which suggests that it may be time to redefine the standards by which we measure economic success and failure. Such a redefinition of the terms and meaning of material life should concern us as political theorists.

### NOTES

1. Michael Walzer uses this phrase in "The Civil Society Argument," *Dimensions of Radical Democracy*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Verso, 1992), 89-107. Our use is somewhat more generic but essentially the same.

2. There are so many proponents of versions of this argument that it would be difficult to list them all. Mark Warren notes that “within democratic theory a remarkable consensus is emerging around Tocqueville’s view that the virtues and viability of democracy depend on the robustness of associational life.” *Democracy and the Terrain of Association* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). Here is a sample of the diversity of the list that includes liberals, communitarians, and critical theorists: Michael Walzer, “Civil Society Argument”; Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers, *Associations and Democracy* (New York: Verso, 1995); Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

3. Yael Tamir also thinks that “bad” civil society poses some problems for the civil society argument although for quite different reasons than ours. See Yael Tamir, “Revisiting the Civic Sphere,” *Freedom of Association*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 214-39. Mark Warren, Amy Gutmann, and Jean Cohen note that theorists should be cautious in their enthusiasm for a blanket positive effect of group membership. See Warren, *Democracy and the Terrain of Association*; Amy Gutmann, “Freedom of Association: An Introductory Essay,” *Freedom of Association*, 6; Jean Cohen, “Trust, Voluntary Associations and Workable Democracy: The Contemporary American Discourse of Civil Society,” *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark Warren (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 208-48. Nancy Rosenblum offers one of the few extended discussions of bad groups but, in the end, does not think that we need to be overly worried and, indeed, sometimes argues that “bad” groups can have good effects. We challenge this reading below. See Nancy Rosenblum, *Membership and Morals: The Personal Uses of Pluralism in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 239-84. Robert Putnam has recently acknowledged that “social capital” can be bad, but, as we discuss below, he does not in fact address the problem we are raising. See Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

4. In comparative politics there is a vast literature on extremism and radicalism. This literature does not often cross paths with the civil society discourse.

5. Jean L. Cohen, “Does Voluntary Association Make Democracy Work?” *Diversity and Its Discontents: Cultural Conflict and Common Ground in Contemporary American Society*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Jeffrey C. Alexander (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University press, 1999), 263-92; Seymour Martin Lipset, “Malaise and Resiliency in America,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 3 (1995): 4-18; Robert D. Putnam, “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995): 65-78; Theda Skocpol, ed., *Civic Engagement in America* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1999); Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schozma, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

6. Rosenblum, *Membership and Morals*, 36-41.

7. See Warren, *Democracy and the Terrain of Association*, for a thorough survey and helpful theory of the full democratic potential of civil society.

8. See Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992). See Note 2.

9. Although extreme forms of hate like that represented by the World Church of the Creator are easy to identify, we acknowledge that the category “bad civil society,” like all social typologies, will slide into some gray areas around its edges. We discuss some of these below.

10. Putnam, “Bowling Alone,” 65.

11. *Ibid.*, 65. See also Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 27.

12. Putnam, “Bowling Alone,” 70. See also Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 112-15.

13. Putnam, "Bowling Alone," 67. See also Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 19.
14. Gutmann, "Freedom of Association: An Introductory Essay," 6.
15. Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 22.
16. *Ibid.*, 22.
17. *Ibid.*, 23-24.
18. See *ibid.*, where, in a chapter titled "The Dark Side of Social Capital," Putnam answers the charge that toleration was on the rise precisely at the same time as, according to his argument, civic engagement was on the wane. Thus the question arises, Does associational engagement encourage narrowness and hinder tolerance? Putnam denies the general correlation but admits "some kinds of bonding social capital may discourage the formation of bridging social capital and vice versa" (p. 362). He never takes it further than this general observation. He never asks which forms of bonding hinder bridging or why some people are more likely to be attracted to those forms rather than more democracy-friendly (or at least democracy-neutral) forms of bonding. (See also p. 400.)
19. Rosenblum, *Membership and Morals*, 59.
20. Michael W. Foley and Bob Edwards, "The Paradox of Civil Society," *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 3 (July 1996): 46.
21. Sheri Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic," *World Politics* 49, no. 3 (1997): 401-29; Stephen Hanson and Jeffrey Kopstein, "The Weimar/Russia Comparison," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 13, no. 3 (1997): 252-83.
22. Fiippo Sabetti, "Path Dependency and Civic Culture: Some Lessons from Italy about Interpreting Social Experiments," *Politics and Society* 24 (1996), 19-44.
23. David Rohde, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica, Europe's Worst Massacre since World War II* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1997).
24. Jeffrey Kopstein and Stephen Hanson, "Paths to Uncivil Societies and Anti-Liberal States," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 14, no. 4 (1998): 369-76.
25. For a view of the extent of illiberalism in America, see Lyman T. Sargent, *Extremism in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).
26. Nancy Rosenblum makes this argument in *Membership and Morals*, 35.
27. Is America experiencing an "insidious erosion of values"? On one hand, there is overwhelming evidence that at the aggregate level, Americans are more tolerant than ever of difference. On the other hand, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) warns us that the number of Web sites devoted to hate has exploded and more and more youth are being lured into hate groups. On one hand, civil rights are firmly entrenched in America; on the other, thinly veiled nativism is on the initiative agendas of many states. Our point is not to resolve this debate one way or another. All we are saying is hate (any amount of it) is bad, particularly for those who are its targets. The American public sphere has no special exemption or protection from the insidious effects of hate beyond our vigilance and understanding of the phenomenon.
28. Was George W. Bush's much criticized visit to Bob Jones University evidence of our strong defenses against bigotry or a sad reminder that such "slips" do not really cost public figures much? It says much for the American public that there was an immediate outcry against the visit. But there are also many Americans, not just African Americans, who are devastated that we elected a man who, in the year 2000, still could not see for himself any problem with such a visit or, worse, calculated that such a visit would help his political chances.
29. The support for Farrakhan among the non-Muslim black population in the United States in the 1990s varied according to how the question was asked and the immediate context in which it was asked. In two opinion surveys conducted for *Time* and *Newsweek* between February 1994 (directly after the controversy surrounding Khalid Muhammad's inflammatory Kean College Speech) and October 1995, the results remained remarkably consistent. Forty-eight percent of

black respondents held that Farrakhan was not a bigot and a racist. More than half (59 percent) thought that he spoke truthfully, and half considered him a positive role model of black youth and as a positive influence in the community. For a summary of these and other surveys, see Robert Singh, *The Farrakhan Phenomenon: Race, Reaction, and the Paranoid Style in American Politics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press 1997), 205-10.

30. William Brustein, *The Logic of Evil: The Social Origins of the Nazi Party, 1925-1933* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996). For a similar argument about the Nazi vote, see Richard Hamilton, *Who Voted For Hitler?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982).

31. Kopstein and Hanson, "Weimar-Russia Comparison," 252-83.

32. Veljko Vujacic, "Genaddiy Zyuganov and the 'Third Road,'" *Post-Soviet Affairs* 12, no. 2 (1996): 118-54.

33. Stephen White, Richard Rose, and Ian McAllister, *How Russia Votes* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1997).

34. Southern Poverty Law Center, "Youth at the Edge: A Generation in Danger from Hate Groups" [Online]. (Southern Poverty Law Center Web site, December 1999). Available from: <http://www.splcenter.org/cgi-bin/goframe.pl?dirname=/whatsnew&pagename=index.html>.

35.

Clearly, economic conditions shape the tactics and vitality of political organizations, whether it be the Nazi Party in Germany during the 1930s or the Ku Klux Klan in the United States during the 1970s. The question is whether similar group dynamics shape the patterns of unorganized mass action carried out sporadically by small groups. Our empirical findings may suggest the importance of distinguishing between coordinated and uncoordinated forms of collective action. (Donald P. Green, Dara Z. Strolovitch, and Janelle S. Wong, "Defended Neighborhoods, Integration, and Racially Motivated Crime," *American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 2 [September 1998], 372)

36. Robert Wuthnow, "The Changing Character of Social Capital in the United States" (paper presented at Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, May 13, 2000), 55.

37. Andrew C. Janos, *East-Central Europe in the Modern World*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Robert W. Tucker, *The Inequality of Nations*. (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

38. The most important articles that not only summarize the huge existing literature but also provide new research are Robert W. Jackman and Karin Volpert, "Conditions Favouring Parties of the Extreme Right in Western Europe," *British Journal of Political Science* 26, no. 4 (1996): 501-21; Michael S. Lewis-Beck and Glenn E. Mitchell, "French Electoral Theory: The National Front Test," *Electoral Studies* 12, no. 2 (1993): 112-27; Subrata Mitra, "The National Front in France: A Single-Issue Movement?" *Right Wing Extremism in Western Europe*, ed. Klaus von Beyme (London: Frank Cass, 1988), 47-64; Gerrit Voerman and Paul Lujcardie, "The Extreme Right in the Netherlands," *European Journal of Political Research* 22, no. 1 (1992): 35-54. On membership in right-wing extremist movements that are inclined to violence, the most extensive research has been carried out in East Germany. Again, the link between high unemployment and right-wing group violence is quite clear, if not easily interpreted. For a summary of this research, see Armin Pfahl-Traugher, "Die Entwicklung des Rechtsextremismus in Ost-und Westdeutschland," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* no. 39 (2000): 3-14.

39. Although, in the case of East Germany, some studies do point to the unemployed and especially unemployed youth as being overrepresented in violent groups. See Pfahl-Traugher, "Die Entwicklung des Rechtsextremismus," 11; Frank Neubacher, *Fremdenfeindliche Brandanschläge. Eine kriminologisch-empirische Untersuchung von Tätern, Tathintergründen und gerichtlicher Verarbeitung in Jugendstrafverfahren* (Mönchengladbach, 1999).

40. Lewis-Beck and Mitchell, "French Electoral Theory."

41. Rosenblum, *Membership and Morals*, 22.

42. Quoted in Rosenblum, *Membership and Morals*, 9, 272.

43. Raphael S. Ezekiel, *The Racist Mind* (New York: Viking, 1995).

44. Quoted in Bob Herbert, "When Hate Sees an Opening," *New York Times*, January 17, 2000, A17.

45. The data she cites, however, are almost entirely concerned with isolated hate crimes rather than group membership or strength. See Rosenblum, *Membership and Morals*, 278-79.

46. Rosenblum, *Membership and Morals*, 278.

47. See, for example, Kent Greenawalt, "Freedom of Association and Religious Association," *Freedom of Association*, 109-44; George Kateb, "The Value of Association," *Freedom of Association*, 35-63; Peter de Marneffe, "Rights, Reasons, and Freedom of Association," *Freedom of Association*, 145-73.

48. This impression is sometimes intentional, as with theorists who think we should leave civil society alone as much as possible. See, for example, Kateb, "Value of Association." For others, the impression is unintentional, as with theorists who simply concentrate on constitutional cases in their writings, not meaning by that that we should not also publicly criticize groups even they are afforded protection under the constitution. See, for example, Gutmann, "Freedom of Association: An Introductory Essay."

49. Gutmann, "Freedom of Association: An Introductory Essay," 7.

50. Inter-marriage is a hard case for our category "bad civil society." Are orthodox Jewish groups that forbid marrying non-Jews as "bad" as a hypothetical Bob Jones Church that forbids marrying blacks? As with all typologies, one must deal with gray areas on a case-by-case basis. Here we would say that both the intent of the rule as well as the effect must be looked at in context. For example, that the Bob Jones Church is preaching to a majority and empowered group and has specifically targeted a minority disempowered group, while orthodox Jewish groups, in the United States anyway, are in the opposite situation, is not irrelevant in evaluating the social message being sent by any given rule. Ultimately, however, one must ask if a rule or policy is accompanied by hate and malevolence toward others. Would this rule, for example, hinder group members' interacting with, say, non-Jews or African Americans in other contexts? Taking these sorts of questions into consideration, it is possible to make distinctions, although they might be somewhat messy.

51. Rosenblum, *Membership and Morals*, 17.

52. Stephen Macedo, "Constituting Civil Society: School Vouchers, Religious Nonprofit Organizations, and Liberal Public Values," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 74: 800, p. 113, emphasis added.

53. For an interesting argument along these lines, see Nadia Urbanati, "A Phenomenology of Associational Life," *The Good Society* 9, no. 1 (1999): 58-60.

54. For a survey of the variety, see Warren, *Democracy and the Terrain of Association*, chaps. 2, 4.

55. See Daniel A. Bell, David Brown, Kanishka Jayasuriya, David M. Jones, ed., *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia* (New York: St. Martin's, 1995).

56. Hasan Hanafi, "Alternative Conceptions of Civil Society: A Reflective Islamic Approach," *Alternative Conceptions of Civil Society*, ed. Simone Chambers and Will Kymlicka (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, forthcoming). See also Suzanne Last Stone, "The Jewish Tradition of Civil Society," *ibid.*, and Richard Madsen, "Confucian Conceptions of Civil Society," *ibid.*, for further variations on the liberal conception.

57. William Galston, *Liberal Purposes* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 255.

58. Rosenblum, *Membership and Morals*, 39.
59. Stephen Macedo, "Community, Diversity, and Civic Education: Toward a Liberal Political Science of Group Life," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 13 (Winter 1996), 240-68.
60. Sarah Henderson, "Exporting Civil Society: Foreign Funding and Women's Groups in Post-Soviet Russia" (Ph.D. diss., Department of Political Science, University of Colorado at Boulder, 2000).
61. Yael Tamir, "Revisiting the Civic Sphere," 224.
62. Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 77-78.
63. Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic," 424-25.
64. Albert Makashov, "Usurers of Russia," quoted in *Johnson's Russia List*, no. 2461 (November 6, 1998), 7.
65. Foley and Edwards, "Paradox of Civil Society," 48.
66. Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, esp., 523-32; Jürgen Habermas, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Claxton (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), esp., 452-57.

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