

it, as in the case of “spare” embryos? While cloning is an issue with the power to capture the public's imagination, we must heed our repugnance and moral intuition, according to Somerville.

Concerning early-life medical treatments, infant male circumcision takes up an entire chapter. This issue is controversial, as it is associated with ancient religious traditions. Yet as a routine procedure, Somerville asks that we re-evaluate it to justify the harm done to the unconsenting infant. She argues that since circumcision is unnecessary and non-therapeutic, the pain and suffering inflicted upon the infant must be justified. However, she also insists that those who have religious commitments be exempt from a prohibition against male infant circumcision. In the re-evaluation of the ethics of this traditional practice, Somerville believes we must consider freedom of religion, parental control, respect for tradition, as well as legal protection of the vulnerable.

Finally, the book examines end-of-life issues, which places “the very soul of medicine on trial” (148). Euthanasia is particularly topical, as the Netherlands has recently legalized this practice. Somerville calls us to examine our motives in this case; perhaps we fear death and want to control it by timing it. Yet other alternatives must first be sought. For instance, it is proven that pain relief mitigates the patient's sense of urgency to request death. Palliative care also recaptures some of the traditional rituals surrounding death. In this chapter the author sometimes uses the word “kill,” for euthanasia and while admitting that it is a strong word, I would argue that it is inappropriate, as it is judgmental and emotionally exploitive.

Somerville sees the widespread acceptance of the discussed practises as symbolic of an irreversible degradation of societal values. The most basic question is: because we can, should we? Her approach is refreshing, rigorous and accurate. She insists we not suppress our moral anxieties, because otherwise, the harm inflicted may permanently damage civilization and everything we regard as permissible, good and human.

Sarah J. Roebuck

McGill University

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*Cultural Dilemmas of Progressive Politics: Styles of Engagement among Grassroots Activists.* By Stephen Hart. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. ISBN 0-226-31817-6. Pp. xii+292.

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For at least the past two decades, one of the most perplexing and frustrating problems facing progressive political movements in the US has been the question: Why have conservatives fared better than progressives in public debates ranging from inner-city poverty to international human rights legislation? In this book, Stephen Hart, a sociologist who has previously written on Christianity and economic justice in the US, takes up precisely this question in his study of various approaches to grassroots organizing. Divulging his general

conclusion in the first paragraph of the book, the author thinks that the primary obstacle facing people working for social justice and human rights is one of discourse. Simply put, the right has done a better job of communicating. Despite the best of intentions, argues Hart, progressives have “ceded the moral high ground to the right” by presenting their proposals in a “cool and technical tone” that both fails to provide a broad social vision and inadequately links together politics and cultural traditions that underlie US-American values (ix, 4). In response, the author contends that, if grassroots organizations want to effect social and economic change through an integrated and radical social-political vision, organizers and activists must move away from the “constrained discourse” (i.e., a single-issue oriented mode that has historically characterized progressive movements) and toward a more “expansive discourse.”

The book is divided into four parts and eight chapters. The first part, “How We Engage in Politics and Why It Matters,” provides a general introduction to the grassroots organizations that the author has chosen to study and their styles of discourse. While too much of this section covers material detailed later, the important point that the way all of us do politics reflects our identity and moral convictions both in and through particular styles of discourse stands out well enough to provide the needed foundation on which to premise the book’s argument. In the second part, “Congregation-Based Community Organizing,” Hart appeals to case studies of faith-based organizations (e.g., Milwaukee Innercity Congregations Allied for Hope—MICAH, Pacific Institute for Community Organizing—PICO, People Acting in Community Together—PACT, among others) to demonstrate how cultural dimensions can affect politics and how faith-based organizations have adopted diverse religious and political perspectives to mobilize effectively at the local level. A particularly important feature of community organizing noted by Hart is that faith-based groups actually have allies among secular organizers, in particular, the well-known and controversial Saul Alinsky (1909–72), the author of *Reveille for Radicals* (1946) and *Rules for Radicals* (1971). To demonstrate the cooperative nature of grassroots activism, Hart suggests in chapter three, “Religious and Political Perspective of Community Organizing,” that organizers in the US, regardless of their faith convictions, tend to share a “religio-political ‘language’” that communicates a worldview critical of the status quo. That is, centred on a critical, and also biblical, understanding of power, self-interest, relationships, and values, organizers tend to hold that power-in-relation supports a community of interdependent individuals who depend on shared values to mobilize against injustice. The language employed by these groups is not simply metaphor, Hart argues, but rather a means of articulating an alternative worldview by recovering concepts and terms distorted by dominant discourse.

Part three, “Human Rights and Amnesty International,” provides a glimpse of the inner workings of Amnesty and the organization’s continual struggle to remain devoted to the single issue of human rights. While this section fits awkwardly into the outline of the book, it is nevertheless the most informative. Hart captures the constant tension between local chapters and national-international bodies, between members who wish to expand the rights dis-

course to include such issues as job security and those who think it necessary to continue with a constrained discourse that focuses on Amnesty's "mandate"—"prisoners of conscience." This discussion is positioned historically with an overview of both the human rights tradition and Amnesty International itself. While this historical context provides the reader with enough political and cultural complexity to follow the nuanced and sympathetic analysis of Amnesty's constrained discourse, a fuller treatment of Amnesty's media activism and "branding"—two modes of discourse used most effectively by big corporations—might have raised some interesting, and perhaps disturbing, similarities to big corporation methods of stifling internal debate.

Part four, "How Should We Talk about Politics?" is undoubtedly the most theoretical, instructive, and yet exciting section in this book. Indeed, the final chapter, "Integrating Culture and Politics," could be and perhaps should be expanded into a book-length discussion. At the centre of the debate here (which includes Richard Rorty, Robert Bellah, Todd Gitlin, and Jean-François Lyotard) is the question: How much culture is too much in politics? On the left, the idea that the personal is political opened up a new line of political critique in the 1970s and 1980s. The blurring of the private and public spheres challenged the conservative political impetus during the Reagan years in particular to equate conservative-fundamentalist Christian morality with sound US public policy. By the early 1990s, the right, in response to George Bush's growing unpopularity and Bill Clinton's entrance into the White House, countered with a declaration of "culture war." Ironically, since the mid-1990s some on the left, decrying the rather constrained discourse of "identity politics," have focused once again on the traditional discussion of labour, but this time in light of a new round of economic globalization. Herein lies the current discursive obstacle for progressives, that is, how to articulate a message of integrated resistance against racism, sexism, poverty, and militarism within the context of a global economy. In response, Hart argues that the most prudent course is to engage in a culturally rich politics that risks the incivility embedded in any culture. Though the language of solidarity does not play a prominent role in Hart's prescription, forming lines of solidarity both within the community and between organizations in other communities is the kind of organizing that he sees as potentially the most effective means of fostering justice.

This book does offer timely proposals for those troubled by the alienating effects of the status quo as well as progressive solutions that have focused almost exclusively on material concerns. Activists who work from a perspective of faith do, in fact, have access to a vocabulary that enables them, on the one hand, to resist injustice and, on the other, to articulate a broader vision of a cultured politics. For this reason, anarchists and other radicals who have discovered the vacuousness of the "no gods, no masters" maxim may find in this book a critical perspective on religion, culture and politics that could very well open up an entirely new discourse for them. At the same time, Christians working for social justice will be challenged by the argument to develop not only a more effective style of discourse but also to create lines of solidarity

with diverse peoples and organizations. Indeed, in light of the recent protests in Seattle, Washington, DC, Prague, Québec, Gothenberg, and Genoa, Hart's book ought to be received as a welcomed voice in discussions concerning the globalization of justice.

Scott Kline

McGill University

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*The Spiritual Roots of Restorative Justice.* Edited by Michael L. Hadley. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001. ISBN 0-7914-4852-5. Pp. 264.

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This interdisciplinary study is the collaborative effort of fourteen authors associated with the University of Victoria's Centre for Studies in Religion and Society. This project, directed by Michael Hadley, explores what major religions say in text, tradition, and current practice about criminal justice in general and restorative justice in particular. The traditions explored include: Aboriginal spirituality, Buddhism, Chinese religions, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism. The fourteen contributors discuss how faith-based principles of reconciliation, restoration, and healing could be implemented in pluralistic multi-cultural societies.

In many ways, the relationship between spirituality and restorative justice in society has been largely overlooked both in academic scholarship and in the popular press. An important message of this book is that religious traditions can help us to reform and to even to change the dominant, "retributive" approach to criminal law in North America today. Religious spiritualities can help us to challenge dominant political and social forces, raising questions about the claims of retributive justice and its adversarial process driven by prosecution and defense. Today, North America politicians discuss the need for laws that are "tough on crime" and which make sure that criminals "do their time," or even face the death penalty. This book helps us to cut through such rhetoric of the political right, and to consider an alternative to our current practices in the justice systems.

From this book, the reader learns that restorative justice is neither a program nor a method (9). "Restorative justice, with its principles of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation, is instead a deeply spiritual process. It is never the easy way out; neither for the offender, the victim, nor the community. It requires all of us to come to grips with who we are, what we have done, and what we can become in the fullness of our humanity. It is about doing justice as if people really mattered; it addresses the need for a vision of the good life, and the common good" (9). This book presents examples of creative approaches to criminal-justice based on reconciliation, rather than retribution. These examples include: the Community Holistic Circle Healing (the Hollow Water Project), the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, Victim Offender Reconciliation Programs (VORP), family conferencing and circle sentencing. From these