Correspondence

"A Theory of Justice"

To the Editors: I have followed with great interest the discussion sparked by John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*. Most of the debate would seem to hinge upon the difference between an absolute egalitarianism and "equality of opportunity." In his review of the book in *Worldview* (February) Mr. Alan Emdin almost entirely evades this central question. In one sense his change of pace is refreshing, and certainly it is valuable to have him note, as others have not, that Rawls's idea of how social values are formed is unrealistically distant from such elementary socializing influences as, for example, religion. At the same time, however, it is regrettable that Mr. Emdin fails to focus on Rawls's argument of what "ought to be." . . .

Conflicting notions of equality seem increasingly central to moral reflection in our society. I would hope that Mr. Emdin and others would address themselves to this issue as it relates to the guiding imperatives of our Western moral, specifically religious, traditions. I believe the serious challenge to Rawls is not, as Mr. Emdin would have it, how he visualizes social formation but whether he is right in saying that equality rather than, for example, some Common Law notion of human rights is the linchpin of social justice. By failing to come to grips with Rawls's central contention, Emdin's review offers little more than a mildly interesting footnote to this important discussion.

E. L. Quittner

South Bend, Ind.

Alan Emdin Responds:

E. L. Quittner poses two criticisms of my review. It is charged that, although I make a few interesting points about Rawls's notion of value formation, I neglect crucial recent debate on the relative merits of absolute egalitarianism as opposed to equality of opportunity, and also that I do not come to grips with the question of what constitutes the "linchpin of social justice."

Apparently Quittner and I travel in different circles, and this, I believe, accounts for our differing views of what discussion of Rawls's work hinges on. Perhaps the virtues of absolute equality are a major topic of consideration in the professional journals of academic philosophers. If so, I am reaffirmed in my judgment that one of Rawls's strong points is that through the notion of the original position and the consideration of institutions he moves beyond what seems to me sterile debate over piecemeal philosophical abstractions.

Exchanges I have been privy to have turned on why Rawls's book, appearing when it did, has been the object of such great attention. In my review I attempted to answer this by pointing to the work as the first effort at the creation of a comprehensive system which both overcomes the impasse positivistic philosophy and economics have created for the study of ethics and also incorporates the rigorous methods of analysis developed by welfare economists. Nearly half of my review is devoted to this task.

Nor do I believe that I "fail to come to grips" with the constitution of the "linchpin of social justice." Quittner misinterprets points in my review addressed to exactly these matters. Quittner writes that Rawls's treatment of socialization is far from realistic, and so it is. But in criticizing the Rawlsian view of authority, religion and the Aristotelian "perfectionism" of intellectual virtue, I indicated my belief that these very things were "linchpins of social justice" and not just the neglected aspects of value formation Quittner makes them out to be. They are among the "guiding imperatives of our Western moral, specifically religious traditions." Indeed, if we are to believe Edward Corwin, they are the background of Anglo-Saxon Common Law as well. A book which treated them adequately would surely be a philosophic work of the first order, and thus would constitute a challenge to "Rawls's argument of what 'ought to be'" on the most serious level. My regrets that my review is not such a work are at least as strong as Quittner's. Still, I believe that I have raised issues compared to which argument over types of equality seems only "a mildly interesting footnote."

Israel and the West Bank

To the Editors: It is easy to say that all Israeli factions seem agreed upon the necessity of "creating some sort of political entity on the West Bank" ("Israeli Politics and the West Bank," *Worldview*, February), but Stephen Oren seems peculiarly insensitive to the fact that even this "concession" is emphatically on Israeli terms. In fact I doubt that any Israeli official close to the center of power entertains the possibility of granting non-Israelis any say in, for example, the expansion of Jewish settlements in the conquered territories. There is, contrary to Mr. Oren's implication, no readiness to see a truly sovereign state established that would have control over its own relationship to the contorted "foreign policies" within the Middle East.

In so many essays such as Mr. Oren's one gets the false impression that Israeli leadership is prepared to be "reasonable." What is not mentioned is that reasonableness is defined in terms of modifying prior outrageous policies. One does not have to accuse Israel of being a minion of U.S. imperialism to recognize the simple power realities by which Israeli leadership perpetuates its oppression of its neighbors—all, of course, in the name of self-defense.

Mr. Oren's admittedly informative article might have been further enhanced had he placed the West Bank issue into the larger context of the long-term prospects for Israel's survival in an Arab world. Is not the

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West Bank debate but one small skirmish in Israel's, I suspect failing, effort to ward off the long-range crisis of trying to maintain a handful of Jews among 400 million Arabs? The crisis is, of course, exacerbated as the Israelis of European background become a smaller and smaller minority. The larger question posed by Oren's article is whether or not Israel will be able to survive peace. That is, once the artificial "war psychology" is removed, the problem of the West Bank will seem trivial compared to the other challenges throwing into question Israel's continued existence.

S. L. Bachman

Austin, Tex.

Stephen Oren Responds:

Mr. Bachman correctly—if somewhat emotively—points out that the problem of the West Bank is only one of Israel's problems. I am surprised he thinks they all could have been dealt with in the compass of one article, but, if it is any consolation to him, he will find an article by me exploring the relation between Israel's religious problems and the question of the territories in the spring *Middle East Journal*. One point to which he seems oblivious is that as the "Jews of European background become a smaller and smaller minority" the problem of the territories and of relations with the Arab states will get more serious, since it is precisely Jews of Middle Eastern background who object most vehemently to any retrocession of territory to the Arabs or to any compensation for Arab refugees, at least until Jews from Morocco, Iraq, Egypt, etc. receive compensation for *their* losses.

I would agree with Mr. Bachman that virtually no one in Israel is prepared to see the West Bank (or most of it) transformed into the nineteenth Arab state. There continues to be a large (although declining) number of Israelis who would be willing for most of the West Bank to revert to a sovereign Jordan, which, however, would have to be in a state of peace with—and therefore to recognize, de jure, the reality of—Israel. The Israeli government, as I tried to show in my article, has not ruled out this option. If there is to be an autonomous West Bank within Israel, then most Israelis (but not, to be sure, Moshe Dayan or the hawks of Gahal and Mafdal) would agree that this entity could regulate Jewish and other immigration in the area it controls. To be sure, this would be those areas of the West Bank so thickly settled by Arabs that Jewish settlement is impractical.

None of this contradicts the central thesis of my article—that in dealing with these territories the Israeli government is not a free agent, that it must take account of electoral and other internal forces and that these internal forces increasingly envisage a future in which the West Bank will in some sense form part of Israel. Mr. Bachman evidently deplores this state of affairs, but I am unpersuaded that his rhetoric will alter it.

Another "Catholic Response"

To the Editors: That *Worldview* has in the past years become the one journal that I really make a point of reading, almost from cover to cover, each month is in part due to the nonsense published elsewhere. It is in larger part due to the kind of thoughtful and lively argument offered by writers such as Denis Kenny ("Wars of National Liberation: A Catholic Response," February). Having said this, I hasten to add that I am also troubled by an oversight (or at least I assume it to be an oversight) in Mr. Kenny's thinking. It was apparent also in his earlier article on the nonneutrality of Pope Paul ("Paul VI and Vietnam," *Worldview*, July, 1972).

Kenny calls upon the Church to renounce its ambitions to wield power, yet one wonders if he is not really asking the Church to utilize its power in a different way. For example, it is clear that Kenny's own sympathies are with the various "liberation movements" he describes. He says the Church should support the really poor (the "anawim"), but isn't this just as surely an exercise of power? I am not as convinced as he apparently is that all these "liberation movements" are indeed aimed at humanizing goals. But even if this is the case, it seems important to clarify precisely what ought to be the Church's attitude toward power—or exercising influence—on such questions. . . .

Is Mr. Kenny making the profound theological point he would seem to be making, if in fact he is only asking the Church to get on "the other side" of various struggles? What happens when these various revolutionary movements succeed and come to power? Should the Church then come to the side of whatever dissident or revolutionary voices would inevitably be raised in opposition to the new wielders of power? . . . The line between political and ethical argument is always vague, of course, but one suspects Mr. Kenny of advancing the former in the guise of the latter.

James Rowley

Dubuque, Ia.

To the Editors: After reading "Wars of National Liberation: A Catholic Response," I am more convinced than ever that Denis Kenny, if I understand his (deliberately?) obscure and terribly abstract style, is on the wrong track.

On the whole the Constantinian Church did more good than harm for Europe until the end of the Middle Ages. But for the Catholic Church to become as specifically involved in the intricacies of the contemporary world as Mr. Kenny wants would be nothing less than a disastrous mare's nest.

As my January letter implied ("The Pope and Vietnam"), I think that the only way to get away from the Constantinian Church is for the Vatican absolutely to imitate Him who refused to judge even so simple