

Given the differences between Indigenous and Western cultural and historical frameworks, what shared values can be identified that support civil discourse and solidarity? Do thinkers such as Aristotle, Christopher Dawson, and John Courtney Murray, S.J., or Robert N. Bellah, offer relevant reference points in this inquiry?

Topic: Shared Values Between Indigenous and Western Frameworks

Texts: Aristotle, Dawson, Murray, Bellah

0:00–1:00 — Opening: Framing the Question

Hook:

When we discuss Indigenous and Western paradigms, we tend to emphasize conflict: colonization, sovereignty, and worldview.

What if the more fascinating question is: Are there underlying common values that enable civil discourse and solidarity?

Briefly introduce the thinkers and texts:

Aristotle — The Nicomachean Ethics

Christopher Dawson — Religion and Culture

John Courtney Murray — We Hold These Truths

Robert N. Bellah — The Broken Covenant

Thesis:

Despite the significant historical and metaphysical differences, these traditions share common values in community, morality, tradition, and the limitation of power, and these shared values can form the basis of civil discourse.

1:00–3:00 — Shared Value #1: Human Beings Are Relational

Start with Indigenous emphasis:

- Identity rooted in kinship
- Responsibility to land, ancestors, and future generations

- Community over isolated individuality

Then transition:

Aristotle actually starts from a similar assumption.

In *Nicomachean Ethics*:

- Virtue develops in community
- Friendship (Books VIII–IX) is essential to flourishing
- Happiness (*eudaimonia*) is not private pleasure — it's shared life in virtue

For Aristotle, you literally cannot become good alone.

Bridge point:

Both frameworks reject radical individualism. That overlap matters for solidarity because civil discourse assumes we belong to each other in some way.

3:00–5:00 — Shared Value #2: Moral Order Beyond Preference

Transition:

The second shared value is even deeper: both traditions assume that morality isn't just personal opinion.

Indigenous worldview:

- Moral law embedded in land and sacred story
- Harmony rather than domination

Aristotle (Book V):

- Distinguishes natural justice from conventional justice
- Some things are just “by nature.”

Then bring in Murray:

In *We Hold These Truths*, Murray argues:

- American democracy only works if citizens believe in a moral law accessible to reason
- Public consensus depends on shared “articles of peace.”

In other words, debate only works if we believe there’s something true to debate about.

Solidarity point:

If morality is purely subjective, discourse collapses into a power struggle. Shared belief in moral limits creates the space for dialogue.

5:00–7:00 — Shared Value #3: Tradition and Sacred Narrative

Transition:

The third shared value is tradition, and this is where Dawson and Bellah become really helpful.

In *Religion and Culture*, Dawson argues:

- Religion forms the soul of a culture
- Every civilization is shaped by a sacred vision

This resonates with Indigenous frameworks:

- Stories are not myths in a trivial sense
- They are structuring truths

Then Bellah:

In *The Broken Covenant*, Bellah argues:

- America has a “civil religion” — shared moral symbols

- When that shared narrative fractures, solidarity weakens

A society without shared memory cannot sustain shared responsibility.

Bridge:

Both Indigenous and Western traditions understand that identity is formed through inherited meaning — not just individual choice.

7:00–8:30 — Shared Value #4: Limits on Power

Transition carefully:

Now here's where the tension becomes real — especially given colonial history.

Indigenous critique:

- Western power often ignored its own moral principles

Bellah:

- America contains both prophetic and imperial strands
- The prophetic strand calls the nation to accountability

Murray:

- State authority is limited by moral law

Aristotle:

- Tyranny is rule for private interest, not the common good

Key takeaway:

All four thinkers assume power must answer to justice.

This creates space for honest dialogue rather than forced unity.

8:30–9:30 — A Necessary Tension

Important nuance:

- Shared values do not erase historical injustice
- Solidarity cannot mean assimilation
- Dialogue requires acknowledging the asymmetry of power

Bellah would call this renewing the covenant — not pretending nothing happened.

Solidarity without justice is fragile. Justice without solidarity is unstable.

9:30–10:00 — Conclusion

Restate thesis conversationally:

So, despite real differences in metaphysics and history, both Indigenous and Western traditions affirm:

- We belong to communities
- Moral truth transcends preference
- Tradition carries authority
- Power must be accountable

Civil discourse becomes possible not when we erase difference, but when we recognize that we share deeper commitments about what it means to live well together.