

the leading role of women in the emerging society will inevitably strengthen the ethic of caring, because in centuries past, men have been more responsible for the emergence and endurance of the ethic of justice, as feminist literature well-describes.

It has long been thought impossible to move beyond commutative justice based on retribution, reparation of wrongs and the punishment of crimes. Post-modernity is proving otherwise, as strikingly illustrated by the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, in which we saw unvarnished truth about past injustices, undertaken with a view to reconciliation, rather than to vengeance or punishment.

In Canada, this ethic, long central to the aboriginal tradition, was recently evoked in a dialogue among Georges Erasmus, John Ralston Saul and Alain Dubuc on the occasion of the publication of the Lafontaine-Baldwin lectures. Each municipality in Nunavut has community freezers where leftover meat and fish are stored. The whole community contributes and people can help themselves as needed. There is no administration or papers to sign: there is thus no humiliation. The Dene community has developed a very similar model for distributing meat. It is not charity. It is simply extra food that is made accessible to all, according to their needs.

Shedding its light from Southern Africa to Northern Canada, this example of the ethic of care is rooted in distributive justice and rests on altruistic considerations: the determining factor is not whether one has a "right" to something, but an emphasis on meeting one's need in a respectful manner.

It is time to move beyond the great message of the philosophers of the Enlightenment where reason meant a belief in progress and justice. Now, more than ever, we need to consider how to reconcile our confidence with a conscience, which will require tough choices. But this reconciliation, in my view, is central to liberal political objectives.

### **American Supremacy and the New Conscience**

The United States has attained a predominance unequalled in the history of humanity. Its government has unparalleled power