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LIBERALS AND COMMUNITARIANS

I. Toward the I & We

Communitarians charge contemporary liberal philosophers (CLP) with an excessive focus on individual rights and with neglect of obligations to the community, to shared virtues and common purposes. While CLP evince a measure of commitment to a moderate vision of community, they contend that communitarians provide an insufficient basis for individual rights. Communitarians, in turn, indirectly acknowledge the need to ensure these rights in order to avoid collectivism. Out of these charges and countercharges, a synthesis begins to suggest itself.

Less Individualism. In *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls founded a conception of justice on respect for the individual. Individual persons and their self-chosen ends are primary, the common good or general welfare, subordinate:

> Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. For this reason justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others.

Rawls arrived at his notion of justice by considering what individuals in the "original position," a reformulation of the state of nature, would choose as "principles of a justice for the basic structure of society." In this hypothetical "original position" individuals are "rational persons concerned to advance their interests," stripped of particular attributes. They debate behind a "veil of ignorance" which prevents them from knowing their future position in society. This uncertainty leads these rational individuals to choose a just order. For example, no one in the original position would rationally argue for a system that favors men, because that person might "end up" a woman. Rawls's philosophy thus emphasizes the primacy of the individual, and it derives social attributes mainly from the aggregation of individuals' rational choices. Whatever concept of community or substantive good Rawls's theory allows for is based on the preferred choices of individuals. The CLP conception of the self is based on the Kantian transcendental ego – a subject given prior to its ends. Rawls reformulates the Kantian subject, stripping away its metaphysical trappings, recasting it within "the canons of a reasonable empiricism." However, the basic concept of the Kantian ego remains intact: the native of the Rawlsian original position, the abstract self, "is prior to the ends which are affirmed by it. . . ."

Rawls's theory has been interpreted in various ways. Some find him somewhat more concerned with community than he admits. Without entering into this argument, I believe that Rawls's position remains primarily a rights-oriented, individual-choice liberalism, although his work has become somewhat more communitarian over the years.

The rights-based ethic of liberalism, as articulated by Rawls and by other noted CLP, including Ronald Dworkin in *Taking Rights Seriously*, and Robert Nozick with *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, has faced a recent, growing challenge from the communitarian critics. Robert Thigpen and Lyle Downing, in their essay, "Liberalism and the Communitarian Critique," for instance, were concerned with "the presence of moral chaos and the absence of common purposes" in contemporary society, and Michael J. Sandel, in his book, *Liberalism and Its Critics*, wished to give "fuller expression to the claims of citizenship and community than liberalism allows." They have faulted liberal theory both for its conception of a freely-choosing, autonomous self, cut off from all social moorings, and for its lifeless, impoverished conception of community and the common good.

MacIntyre, for example, in *After Virtue*, rejected the possibility of theorizing about justice with an abstract self as the subject:

> . . . particularity can never be simply left behind or obliterated. The notion of escaping from it into a realm of entirely universal maxims which belong to man as such, whether in its eighteenth-century Kantian form or in the presentation of some modern analytical moral philosophies is an illusion.

In *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, Sandel argued that Rawls's representative rational agent "fails plausibly to account for certain indispensable aspects of our moral experience," because we are not, and cannot be, entirely autonomous agents, "independent in the sense that our identity is never tied to our aims and attachments." Sandel maintains that people are always "situated" or "embedded" in a social context, and "encumbered" by ties of community.

Communitarians are further troubled by what they see as a weak conception of community and common good, or shared moral values. They point out that the "strong" CLP (or libertarian) position holds that individuals' ends are either competing or independent, "but not in any case complementary." To libertarians (among them, Nozick), social arrangements are essentially "a necessary burden," and "the good of community consists solely in the advantages individuals derive from cooperating in pursuit of their egoistic ends."

True, for moderate CLP, the community is far more than a "necessary burden." Indeed, Rawls contends that a "well-ordered society" founded on the principles of justice possesses "shared final ends and common activities valued for themselves." Rawls sees just institutions as "good in themselves" because they provide each individual's life with "a more ample and rich structure than it would otherwise have." That is, individuals may see and indeed benefit from a just society, but it is *they* who change it, for *their* individual purposes. Dworkin, too, has argued that attempts to impose any preferred way of life are illegitimate.

In sum, moderate formulations of CLP allow for some vision of community, beyond a mere aggregation of self-interested individuals; however, CLP, including Rawls and Dworkin, hold the community to be secondary, derivative and reflecting a rational choice of the individual – with whom all basic rights rest. Yet CLP have shown some flexibility: recently, both Rawls and Dworkin have modified their positions in response to communitarian criticisms. In his essay, "Justice as Fairness," Rawls conceded that the basic values of the representative moral agent – now called the "citizen" – derive not from intuitions but from "an 'overlapping consensus' that undergirds the modern state." Further, Rawls acknowledges social and historical particulars – namely, the "democratic society reflected in contemporary, advanced, Western, industrialized nations" – that implicitly inform *A Theory of Justice*. In kind, Dworkin now considers his fundamental concept of "equal concern and respect" to be historically and politically embedded. As John R. Wallach observed in "Liberals, Communitarians, and the Tasks of Political Theory":

> Contrary to communitarians who fault Rawls and Dworkin for not paying attention to the "shared meanings and understandings" of historical societies, each claims that the ideas he previously called intuitive presuppose them.

It seems that CLP, both through their critics and their advocates, have moved toward recognizing an important sphere beyond the individual. However, despite these steps, CLP remain committed to principles that must be modified and supplemented if the middle ground is to be evolved. As Wallach notes, to claim that "the debate between liberals and communitarians has collapsed . . . overstates the distance Rawls has traveled since 1971." First, liberals continue to hold that individual liberty, protected by individual rights, takes priority over any and all common good, rather than treating (as I will attempt to) individual and community as moral equals. Second, the liberal concept of the individual remains atomistic at least in that liberals do not recognize community as a constitutive element of the self.

Moderate Communitarianism. While CLP maintain the primacy of the rights-bearing individual, communitarians seek to establish moral coherence

within society, the moral foundations of a common good. For communitarians, the shared moral values, "virtues," and traditions of the community, rather than the rational choices of abstract individuals, are the bedrock of moral-philosophic discourse. They see persons as "implicated" or "embedded," or as "citizens" who share a set of moral values by virtue of their membership in a community. According to Sandel:

> . . . if we are partly defined by the communities we inhabit, then we must also be implicated in the common purposes and ends characteristic of those communities.

And according to MacIntyre:

> . . . we all approach our own circumstances as bearers of a particular social identity. . . . I am a member of this or that guild or profession . . . I belong to . . . this clan, that tribe, this nation. Hence what is good for me has to be the good for one who inhabits these roles. . . .

Moreover, this notion of common good has a dynamic element: communitarians see the community and individuals as working toward a *telos*, a common purpose or goal, not fulfilled in society today.

Because CLP affirm a plurality of individual ends, as Isaiah Berlin says, "equally ultimate," they look to a theory of *procedural* justice, such as Rawls's, to adjudicative frameworks that do not presuppose a particular conception of the good. On the other hand, because of their concern with community and the common good, communitarians tend to focus on systems or institutions, substantive entities that embody their moral values. Two leading communitarians, Alisdair MacIntyre and Michael Walzer, highlight the communitarian approach – and point toward the need for developing a principled basis for individual rights.

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre articulated a "strong" communitarian vision of a moral community, premised on the idea that the moral foundations of modern society are incoherent, fragmented; he contended that "we have – very largely, if not entirely – lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality." His conception of the exemplary moral community derives from the Aristotelian tradition of civic virtue, where persons are understood to achieve a *telos* by exercising virtues (particular "acquired human qualities") to attain the intrinsic goods of "practices" – complex and coherent, "socially established," shared activities in "arts, sciences, games, politics . . . the making and sustaining of family life. . . ." Communities that function through this involved scheme find their moral basis in "shared understandings," in common assumptions.

Individuals in such a community do not (as CLP would have it) choose their own good; they find a common good as members of a distinct moral order. Each person seeks to learn and exercise the virtues and achieve the internal goods of practices, to discover and achieve *telos* (what Aristotle called *eudamonia*, loosely translated, human well-being), and in this "education," each finds that "my good as a man [or woman] is one and the same as the good of those others with whom I am bound up in human community." Nor can the *search* for the good be an individual enterprise – the community provides the only legitimate context.

In *Spheres of Justice*, Walzer, a moderate communitarian, formulated a system of distributive justice based on shared moral values. Walzer maintains that each community confers particular meanings and values on goods, and from these common values, distributive justice derives:

> If we understand what a good is, what it means to those for whom it is a good [i.e., to the members of a certain community], we understand how, by whom and for what reasons it ought to be distributed. All distributions are just or unjust relative to the social meanings of the goods at stake.

Walzer casts these shared meanings and values within a pluralistic framework to create his notion of "complex equality." Since different goods have different social meanings (and thus, different principles of distribution), these "spheres" of goods ought to be kept autonomous. Complex equality arises, then, when a good in one sphere, such as political office, cannot be "converted" into the good of another sphere, such as entrepreneurial opportunities.

Walzer's defense of plural social meanings and values leads by implication to the ideal of plural subcommunities that flourish within a broader, latent community. Thus, he represents a more moderate communitarian stance than MacIntyre, who talks of "the pluralism which threatens to submerge us all." Further, Walzer develops his notion of community against a "background" of rights, asserting that individuals have the right to "life and liberty," and other rights "beyond" those. (While he acknowledges certain rights, Walzer does not make clear whether individuals can choose freely among the autonomous values of various subcommunities. He seems more intent upon drawing out the latent meanings of the community as a whole.)

While the notions of shared moral values and of community are firmly grounded in these works, some critics contend that the status of the individual is precarious in the communitarian vision. Communitarians do not establish

effective boundaries against collectivism; and they do not provide a sound basis for the self to transcend social roles and assume a critical stance against society. Sandel's position illustrates the problem:

> As a self-interpreting being, I am able to reflect on my history and in this sense distance myself from it, but the distance is always precarious and provisional, the point of reflection never finally secured outside the history itself.

MacIntyre does not clearly separate the self from its social roles and corresponding ends. He claims that "what is good for me has to be the good for one who inhabits these roles." Such a separation is necessary if individuals are to evaluate the moral status of practices; indeed, MacIntyre concedes that "there *may* be practices . . . which simply are evil . . . " for example, "torture." But in MacIntyre's world persons could not criticize evil practices, for they would not be able to transcend the social roles tied to these practices.

Affirming some measure of individual rights guarantees autonomy. But MacIntyre claims that "natural or human rights . . . are fictions." Rights presuppose "the existence of a socially established set of rules . . . [in] particular historical periods under particular social circumstances." MacIntyre's project is thus one of duties, of the obligations of membership.

Individual rights are not soundly protected in Walzer's philosophy, either, as his treatment of personal autonomy demonstrates. "Justice," Walzer contends, "is relative to social meanings . . . Every substantive account of distributive justice is a local account." Bound to the particular social meanings of the community, individuals may be unable to evaluate the moral standing of their community, that is, to be autonomous and critical.

As James S. Fishkin has indicated in "Defending Equality: A View from the Cave," Walzer's work "lack[s] shared understandings about how to interpret whatever shared understandings actually exist among us in our culture," that *Spheres of Justice* establishes no sure footing for the autonomous individual, no map for how to disagree with or how to challenge shared meanings.

Individual rights, then, are not secured in these communitarian visions. Communitarians indirectly have acknowledged this difficulty; indeed, in their attempts to avoid collectivistic implications of their work, they point the way to a synthetic position. MacIntyre, for example, writes that exercising the virtues does not entail ". . . the liquidation of the self into a set of demarcated areas of role-playing." Sandel talks of the "enduring attachments and commitments which taken together *partly* define the person I am." Walzer admits (although vaguely) that individual persons may not be entirely subjected to "shared meanings" when he refers to "those deeper opinions that

are the reflections in individual minds, *shaped also by individual thought*, of the social meanings that constitute our common life." For communitarians, then, the moral force of community is a central, perhaps the central constituent of the individual, but they maintain that it is only a constituent and not the entire self.

Philip Selznick, in "The Idea of a Communitarian Morality," provided another reason for a synthesis, arguing that there is room for individual rights within a communitarian morality. He contends that communitarian philosophy's central value is "*belonging*," and he interprets this claim to mean that "personhood is best served in and through social participation." The result in communitarianism is the priority of duty over right; "duty is what roles are about and what membership is about." Thus, as he points out, when we accept membership in, for example, the academic community, we think first of our responsibilities, not our rights. Contrary to MacIntyre, however, Selznick contends that *rights-claims can be legitimate*: "A duty-based community is not . . . insensitive to claims of right. . . . A moral community must recognize . . . natural rights . . . which derive from our understanding of what personhood requires." Yet rights are not central to the communitarian project, for "rights do not define the community," nor do they provide reasons for acting. Duties, to the contrary, "summon us to action."

The I & We. The synthetic position suggested in both philosophies is the I & We paradigm, the idea that both individual and community have a basic moral standing; neither is secondary or derivative. In this paradigm the We signifies social, cultural, and political, hence historical and institutional forces which shape the collective factor – the community.

Such a position may seem elementary, almost obvious. However, many social theorists have been one-sided. To Bentham, for example, "community is a fiction." And much of psychological and neoclassical economic as well as other social sciences literature, is reductionist; that is, it maintains that the explanatory factors are individual, and either denies the need for collective concepts or depicts them as the result of aggregations of individual transactions. Typical is the argument that there is no public interest, only interests of specialized groups. Still others, from Sartre to Nozick, consider the "community" a burden if not "hell." And, of course, collectivists – both totalitarian and dogmatic religious – ignore the role and rights of individuals.

Even those CLP who "consider" community, or communitarians who "consider" the individual, do not, as we have just shown, accord both elements a *basic*, primary moral status. CLP, at best, grant community a secondary status, in the sense that they do not override individual rights, and at most overlay claims when these do not conflict with individual rights. Communitarians, on the other hand, tend to grant individual rights a secondary position. Indeed, work by both sides reads as if prizes were awarded to those able to build their whole moral position upon one primary moral building

stone.

In contrast, my own view is that both the individual and the community have the *same basic primary* moral standing. Hence, all specific positions – whether on the rights and duties of AIDS patients, pornography dealers, or the press (versus national security) – must be worked out with careful attention to both. One cannot use the needs of society – or individual rights – to shut out the other considerations, as, for instance, do First Amendment absolutists.

Three considerations, empirical, moral-philosophical, and pragmatic, support the I & We paradigm. First, while it is possible to theorize about abstract individuals apart from a community, if individuals were actually without community, they would have very few of the attributes commonly associated with the notion of the autonomous person. Clearly, *the individual and the community "make" one another*, and individuals are not able to function effectively without deep links to others, to community.

Many sociologists have contended that community has weakened within modern society, adversely affecting individuals. Eric Fromm, for example, has argued that individuals won excessive autonomy as industrialization, or more precisely, urbanization transformed society. He believed that this extreme autonomy was gained at the cost of weakened social bonds in both the family and the community, leaving the individual highly anxious, even hysterical, looking despairingly for synthetic affiliations to replace the lost bonds. Hence, totalitarian political movements provide a proxy for such bonds. And the decline of religion and "traditional values" left people yearning for firm direction, provided by demagogues and dictators. In a similar vein, David Riesman agrees that people have become other-directed, seeking to conform because they have lost inner orientation.

The I & We position also finds support in that radical individualism or collectivism taken alone lead to policy conclusions that even their own advocates are often uncomfortable with. For those who recognize only the primacy of the community, who consider individual rights either secondary and derivative or assert simply that "there are no such rights," as MacIntyre does, open the door to the intolerance, or worse, the tyranny found not only in totalitarian ideologies but also in absolutist theology and authoritarian political philosophies.

Equally unacceptable are positions that focus exclusively on individual rights, particularly the extreme libertarian stand; few endorse policies, as Nozick does, that allow individuals the right to choose whether or not they wish to defend their country. The same challenge to the libertarian position holds for other common goals very widely endorsed, from concern for future generations to the condition of the environment.

Finally, there are pragmatic considerations: will the I & We paradigm facilitate the development of both public policy and norms of behavior that

members of relevant communities will consider compatible with their principles? For example, in 1983 Morris Janowitz highlighted the problem by citing a study of young Americans, who seek to have the right to be tried before a jury of their peers, but not the obligation to serve as jurors.

A more complex application is to be found in the pornography debate. Jean Bethke Elshtain, for example, has written an interesting article on the philosophic implications of the opposing positions taken by feminists and civil libertarians (as well as neoconservatives) on the question of pornography, "The New Porn Wars: The Indecent Choice Between Censorship and Civil Libertarianism" (*The New Republic*, June 25, 1984). Feminists, she noted, have chosen to fight pornography with the same conceptual tool that libertarians use to defend it – the language of individual rights. Feminists argue that pornography violates the civil rights of (individual) women; libertarians respond that limiting pornography violates the right to free speech. Elshtain concluded that ". . . the idea of [individual] 'rights' cannot bear all the weight being placed upon it. But without reference to rights, how can someone press the case for cultural change in a *liberal* society?" She approached the problem partly from a communitarian perspective, suggesting that "communities should have the power to regulate and to curb open and visible assaults on human dignity. Thus, Elshtain implicitly conferred upon the community a prerogative to determine the boundaries of a particular value – human dignity. She limited this prerogative, however, by warning that communities "should not seek, as groups avowedly do, to eradicate or condemn either sexual fantasies or erotic representations as such."

In her book, *Democratic Education*, Amy Gutmann, seeking to formulate a position recognizing both individual rights and a substantive good, has developed some basic principles for the I & We paradigm. Gutmann's position rests on the belief that the democratic society, broadly conceived, is a "good" society, and thus worth preserving. In all societies, she argues, institutions shape members; only in a democratic society do members have an effective voice in shaping those institutions.

Gutmann further contends that each generation must be educated "to deliberate critically among a range of good lives and good societies." Two principles secure this deliberation against the possibility that democratic communities may undermine themselves. The first, nondiscrimination, requires that all members of the community acquire the capacity to deliberate, for otherwise, the participation necessary to democracy will be endangered. The second principle, nonrepression, prevents the state and any group within it from restricting access to alternative views, enabling "rational consideration of different ways of life." In Gutmann's terms, nonrepression thus maintains that "nobody be *required* not to be exposed to alternative viewpoints" (private communication).

Gutmann's approach is usefully applied in situations such as a Ten-

nessee court decision to exempt Fundamentalist Christian children from reading books that their parents found offensive. The court held that the parents had "drawn a line" based on their religious beliefs, and that the court could not call this line "unreasonable." Gutmann's principle of nonrepression suggests that the court erred: the children will not be exposed at home to alternative viewpoints, and the state cannot require the parents to teach such viewpoints. Hence, the public schools provide the only occasion to expose students to a range of different beliefs, a necessary process if they are going to deliberate rationally about alternative ways of life. In disputing the court's ruling, Gutmann reiterates her substantive conception of the good: the "content of public schooling *cannot be neutral* among competing conceptions of the good life"; rather, democratic education must "prepare future citizens for participating intelligently in the political processes that shape their society."

Other public policies based on the I & We position, for instance, are the market (should it be regulated at all?); the balance between AIDS patients' rights (to privacy) and obligation to community (to disclose sexual contacts); "mandatory" seat belts; due process for disruptive students in high schools; and the balance between the First Amendment and national security.

II. In Focus: Which Community?

While the basic issues of the CLP-communitarian debate so far discussed involve the theoretical orientation that the I & We provides and seeks to develop and amplify, there still is the matter of clarifying the focus, to which no answer seems readily apparent. This philosophical dialogue, it seems, would benefit significantly if the participants would, when using the term "community," indicate which community they mean. Sandel, for example, alludes to "a common vocabulary of discourse and a background of implicit practices and understandings." By this criterion, a football game, an undergraduate study group, and an annual lumberjacking convention all would qualify. Instead, communitarian notions of community ought to be explored in terms of scope (hundreds or millions of people; small groups or mass society); substance or "content" (moral, political, religious, or cultural entity); patterns of "dominance" (how the community expresses its values, interests, commitments, and ends).

Scope. When focussing on concrete political issues, writers most often refer to a small "local" community – a town, city, or county. Sandel, for example, espouses "laws regulating plant closings, to protect . . . communities from the disruptive effects of capital mobility and sudden industrial change," and suggests that communitarians would be "more likely than liberals to allow a town to ban pornographic bookstores, on the grounds that pornography offends its way of life and the values that sustain it." Gutmann considers "the explicit concern for preventing the disruption of local communities. . . ." Elsewhere, Sandel calls for the revitalization of community, local and national.

Several of his respondents (in *The New Republic*, May 9, 1988), both communitarian and liberal, took the small, local community as the subject of debate, whether or not agreeing on the need to revitalize it. Elshtain, lamenting "city and community powerlessness," talked of "recapturing civic empowerment at the peripheries." Robert Reich argued that "the liberal task at hand is not to add legitimacy to the spurious notion of geographic community."

Other communitarians envision community on a grander scale. Walzer believes that in the real world, "independent states" – entire nations – approximate most closely his notion of community; his historical examples include the Hellenistic city-states as well as the medieval Jewish community, in which "social pressure worked very much like political power." MacIntyre also conceives of a nation or city-state community; he seems to consider Athens in classical times a representative community. Thus, for some communitarians, the nation or city-state is an alternative to the smaller-scale local community. Exploring yet a broader perspective, Walzer considers a community comprised of "humanity itself . . . the entire globe . . . But were we to take the globe as our setting, we would have to imagine what *does not yet exist:* a community that included all men and women everywhere."

Substance. Considering various notions of size leads to the more significant issue of substance, the content or nature of the community, for the concrete expressions of a community's scale – town, city-state, nation, or neighborhood – may have social, political, economic, moral, or other underpinnings. The difficulty here is that the communitarians do not draw on one clear substantive account of community. For example, Sandel does not say explicitly what makes a local residential area or municipal government a community. However, his notion of community as a "common vocabulary of discourse and a background of implicit practices and understandings," suggests that a town or a city is a community by virtue of a latent cultural consensus. Sandel's repeated references to "moral experience" further suggest that the community has a moral dimension, expressed in people's "constitutive attachments."

Walzer suggests, similar to Sandel, that a community is distinguished by its "shared understandings and intuitions," a common fund of meanings. He explains that in its pure form, such a community is only a theoretical construct; in reality, "political communities" are ". . . probably the closest we can come to a world of common meanings. Language, history and culture come together (. . . more closely here than anywhere else) to produce a collective consciousness. The implied community is, like Sandel's, essentially cultural-moral, presumably found in small locales, and sought for in more encompassing ones, even in nations, worldwide, via the United Nations.

While Walzer interprets the political community to indicate the presence of a latent cultural or cultural-moral consensus, Benjamin Barber, in his book, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, sees the political

community as an end in itself. He espouses "strong" democracy, a politics of universal participation, in which "all of the people govern themselves in at least some public matters at least some of the time." Barber's conception of community involves not as much the substance of a particular cluster of "shared understandings" as the process of political participation. He envisions the nation as a town hall, and it is through the activity of direct participation that Barber fashions his community and the individuals within it. Public activity is elevated from a means to a community goal: "To participate is to create a community that governs itself, and to create a self-governing community is to participate."

The Responsive Community. Perhaps the central issue of these various interpretations of the substance of community is how the community expresses, affirms – versus imposes – its common values, ends, and interests. A three-part classification is helpful here. First, values may be imposed by the state, which makes for a coercive community. Alternatively, values may be imposed by a "tight," nonpluralistic community, lacking moral alternatives – a Salem-like community, whose punitive force is largely psychological (fear, humiliation, isolation, degradation). Finally, values may be affirmed (here, we avoid *imposed*) by what is called a "responsive community," a noncoercive community that appeals to the "nobler" part of the self, and one that in turn the self finds compelling.

One important source of the reluctance to accord full moral standing to the community is the view that any and all community voices are coercive. Nineteen-sixties radicals referred to economic and psychological "coercion," for instance, arguing that there was no basic difference between a police state (Stalinist Russia) and a capitalist society that forced farmhands (and many other workers) to labor at demeaning jobs for low pay, and subjected its citizens to media and junk-culture "rape." Libertarians often take a similar position, by simply not recognizing a difference between the state and the community; both are viewed as "making" people behave in the name of the collectivity, without regard to differences in means. Libertarians assume that both intrude unduly on decisions that autonomous individuals (conceived as independent of community) are to make. CLP, Elshtain explains, see the individual as free not only from state coercion but from "a public morality he may not share," and free as well from the intrusions of his neighbors into his "private affairs." She adds:

> Civil libertarians cannot get beyond a picture of isolated individuals, bound up in their "freedom from," going through the world *en garde* against possible constraints from concerned and potentially "repressive" communities.

Social conservatives construe the issues in equally extreme terms when they argue that those opposed (as liberals are) to state-imposed religion (for example, prayer in schools) or a ban on abortion, are simply "against" religion or "for" abortion. The possibility that one may favor certain values but seek for them to be supported via the moral appeal of the community – and not forced by the state – is lost.

While the concept of community may harbor the threat of coercion, it is not necessarily the coercion of the state, but the moral compulsion of a Salem-like community. Sandel does not describe the institutions that would sustain the moral community he envisions, but, as we have seen, the individual is subject to the shared understandings, the collective consensus of the community. In MacIntyre's project, the potential for moral pressure by a monolithic community is more tangible – and threatening. "Practices," interpreted within the context of "traditions," are the institutions that structure individual lives; the societal "virtues" are the "acquired qualities" that enable individuals to achieve the intrinsic goods of a collectivity. And we have seen that MacIntyre does not provide a sound basis for the individual who criticizes the socially fostered practices. MacIntyre's community, then, is morally domineering because human activity is sharply defined by and limited to a distinct constellation of practices – and these endeavors are the only means through which an individual can find moral meaning and worth in the community. The person who does not follow them is necessarily an outcast, for the community lacks in its moral vocabulary legitimate alternatives and the capacity to allow, respond to, and benefit from critical and innovative individuals.

The I & We paradigm builds on the concept of a responsive community, one that appeals to values that members already possess ("Only you can prevent forest fires!") and encourages them to internalize values they currently do not have (before an appeal to prevent litter will be effective, individuals are called upon to concern themselves with the environment). This type of voluntary moral affirmation and education provides solid foundations for a noncoercive community. When people act to express a value they have truly acquired within a pluralistic community (internalized rather than accepted as a social pressure to which they had "better" conform), they are not, nor do they feel, coerced, even in a psychological sense. There is nothing morally objectionable about such an act; on the contrary, without the expression of internalized values, there would be no social coherence or community – or for that matter, functioning individuals.