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## THE RESPONSIVE COMMUNITY: A COMMUNITARIAN PERSPECTIVE\*

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*Authentic communities, ones that are responsive to the "true needs" of all community members, reflect the appropriate balance of order and autonomy. The traditional contradiction between order and autonomy can be minimized by responsiveness that considers the community's historical position. When centripetal forces pull too much toward order, an emphasis must be placed on autonomy. When centrifugal forces pull too much toward autonomy, order must be given greater weight. The relationship between centripetal and centrifugal forces is peculiar. Like a symbiotic relationship, the forces enhance each other. However, at a point where one force gains undue supremacy over the other, they become antagonistic. This relationship, labeled inverting symbiosis, informs communitarian analysis of the current social conditions and therefore must be applied within context. As communities develop particularistic identities, boundaries between members and nonmembers evolve. To reduce the potential for conflict, layered loyalties (allegiances to multiple communities) must be fostered. Ultimately, an overarching "community of communities" must develop to respond to the needs of constituent communities as those communities are responsive to their constituent members.*

**M**y thesis is that sociology can provide a compelling answer to an age-old problem, an exit from an entrapping dilemma: how to maintain both social order and personal autonomy in one and the same society; in other words, how to construct a society that protects its members from one another—from civil war to violent crime—and does so without oppressing them.<sup>1</sup> This dilemma, which in one form or another has occupied social philosophers and sociologists from the first days of the discipline, still confronts contemporary societies, from Russia to Iran to the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> The concepts of order and autonomy have parallels in the concepts of civility and piety as examined by Selznick in *The Moral Commonwealth* (1994:387-427).

The quest for such a peaceful society is significant. Yet major social thinkers have argued that the concept is too narrowly framed. Simply seeking to prevent hostilities will not guarantee social justice to members of the society, other than indirectly, when it is argued that the absence of justice leads to violence. And, aiming at peace alone will not reveal the ways a society can reduce alienation or enable its members to grow as persons without becoming highly dependent on the state.

Only a community that is responsive to the "true needs" of all its members, both in the substance of its core/shared values and in its social formation, can minimize the penalties of order and the dangers of autonomy. I refer to such a community as an *authentic community* and to all others as *partial* or *distorted communities*. While a fully authentic community might well be a utopian vision, it is a vision that can guide the personal and collective efforts of social actors and one that can be approximated.

*Responsiveness* is the cardinal feature of authentic communities. If the values the

community fosters and the form of its structure (allocation of assets, application of power, shapes of institutions, and mechanisms of socialization) do not reflect its members' needs, or reflect only the needs of some, the community's order will be ipso facto imposed rather than truly supported. And in the long run, imposed order is unstable (indeed ultimately disorderly) and threatens the autonomy of individual members and subgroups.

Thus far, then, I assume that (1) there is a strong measure of built-in contradiction between the common good and the needs of community members; (2) as the community's responsiveness is enhanced, the scope of this fundamental contradiction can be significantly reduced (but not eliminated); and (3) the ways a community can be made more responsive can be specified.

I draw on previously advanced ideas strictly as markers to indicate the intellectual place of my presentation and, more generally, of communitarian thinking. I stress that when I refer to Talcott Parsons, Sigmund Freud, or Karl Marx, I make no attempt to summarize their positions, let alone to do justice to the rich complexity of their theories; I reference their theories merely to place the discussion in a context.

### **RESPONSIVE COMMUNITIES: BEYOND PARSONS, MARX, AND FREUD**

Sociological theories vary greatly in their assumptions as to how difficult it is to provide order and maintain autonomy for community members. Parsons's ideas are at the optimistic side of a continuum. He sees societies as having a set of collective needs and a core of shared values. These values are internalized through socialization, so society members voluntarily seek to accomplish what the society needs. Social control mops up recalcitrant deviants. Wrong (1961) has captured this implied notion of the pliability of human nature (also see Wrong 1994).

The underlying idea is that one can bring members of a community to truly affirm their societal formation. Little attempt is made to assess the particular societal regime or to examine whether the society could or should adapt to the members, at least to some ex-

tent. For example, according to this Parsonian view, a traditional society that expects all its members to marry and labels women who do not do so in derogatory terms, such as "spinsters," would not be expected to change to accommodate the needs of women who do not seek marriage.

Marx approaches the issue rather differently; surprisingly, he largely defines away the dilemma. Within history, Marx views the notion of a social order that serves all members of a society as a false conception advanced by one class of members to hold the others at bay. There is no one society. Existing class consciousness and organization do not reflect the objective needs of "the people" as a whole; at best they reflect the needs of the oppressors. In short, in the terms I use here, there is no one order into which society members fit or that can be modified to meet members' needs part of the time. At the "end of history," though, this basic contradiction will be resolved, and the society and its members will live in basic harmony.<sup>2</sup> Marx's prescription, hence, advances conflict, to hurry society to the end of history.

Freud approaches the order/autonomy dilemma with much less optimism, and at the same time he shows greater respect for these two cardinal elements of the human condition. Disregarding differences among his various writings and conflicting interpretations, he argues that while order (civilization) can be attained, such an order exacts considerable costs from the individual. Moreover, individuals can only be partially socialized; the veneer of civilization is thin and troubled. Although Freud moves us forward by not defining away the problem of order and autonomy, he too fails to seriously entertain the possibility of recasting society to reduce the distance between the societal needs for order, the claims on individuals that such order poses, and the needs of the members of the society.

A review of sociological evidence—the recent collapse of communist regimes, the high level of alienation in capitalist countries, the disaffection and restlessness in social democratic societies, the rise of religious funda-

<sup>2</sup> Marx does see the possibility for some limited individual antagonism even in a communist society (Marx and Engels 1970:183).

mentalism in Islamic nations—strongly indicates that there are indeed limits to the extent to which members of a society can be fully socialized. From a normative viewpoint, I find this conclusion rather reassuring. If people could be successfully socialized, using a Soviet, Madison Avenue, or some other propaganda technique, one could make slaves sing with joy in their galleys or teach the oppressed to cheer their oppressors. This hardly seems a commendable world.

I put forth, then, that *there is a fundamental contradiction between the society's need for order and the individual's quests for autonomy*. I use the term autonomy rather than liberty because much more than individual rights is involved—including opportunities to follow one's own subculture, for individual self-expression Maslow-style, and for creativity—all of which are diminished when the pressure to maintain order is unduly high.

I maintain that *this fundamental contradiction can be reduced by means other than fitting people into social roles—namely, by rendering the social order more responsive to the members' true needs*.

I digress briefly here to explain “true” versus “false” needs. One can empirically determine whether the wants a people express reflect their true nature or have been falsely implanted. One indication is the direction that human behavior moves when mechanisms of socialization and social control slacken: Does a behavior persist or decrease? For example, the “true need” for many women to work outside the home is supported by the observation that women seek to work even when they are well-off and are not under economic pressure. On the other hand, the fact that rich people do not line up to work on assembly lines tells us volumes about the compatibility of assembly-line jobs with true human needs (Etzioni 1968a, 1968b). Another indication of true needs is that, generally, people's behavior reveals what they truly believe. The fact that practically all smokers try strenuously to stop smoking suggests that they are addicted to cigarettes and do not truly prefer to smoke (Goodin 1991; Wolfe 1991).

To return to my main argument, I choose my words carefully: I suggest that a society can be made “more responsive” rather than fully responsive, because evidence strongly

suggests that the built-in contradictions can be significantly reduced but not eliminated. Even the Israeli *kibbutzim*, communal settlements, which in their heyday, were highly responsive, have been unable to bring their social formation and their members' needs into full harmony. Again, behavior offers evidence: For every person who stayed in a *kibbutz*, several left, and frequently there have been internal pressures to dismember many *kibbutz* institutions. In short, I conclude that while the order/autonomy contradiction built into the human condition can be eased by enhancing responsiveness (not merely through more socialization and social control), it cannot be eliminated.

### THE PROCESSES OF RESPONSIVENESS

Libertarians,<sup>3</sup> whose influence has been rising in social science, law, philosophy, and society over the last two decades, take a highly voluntaristic and individualistic approach to both the basic issue of reconciling the order/autonomy dilemma and to finding ways to reduce the built-in contradiction. Expressions of libertarian thinking are found in the Chicago School, especially in the works of Richard Epstein, Richard Posner, and Terry Eastland; it is reflected in the works of rational-choice sociologists; and it has roots in the earlier texts of Robert Nozick, Ronald Dworkin, and John Rawls, although the latter two have moved toward a partial recognition of some elements of communitarian thinking.

The libertarian perspective, put succinctly, begins with the assumption that individual agents are fully formed and their value preferences are in place prior to and outside of any society. It ignores robust social scientific

<sup>3</sup> The terms “liberals,” “classical liberals,” “contemporary liberals,” and “libertarians” have all been used to characterize the critics of communitarians. These labels are confusing; for instance, many readers do not realize that the labels are not confined to or even necessarily inclusive of those who are called liberals in typical daily parlance. Most importantly, because the defining element of the position is the championing of the individual, “libertarian” seems both the less obfuscating term and the one that is substantively most appropriate.

evidence about the ill effects of isolation, the deep-seated human need for communal attachments, the social anchoring of reasoning itself, and the consistent interactive influence of society members on one another. Much of the communitarian writing in the 1980s by nonsociologists focused on remaking this basic sociological point: There are no well-formed individuals bereft of social bonds or culture.<sup>4</sup>

Most important for the point at hand is that libertarians actively oppose the notion of “shared values” or the idea of “the common good.” They argue that once a community defines certain behaviors as virtuous, all members who do not live up to the standards are judged inferior. The only principled way to avoid discrimination is to have no collective judgments at all (Nozick 1974:28–35, 153–55). Libertarians “solve” the problem of order and provide maximum responsiveness in one and the same way: by denying the need for collective goals (other than defense and a few others) and by relying on the aggregation of individual preferences. To reiterate, these are preferences that libertarians assume are formed by individuals *on their own*, without membership in, influence from, or regard for a community. These aggregated individual choices occur when people vote, which is said to guide the polity; when individuals voluntarily form contracts and craft agreements; and when consumers apply their purchasing power to “vote” for products with currency.

While individual choices and the aggregation of choices enhance responsiveness somewhat, the main features of these processes are: (1) Individuals’ actions are often deeply affected by groups and communities of which they are members and by the dysfunctional effects of being denied group membership; (2) much relevant social action takes place when groups act in unison, rather than when individuals act alone; (3) individual choices and actions reflect affect and values more than do “evidence” and “reasoning”; and (4) the mobilization of groups and coalition-building among them are among the most powerful factors that affect final societal out-

comes—the extent to which a society’s responsiveness is enhanced or diminished (for details, see Etzioni 1968a, 1988).

## RESPONDING TO CRITICS

While other social sciences and branches of social philosophy have recently begun to acknowledge the importance of the concept of community and are pondering what defines an authentic community, the concept of community has been a cornerstone of sociological thinking for nearly two centuries—note, for example, the works of Durkheim, Tönnies, and Marx. Sociologists have established the pivotal role of authentic communities as a major antidote to alienation and tyranny and as a key element of a “good society.” Neoclassical economists, rational choice political scientists, law-and-economics legal scholars, and various *laissez-faire* conservatives and libertarians have continued to draw on a social model describing masses of individuals who act as free agents, ignoring the concept of community, indeed society in toto (Bentham [1935:8] and Margaret Thatcher [1993:626] declared the concept a fiction), or conceiving of community as a social contract, deliberately crafted and rationally constructed by individuals. The importance of shared culture, history, social bonds, and social structure is typically overlooked.

During the early 1990s, tribal wars have frayed the social fabric in a score of countries, formerly communist countries have sought new civic cultures, and individualism has increased in the West. All of this, combined with some social activism led by sociologists, has accorded the language of community a new currency in the public discourse. This, in turn, has strengthened academic interest in the concept of community.<sup>5</sup>

In reaction, both old-timers and newcomers to the sociological concept of community have posed several questions about the empirical validity and normative implications of the concept—questions that deserve systematic attention. Can community be clearly defined? What can be determined about the

<sup>4</sup> This observation was made by Philip Selznick during a session on communitarian thinking at the 1995 meeting of the American Sociological Association.

<sup>5</sup> Coughlin (forthcoming) provides a chart of the increase in the number of articles, both general circulation and academic, about communitarianism.

forces that seek to diminish order versus those that seek to curtail autonomy? Under what conditions do communities cease to be exclusive, and instead become encompassed in communities of communities.

### WHAT IS COMMUNITY?

Several critics have argued that the concept of community should be avoided because it is too ill-defined. Margaret Stacey (referenced in Bell and Newby 1973:49) argues that the problem of defining community can be solved by avoiding the term all together. Bell and Newby (1974) argue, "There has never been a theory of community, nor even a satisfactory definition of what community is" (p. xliii). In another text, Bell and Newby (1973) write, "But what is community? . . . [I]t will be seen that over ninety definitions of community have been analyzed and that the one common element in them all was man!" (p. 15).

It should first be noted that many widely used terms are not readily definable. The concept of a chair seems much simpler to define than almost any sociological term, let alone community. However, what is a chair? A place on which to sit? So are benches and sofas. A piece of furniture that has four legs? Some chairs have three of legs. And so on. Yet, we have little difficulty using such a term.

Moreover, community can be defined with reasonable precision. Community is defined by two characteristics: (1) A community entails a web of affect-laden relations among a group of individuals, relations that often crisscross and reinforce one another (rather than merely one-on-one relations or chains of individual relations); and, (2) community requires a commitment to a set of shared values, norms, and meanings, and a shared history and identity—in short, a shared culture. This definition recognizes that there are collective, historical actors and not merely grand individuals. Communities are not only aggregates of persons acting as free agents, but also collectives that have identities and purposes of their own and can act as a unit. In effect, these very communities often drive history and set the contexts for individual actions in society.

I suggest that a third characteristic further

defines community: (3) Communities are characterized by a relatively high level of responsiveness. This third characteristic excludes social entities that oppress their members: It defines as partial communities those that are responsive to some members or sub-groups, but not to all; it characterizes as unauthentic those communities that respond to the false needs of members rather than to their true needs.

### BASIC FORCES AND THE COMMUNITARIANS

The notion that communities share a culture has raised the hackles of those who are opposed to any community-based definition of the common good and of shared values as having a role in social life and history. Libertarians are correct in saying that if a community undergirds a norm (e.g., community members ought to attend church on Sunday), those who violate the norm (as distinct from being exempt for an accepted reason, e.g., they are ill) will come under some measure of community censure. However, while libertarians are troubled by such outcomes, most sociologists recognize community censure as a major way that communities uphold members' commitments to shared values and service to the common good—community order. And indeed community censure reduces the reliance on the state as a source of order, a matter libertarians consider of utmost importance.

Put differently, communities command *centripetal forces* that seek to pull in members' commitments, energies, time, and resources for what the community as a collectivity endorses as its notion of the common good. Communities do so by taxing members' income and demanding that they make contributions in-kind or provide sweat equity, defining which activities members may pursue as individuals versus those that the community abhors (e.g., nursing patients versus dealing crack) (Goode 1978). In this sense, communities are anti-individualistic (although not necessarily, and often not, anti-individual). That is, they oppose excessive withdrawal into self and self-centered projects, but do not oppose individual endeavors that might be compatible with, or contribute to, the common good.

Surprisingly, many discussions of community leave the matter at this point. Perhaps because it is self-evident or because they subscribe to the assumptions of sanguine sociologists who presume that most individuals can be deeply socialized, these discussions ignore the reality that community members do have needs of their own that cannot be served by merely being part of their community. These individual needs are deeply rooted—members of any one community have different needs, while the community definition of the common good is often, at least in part, applied to all members. (For instance, the expectation a century ago that all people retire by a given age, while today millions of people who reach that age are able and anxious to continue working.)<sup>6</sup> Also, community members have a need for self-expression, although Maslow (1954: 180–83) may be correct in suggesting that it is activated only after more basic human needs, such as security and creature comforts, are relatively sated.

To reiterate, while not all quests for autonomy are anti-communal (e.g., many scientific projects are not), attempts to extend the realm of individual autonomy generate centrifugal forces, forces that, if they reach high levels, undermine the communal bonds and culture.

What is the relationship between the concepts of centripetal and centrifugal community forces and the concepts of order and autonomy? Order and autonomy are community needs; centripetal and centrifugal forces either exacerbate or ease the fulfilling of these needs. The relationship between these forces and needs are like those between a new crime wave and the means employed to maintain public safety: They affect each other, but they are hardly identical.

First, to reiterate a key observation that should guide social theory: *All social entities are subject to both centrifugal and centripetal forces. Communities have social formations that protect the community from being*

<sup>6</sup> Some anthropologists have observed tribes in which the members are reported not to have a concept of an "I," of an individual. But in all complex societies this concept or its equivalent seems to exist and reflects the need for personal autonomy.

*pulled off balance by either of these forces.* For instance, national service, to the extent that it fosters social bonds and shared normative conceptions, serves as an antidote to excessive individualism, and the Bill of Rights serves as an antidote to excessive collectivism. This perspective leaves behind the libertarian-communitarian debate that dominated the 1980s: whether a group of individuals should have a shared concept of the common good. Instead, this view focuses on the scope, power, and content of such concepts, taking for granted that they are, and ought be, defining elements of communities.<sup>7</sup>

Second, *the basic centripetal and centrifugal forces vie with one another continually, pulling the community in opposite directions: centripetal forces pull toward higher levels of community service, regulation, and mobilization; centrifugal forces pull toward higher levels of differentiation, individualization, self-expression, and subgroup liberty.* This tug of war between contradictory forces is not accidental, encountered under some special sociological or historical conditions, but should be assumed to influence all communities.

Third, and most important, *authentic communities require that the two basic forces be in balance*, as opposed to allowing one force to gain a decisive upper hand.<sup>8</sup>

## THE INVERTING SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP

I turn next to discuss the peculiar relationship between centripetal and centrifugal forces—one that is rather different from relationships we are more familiar with. Some forces cancel each other out. For instance, bases neutralize acids. Some forces support one another—go hand in hand—such as loans from the World Bank combined with the reduction of trade barriers by First World nations. There are also symbiotic relations,

<sup>7</sup> Many overviews of the 1980s debates on this topic exist (Bell 1993; Avineri and de-Shalit 1992; Sandel 1984).

<sup>8</sup> We need also to take into account whether the levels of both forces and the responsive formations they encounter are low or high; the said balance can be achieved on several force levels (Bell 1995).

when two forces enrich one another rather than merely work well together. Plover birds, for example, stand in the mouths of crocodiles, eating worms and leeches. The crocodiles get their teeth cleaned, and the plovers get a ready supply of choice food. We rarely, though, encounter a combination of forces that enhance one another up to a point—forming a balanced symbiotic relationship—but become antagonistic if either force gains too much strength.<sup>9</sup> I refer to this unusual relationship as *inverting symbiosis* (cf. schismogenesis in Bateson 1958:175).

*The relationship between centripetal and centrifugal community forces is one of inverting symbiosis:* The two forces are mutually enhancing up to a point, and then they can turn antagonistic. To assess this hypothesis, let us engage in a mental experiment. Let us start with a low level of community, say residents in a recently completed high-rise building, and assume that some social agents (maybe some community organizers) start to build social bonds and foster a culture among the new residents. Up to a point, *both* the common good and the individual members' autonomy will be enhanced by these centripetal forces.<sup>10</sup> The common good, such as tending a shared garden or dealing as a group with the building's service providers, will be richer for them. The high-rise residents, getting to know one another as persons, will feel less isolated and will have a stronger sense of self and feel secure in their autonomy.

However, if the newly found community lays ever increasing claims on its members, eventually both community order and personal autonomy will be threatened. Thus, if the centripetal forces grow too strong, not only will the members' autonomy shrivel, but the communal bonds will fray—social responsibilities will turn into imposed duties, and opposition to the community will grow.

<sup>9</sup> Note that this relationship is different from relationships that are described as dialectical, or as having a declining marginal utility, and from those that are curvilinear. For instance, some studies suggest that if people consume alcohol in moderation it will enhance their health, but beyond a certain point health will diminish. But this holds only one way—alcohol to body and not vice versa—hence, it is not inverting symbiosis.

<sup>10</sup> This point has been made with regard to China (Bell 1995:41).

This is what happens in totalitarian regimes: While initial calls for new social responsibilities are rather warmly accepted, as these regimes escalate their demands, alienation grows.

On the other hand, if centrifugal forces grow too strong, not only will service to the community become deficient (as would happen if residents had to arrange for their own garbage pick up), but the autonomy of high-rise residents who depend in varying degrees on the community for basic needs will be diminished. In the terms used here, the relation between the two forces in this community will have moved from being mutually enhancing to antagonistic.

Once one recognizes these relations between centrifugal and centripetal forces and their respective formations in communities, many arguments in this realm can be disentangled by applying the concept of inverting symbiosis. Take, for example, the argument that individualism is a basic feature of American society, and hence, criticisms of individualism constitute attacks on the core value of the American society, versus the notion that individualism is a form of societal malaise.<sup>11</sup> If one views such arguments as misleadingly dichotomous and applies the concept of inverting symbiosis, both claims are off the mark: The American tradition is a mixture of the two formations and of a quest for "corrections" when one formation becomes too strong. The fact that both individualization and communal bonds are part of the American experience is well reflected in our founding documents. The Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution contain statements such as "[W]e mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred trust"; "We have appealed to their [the British] native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations"; and "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, . . . promote the general welfare. . . ."

Moreover, when seen in this context, calls for more individual autonomy when communal bonds are very strong or even oppressive, as they were in the early colonies or states,

<sup>11</sup> This issue is discussed elsewhere in greater detail (Bellah et al. 1985).

are, in effect, calls to move from antagonistic relations back to the mutually enhancing relations of inverting symbiosis—not to a system based on individualism (or high centrifugal and low centripetal formations). This also was the socio-historical context of the Britain in which John Locke and Adam Smith were writing. However, when prescriptions for more individualism are applied to contemporary and highly individualistic Western societies, especially to the United States, they have the opposite effect: Such prescriptions move society deeper into the antagonistic zone.

In the same vein, recent statements by communitarians pointing to the need for increased emphasis on community in the United States have been misconstrued as antithetical to individuation. To the extent that these statements are made in a context seen as excessively individualistic, they point to a need to move from the antagonistic zone toward the mutually enhancing one, one in which order and autonomy sustain one another, and both are well served.

The same confusion is particularly evident in the debate between individual rights (a legal expression of the centrifugal formations) and the call for personal and social responsibility (for stronger centripetal formations). Again, this confusion is resolved when the concept of inverting symbiosis is applied. Libertarians have distorted arguments by communitarian Mary Ann Glendon and others (myself included), who argue that individual rights have been overemphasized, interpreting these arguments as if they suggest that individual rights should be curtailed, if not suspended (McClain 1994:1032).

The concept of inverting symbiosis allows one to see that rights and responsibilities enhance one another up to a point. This can be demonstrated both regarding specific rights and on a more generic level. For instance, the right to free speech, if one looks at it sociologically, presumes that those subjected to it (as distinct from those who exercise it) must tolerate speech that they find offensive. If individuals are intolerant, the right to free speech is at best contested, and ultimately not sustainable.

Similarly, the majority of Americans have believed for decades that they have a right to numerous government services, but they

refuse to assume the duty to pay for them. The communitarian argument here is that we are in a mutually enhancing zone: greater government services to individuals presumes a willingness of individuals to assume responsibility by paying taxes.

More generally, libertarians have long feared that any recalibration of legal rights will cause a sociological phenomenon widely referred to as the "slippery slope." The fear is that once a limited change is made in an institution or tradition, uncontrollable social forces are unleashed that widen and extend the change and lead to the destruction of that institution or tradition (Schauer 1985: 361–62). Hence, for example, the argument that we should refrain from making changes in the U.S. Constitution. The fear of a slippery slope has been one reason that activists from rather varied political backgrounds oppose having a constitutional assembly of the states in Philadelphia in 1996. I have suggested elsewhere that one can make sociological "notches" on the slope, formatting social arrangements that can prevent social avalanches (Etzioni 1993: 177–90).

A more profound point: Historically, governments that provide rich legal rights to their citizens have been endangered, not when the community demanded that those who have rights also live up to their social responsibilities, but when this was *not* done. The link is that *rights, which impose demands on community members, are effectively upheld only as long as the basic needs of those community members are attended to*. Thus, during the first third of this century when the needs of the Soviet and German peoples were denied, they supported those who would replace democratic governments with tyrannies. In short, the sociological protection for a regime of individual rights (of liberty) is to ensure that the basic needs of the community members are served. This in turn requires that community members live up to their social responsibilities—they must pay taxes, serve in neighborhood crime watches, and attend to their children and their elders. We see here that there exists at the core of civil democratic societies a proud mutuality between individual rights and social responsibilities.

However, if a society legitimizes ever more individual rights or imposes ever more social



responsibilities, there will come a time when the balance is uneven. This occurs, for instance, when, as a result of bestowing ever more legal rights on a people, individuals move from attempting to resolve conflicts through negotiations, bargaining, and mediation to relying on the courts (a phenomenon often referred as litigiousness) (Glendon 1991). Or, when imposing ever more taxes on a people leads to a tax rebellion (as many states saw in the 1980s following California's Proposition 13), if not a full-blown political rebellion, like that faced by King George III. In short, while up to a point individual rights and social responsibility are mutually enhancing, they turn antagonistic if the level of either increases after that point.

I am the first to grant that the exact point at which mutually enhancing relations turn antagonistic is not clearly marked. One can establish, however, when a society passes from one zone to the other: The term anarchy is often applied when excessive individualism prevails, and collectivism when social duties are excessive.

### WITHIN HISTORY

So far I have depicted the relationship between the two core elements of community in largely analytical terms: A balanced combination makes for a good alloy called "community." I first posed the question in static terms: Which combinations are most conducive to community? I then pointed out that in an historical perspective communities are perpetually subjected to centrifugal or centripetal forces.<sup>12</sup> These varying forces push the communities and other social entities either toward collectivism or toward individuation. Thus, even if a community reaches the best possible balance based on its organizing principles—the ultimate symbiosis—it cannot be stable for long because the dynamic constellation of historical forces will change.

<sup>12</sup> I cannot discuss their origins, but suffice it to say that some forces are externally generated, for instance due to the spread of American culture on worldwide television, and some forces are internally generated, for instance, when an oppressed group mobilizes itself for social action (Etzioni 1968a).

Therefore, for a community to maintain an overarching pattern, to be metastable (the specific formation of the community will change, but not the basic balance between order and autonomy), the community must respond like a person riding a bicycle; it must continually correct tendencies to lean too far in one direction or the other, as it moves forward over a changing terrain. Thus, forces in the United States in the early 1990s that are pushing for a reemphasis on social responsibility and of which the communitarian movement has been a significant part, can be viewed as a move to counterbalance a period of unduly high centrifugal forces.

Communities in which no balancing forces are activated lose their overarching pattern through tribal wars, revolutions, or an accumulation of smaller changes that lead to a fundamentally different pattern. Japan, for instance, changed in this way during Western occupation after World War II: It became a constitutional democracy in which individual rights are recognized and protected, albeit less than in the West. And, of course, the U.S.S.R. experienced a major breakdown in 1990, moving to a drastically different formation in terms of its balance of order and autonomy.

Those who seek to maintain the basic existing societal pattern must cast themselves on the other side of history. They must try to pull against the forces that are tilting the society off balance at that particular time. Those who seek to destroy a particular societal pattern often cast themselves in support of forces that push the existing societal formations even further out of kilter, out of the zone in which the particular pattern can be maintained.

### COMMUNITY OF COMMUNITIES: RELATIONS TO NONMEMBERS

Even communities that are responsive and well-balanced will be particularistic, having identities that separate and a sense of sociological boundary that distinguishes members from nonmembers. These features render even these communities potentially hostile, if not dangerous, to nonmembers. Communities can be exclusive—they can take positions against immigrants or persons of different economic, racial, or ethnic back-

grounds, or sexual orientations; they can seek to break up societies in order to gain greater autonomy for their members (e.g., Quebec); they can engage in tribal warfare against other communities that were once members of their own society (Afghanistan, Bosnia, Sri Lanka, India, and the former U.S.S.R.).

Some see these potential failings of communities as sufficiently damning to oppose community as a normatively approved sociological formation and seek to replace it with a "worldwide family," of which all individuals are members, or with a "universal state," in which all are citizens (Schlesinger 1992). But there is no reason to expect that such developments will take place or can even be engineered, or if they were to develop, that members of existing communities would find these mega-societal entities responsive to their needs.

A more realistic and normatively acceptable position lies in developing those social processes that foster what I call *layered loyalties* in members of various communities. As a result, members see themselves as, and act as, members of more than one community. People who have a loyalty to a region (for example, the South in the United States, or Scotland in the United Kingdom), but also to their nation, are a case in point. Attempts to develop supranational communities, for instance, in Western Europe, reflect attempts to develop new layered loyalties. To the extent that layered loyalties evolve, they discourage exclusivity and tribal wars.

I note, though, that the mere existence of layered loyalties will not suffice. When normative conflicts occur between the layers of communities on some select issues concerning order and autonomy, loyalty by all member communities to the overarching community must take precedence over loyalty to the immediate community. This ensures that the "community of communities" will be responsive to member communities' needs and not merely be imposed on them or be of only marginal significance. For instance, only if all the various Canadian provinces have a higher commitment to the Canadian society than to their provinces will they be willing to make the sacrifices needed to make Canada responsive to all member communities. Such levels of loyalty seem natural

when they are in place in highly integrated nations, yet in other nations they are difficult to attain. Note, though, that quite a few communities of communities did evolve out of separate communities, including the United States, Germany, and Italy.

At the same time, one must acknowledge that until these layered loyalties encompass the ultimate community of communities, that *of all people*, intercommunity dangers will not be overcome, although they may be curtailed.

## IN CONCLUSION

The need for order and the need for autonomy cannot be fully reconciled. Moreover, communities are subject to centrifugal forces that strain efforts to maintain order, and to centripetal forces that undermine autonomy. Hence, communities must constantly endeavor to balance both, or be thrown off into social anarchy or collectivism.

The order of an authentic community is based on social formations that are continually reshaped in response to the members' true needs rather than relying only, or even mainly, on socializing the members to accept the community's demands or on utilizing control processes. This is not to deny that, when all is said and done, communities do face tragic choices. They cannot meet all the demands of all members, but they can reduce the distance between the demands on members for order and what the members seek through a process of resocializing the members.

A common mistake is to view order and autonomy either as antagonistic (a zero-sum relationship, so that the more we have of one the less we have of the other) or as mutually enhancing. They are complementary up to a point, after which they grow antagonistic. It is the role of those who care to fashion authentic communities to pull their communities into the highly responsive zone, into one in which mutuality between the basic elements of order and autonomy is high and antagonism low.

While communities are by nature limited in terms of the number of members they encompass and have separatist tendencies, they often do become parts of still more encompassing communities. Under the proper con-

ditions, these overarching communities can maintain order among communities without suppressing autonomy (Etzioni 1965).

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