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UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

SIRENS OF COMMUNITY

A thesis submitted to
the School of Graduate Studies and Research
of the University of Ottawa
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Degree of Master of Arts
(Philosophy)

By
Phil Lancaster



Philip Lancaster, Ottawa, Canada, 1992



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Contents:

Abstract.....i

Chapter one:	Introduction	1
Chapter two:	Whence Individualism?	7
Chapter three:	A Version of Communitarianism	20
	1. Allan Bloom	21
	2. Alasdair MacIntyre	47
Chapter four:	Epistemogical and Metaphysical Obligations of Community	71
Chapter five	Community and Rationality	89
Chapter six	Rationality and Individualism	1 0 6
Chapter seven	Conclusion	117
Notes		120
Bibliography		134

ABSTRACT

Recent books by Alan Bloom and Alasdair MacIntyre have argued that liberal individualism is inadequate to a full moral existence. Bloom claims that our lives could be so much richer if we recognized the creative force of 'prejudices' and acknowledged that culture needs just such a creative force if it is to flourish. MacIntyre claims that individual identity is embedded in the particular cultural tradition of which each individual is a part. He goes on to develop the argument that each person's moral understanding is necessarily bounded by his own tradition and that moral membership in some such tradition is a precondition of being able to understand the moral arguments of any tradition. MacIntyre also argues that the language of moral debate suffers from meaning incommensurability because the underlying rationale for the arguments that are framed within each tradition reflect different beliefs about rationality. Both Bloom and MacIntyre can be interpreted in a way that depicts them as complementary members of a school of thought known as 'communitarianism'.

This paper takes the view that the version of communitarianism formed by the conjunction of the major premises of Bloom and MacIntyre is based on an epistemological error. It begins with a brief exploration of the genesis of the concept of modern individualism using De Tocqueville as the point of departure. The paper attempts to illustrate the Tocquevillean theme of "freedom as interdependency" of rational individuals. The first section outlines De Tocqueville's theory that moral relations among reasoning individuals requires the freedom to develop a sense of each others moral status. As De Tocqueville observed, the process of arriving at agreement on necessary collective action requires free individuals to communicate in order present and discuss various ideas of affecting the relevant decisions.

The third chapter has a section devoted to each of Bloom and MacIntyre. The section on Bloom concentrates on his argument concerning the aesthetic worth of 'prejudice' and considers some of the practical problems attendant on his desire to appeal to traditions as arbiters of moral and aesthetic value. This theme is taken up again in the section on MacIntyre though the major effort is to consider the implications of his notion of moral embeddedness. This section concludes that the communitarian thesis relies on a problematic notion coherence as the ultimate criterion of truth for moral claims.

The fourth chapter argues that the notion of cohesion has epistemic problems that cannot be avoided within the

conception of community that I attribute to Bloom and MacIntyre. In order for this communitarian thesis to work, traditions must be able to appeal to teleological insights that are not open to analysis. This communitarian thesis advocates coherence as the locus of moral authority. I attempt to show that this commits them to the position that traditions have only to offer a cohesive account of existence in order to ground their doctrines on something solid. This paper argues that the prospects for developing a plausibly cohesive account requires a teleological confidence that is not possible given human epistemic limits. The paper argues that notions of moral certainty just cannot be maintained in the face of the ultimate contingency of human knowledge.

The fifth chapter of this paper is devoted to an analysis of the rationality of this version of communitarianism. Bloom and MacIntyre both reject what they see as a Weberian tendency in moral thought. Chapter five suggests that Weber should not be rejected so quickly. It also suggests that turning inward to various communities in search of conceptions of virtue merely turns away from the central problem of morals. It further suggests that the communitarian programme is liable to contribute to the kind of mute conflict of absolutes that is liable to lead to the kind of impasse that served as a focus for Weber's theory of rationality.

The final chapter outlines a skeletal argument for individualism through reference to Jan Narveson's recent review of libertarianism. It suggests that the careful consideration of means-ends rationality, taken in conjunction with our necessary epistemic uncertainty, logically inclines us to reliance on the Heraclitean notion of "what is common". Since developing a common understanding of what is common is critical to uncoerced moral behaviour, it follows that something like the Tocquevillean version of freedom offers a better context for the development of harmonious moral relations than the version of communitarianism that is presented here does.

"The unknown, the unforetold, the unproven, that is what life is based on. Ignorance is the ground of thought....The only thing that makes life possible is permanent, intolerable uncertainty: not knowing what comes next."¹

Introduction

Existence is bewildering. Though scientists have been able to acquire significant elements of particular knowledge about the universe, the meaning of our own existence within this universe is as inscrutable to us as ever. The sum of all of the bits of scientific knowledge that have been learned over the last three hundred years seems to have given us no better idea how the cosmic puzzle fits together than we had when we started. And yet, some cohesive account of how the pieces fit seems to be fundamental to knowledge about our own role in the cosmos and thus, to moral certainty. Perhaps the turmoil of contemporary existence and the unintelligibility of much of what passes for moral debate has contributed to a recent effort to twist moral certainty out of cultural 'truths'. This is a strategy that has a number of problems warranting close inspection. Of particular interest is the suggestion that moral certainty could be gained by discovering what already lies within the moral domains of various communities and that, once found, these certainties could be insulated from the scepticism that attends our general belief in the ultimate contingency of human knowledge.² In order for this thesis to succeed, it must somehow deal with an epistemic problem that has a long history in western thought: "Human nature does not have divine

understanding; divine nature does."³ Not understanding, we can seek knowledge that would improve our comprehension but, being human, we cannot know with certainty. We are, after all, only human.

Yet believing that we exist in perpetual uncertainty does not obviate the need to act. In everyday life, we must act to exist and, given the destructive consequences of many human actions, (and modes of existence) it matters very much how we act. In this essay, I will argue that our epistemic limitations, in particular, the necessary uncertainty that must attend every choice of 'ends', imposes constraints on moral action that we ignore at our peril. In order to achieve this objective, I will juxtapose two post modern, moral worldviews. The first is represented by writers, such as Alan Bloom, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Charles Taylor, who argue from an Aristotelian basis to claim that the individual 'self' achieves its identity through interaction with some particular intellectual tradition. I will refer to this view as communitarianism though I will concentrate on a version of it that I will derive almost exclusively from Bloom and MacIntyre.⁴ In opposition, I will place a school of thought that has conceptual obligations to Heraclitus but is represented in the modern liberal tradition beginning with J.S. Mill and carried into contemporary debate by Robert Nozick, Jan Narveson and others. I will, with apologies to authors whose subtlety I cannot hope to preserve in a work of such limited scope, group all of the arguments emanating from this quadrant of the philosophical compass under the general

heading of individualism.

Some Preliminary Thoughts

Somewhere between the self-centredness of Nietzsche's Overman and the selfless brotherhood of Plato's ideal Republic lies a range of possible solutions to the problem of social existence. Aristotle claimed that "Man, when perfected, is the best of animals; but if he is isolated from law and justice he is the worst of all".⁵ Underlying this claim is a teleological theory in which it is postulated that all things have a purpose that is deducible from their nature. "The good has been declared to be that at which all things aim."⁶ Communitarians identify themselves as such by their conceptual debts to the teleological paradigm. In essence, the communitarian thesis is that individuals cannot aspire to full moral lives outside of specific communities in which moral beliefs can be shared, developed and nurtured. According to this view, rationality is itself grounded in specific community beliefs. Communitarians generally claim that the liberal programme of seeking a universalisable criterion of rationality is based on a misguided set of aesthetic judgements disguised as rational theories. I will argue that the conclusions reached by both Bloom and MacIntyre suffer from many of the very weaknesses that they so eloquently point out in their analyses of the liberal tradition. I will also attempt to show that the call to community must be based either on an epistemic conceit or a woolly notion of rationality. Ultimately, I will argue that the version of the

communitarian thesis that I attribute to Bloom and MacIntyre fails to deal adequately with the problem of communication and seems to under appreciate the consequences of moral conflict.

In Leguin's science fiction classic, The Dispossessed, the hero, Shevek, becomes a prisoner of the morality of his own tightly knit community.⁷ Finding that his highly original work in physics is stifled by the levelling mechanisms of his society, he decides that, in order to live with his conscience, he must reject the constraints on the 'self' imposed by his community. In so doing he is beset by misgivings about his own motives in rejecting the anti-individualist worldview of his community. His desire to contribute to humankind, to transcend the bounds of his own particular community for its own good, struggles with his need to share in the moral life of his community. Either Shevek exercises a right which his society does not recognize, the right to act according to an individually derived end, or he must see his work wasted on people who cannot understand it. He decides, finally, that he must deny the main premise on which his own community was founded - that society is a single organism of which individual humans are merely parts. With this denial, Shevek runs the risk of becoming subverted by his own vanity for he cannot achieve what he feels he must without acting on his own, without asserting his right to discover meaning obscured to the rest of the society in which he was born and nurtured. In Leguin's words, "To die is to lose the self and join the rest. He had kept the self and lost the rest."⁸

The moral agony described in this story helps to set the bounds for the discussion which follows below. It just makes no sense to try to discuss the self as if she were somehow prior to her culture nor does it seem very compelling to picture the self as a completely dependent creation of a culture - the two parts exist in constant tension. What needs to be determined is whether the tension will be destructive or creative. While it may be true to state, as MacIntyre does, that the Nietzschean ubermensch is a monster, (AVp21) there is another possible truth in the claim that the community which banishes him will have no protection from itself and will be vulnerable to its own collective fantasies; much in the way of Leguin's community. As she says elsewhere, "Light is the left hand of darkness, and darkness the right hand of light"; there is no self without other and no other without self.⁹ The question is, how best to protect the two from merging to the point that both cease to exist?

In order to clearly understand the communitarian view of the nature of the relationship between self and society, it will be helpful to begin by developing a preliminary understanding of communitarian objections to liberalism. Bloom claims that selfish individualism is to be blamed for most of the evils of contemporary American society.¹⁰ MacIntyre goes after both individualism and utilitarianism claiming, that they are a matched set of "fictions" stemming from common liberal roots.¹¹ Let us begin then with an abbreviated discussion of individualism as a preliminary to a

focused consideration of communitarianism.

Whence Individualism?

"...new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
The Element of fire is quite put out;
The Sun is lost, and the earth, and no man's wit
Can well direct him where to look for it.
And freely men confess that this world's spent,
When in the Planets, and the Firmament
The seek so many new; and then to see that this
Is crumbled out again to his Atomies.
'Til all in pieces, all coherence gone;
All just supply, and all Relation:
Prince, Subject, Father, Son, are things forgot,
For every man alone thinks that he hath got
To be a Phenix, and that then can be
None of that kind, of which he is, but he."¹²

Alexis De Toqueville is usually credited with coining the term "individualism".¹³ In his Democracy in America, he writes:

"Individualism is a mature and calm feeling, which disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellows, and to draw apart with his family and his

friends; so that, after he has thus formed a little circle of his own, he willingly leaves society at large to itself. Selfishness originates from blind instinct: individualism proceeds from erroneous judgement more than from depraved feelings; it originates as much in deficiencies of mind as in perversity of the heart."¹⁴

De Toqueville goes on to claim that "individualism, at first, only saps the virtues of public life; but, in the long run, it attacks and destroys all others, and is at length absorbed in downright selfishness".¹⁵ The thrust of his argument is that democracy gives rise to individualism by broadening the scope of human relations so much that there are no meaningful relationships left. He claims that, lacking the class separations of traditional aristocracies, democracies may also lack the unifying factors that make community possible.¹⁶ The democratic individual has no subsection of society with which to associate closely, and is therefore left in an open, but largely vacuous, relationship with all his fellows. "Aristocracy has made a chain with all members of a community, from the peasant to the king: democracy breaks that chain, and severs every link of it."¹⁷ He says that, as social conditions become more equal, the feeling of independence from one's countrymen grows and thus the members of democratic societies come to believe that they owe nothing to anyone and that they can live without the help of others. "They acquire the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone, and they are apt to

imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hands."¹⁸

There is, according to De Tocqueville, a curious quality to individualist thinking where metaphysical matters are concerned. In his eyes, the American individualist is not so much concerned with philosophical consistency as disinterested in thinking philosophically in the first place and thus prefers to accept almost any convenient metaphysical claim at all provided that it does not interfere with her efforts to live well.¹⁹ The individuals who inhabit De Tocqueville's democracy busy themselves with mundane matters and tend not to bother themselves much with questions of ultimate meaning. If De Tocqueville had stopped his analysis of American democracy here, then one would indeed have had to carry on a considerable distance with the task of developing a rounded view of individualism but, fortunately, he is more subtle than that. In a short section in which he discusses the democratic notion of the "indefinite perfectibility of man", he argues that the belief that all men can be improved by gaining experience of moral responsibility exerts such a strong influence on the American consciousness that even those with little time for thinking seem to be motivated by it.²⁰ Though, in his view, the Americans take their belief in perfectibility too far, he argues that aristocracies tend to equally extreme opposite beliefs.²¹ The idea of perfectibility coupled with the notion of equality, also peculiar to democracy, suggests a moral basis for democratic practice; i.e., democratic forms of association provide the context

for moral education through practice. On this view, the actualization of moral potential requires that the individual have the opportunity to accept full responsibility for his own actions.²² Aristocracy, on the other hand, fosters beliefs in natural limits to moral potential and; therefore, to moral aspirations. By formulating a view of social perfection in which individuals have assigned roles, aristocratic forms of government limit the field of moral perfectibility to select groups in the belief that only a very few of them have what it takes to be 'good'.²³

At first glance, one could be tempted to ascribe a monadic quality to Tocquevillean individuals. In so far as individuals may be considered as self-directed, there is a certain naive resemblance but there are important differences that need to be kept in mind. Leibnitz postulates his monads as completely self-contained entities responding to a pre-ordained pattern that allows them to function without reference to external conditions.²⁴ The monad operates as part of a perfectly planned system in which intermonadic communication is simply unnecessary. The Tocquevillean individual is different in that, though he or she looks inwards for guidance, she guides herself by reference to external conditions. De Tocqueville takes some pains to explain how the Americans cope with the tendency to act independently; ie., by creating social clubs and associations of various ilk.²⁵ The danger that de Tocqueville clearly sees in democracies is that

individuals concerned only with their own affairs could retreat into selfishness and thus become victims of their own indifference to the need to communicate in order to recognize the moral status of others. In the American case, (at least during his day) despite the widespread lack of concern with grand theory and deep thought, citizens take an active part in local government and thereby take responsibility for social action.²⁶ Thus the importance of voluntary associations. Democratic social structures, such as service clubs, help to "combat the effects of individualism" by providing their members fora for public dialogue which, in turn, give each member some opportunity for moral relationship with others.²⁷ Active engagement in social decision making within democratic associations encourages the development of "practical" rationality²⁸ in a way that no undemocratic form of political association could. Each member of a service club participates in decision making and thereby shares in moral responsibility for the outcome of decisions and gains experience in the exercise of practical morality.²⁹ The existence of voluntary associations 'proves' the difference between Liebnizean monads and Tocquevillean individuals. Tocquevillean individuals react to one another's existence by attempting to bridge the gaps that separate them from each other and; therefore, cannot be considered 'windowless'.

The monadic paradigm fails to capture the essential qualities of individualism in anything but a metaphoric sense. While it is clear that individualists may appear to act according to some

hidden internal principle, and in this sense are monadic, it is also clear that they have their windows at least partly open to exterior causes. The main 'causes' in this instance just are each other. In coming together voluntarily to resolve social issues, they are drawn into interaction with and acknowledgement of each other's moral existence. Lacking any authority beyond themselves, each is required to refer any opinion that she may wish to impose on others to the common judgement of all. The fact that they are able to achieve some level harmony outside of the ordered pattern of assigned roles gives the lie to the monadic interpretation. Achieving harmony without an agreed on concept of order requires a heavy dependency on communication. In a society where each considers herself to be the arbiter of moral value, harmonized moral action would be impossible without a great deal of talk (provided that force is not used to bring about some sort of harmony by crushing the will of those who disagree). The notion of communication, at least in so far as it is communication that contributes to moral decision making, seems to negate the plausibility of a monadic description of De Tocqueville's version of individualism just because communication logically entails recognition of self and others in the same moral space. As long as the resolution of moral issues depends on communication among individuals, then reference to some purely selfish motive or some strictly private insight will not suffice to achieve agreement. It follows that individuals must find some commonly acceptable means of reaching agreement and thus, in reaching for common ground,

Tocquevillean individuals discredit the monadic version of themselves.

What undoubtedly seemed strange to the eyes of a nineteenth century aristocrat was the willingness of Americans to trade the clear sense of belonging to a social order, in which each had a determinate place, for a system in which the self no longer had a clearly defined social role. In insisting on the freedom to define its own values, the individualist cuts herself off from the possibility of participating in a well ordered society that De Tocqueville thought to be an essential part of the aristocratic system.³⁰ In an aristocracy, the societal whole integrates the functions of all of its individuals by defining a role for each. The nobleman has obligations to the whole that, in a sense, 'pay' for the special privileges that he enjoys. The serf has fewer rights but also fewer obligations. Serf and nobleman have complementary roles and thus share an interdependency that, in a 'true' aristocracy, allows each member to maximize his potential within a well ordered whole.³¹ Of course, in the Aristotelian version of aristocracy, the degree of integration of aspirations required to get the whole enterprise off the ground requires a rather notorious view of nature.³² The trouble is, as De Tocqueville accurately saw at the time, once the process of rejecting moral authority external to self had begun, the individuals who had managed to break free of the bonds of intuitively based moral rules were unlikely to redevelop a taste

for the security of aristocracy.

Henry Thoreau provides a live example of a Tocquevillean individual. He clearly rejects external authority as an incursion into his own moral domain.³³ It is hard to imagine how an author capable of producing an essay advising civil disobedience as a moral duty could be persuaded that he would live a richer moral life by participating in a social order which obliged him to defer to the moral authority of an aristocratic class than by living in accordance with his own moral reasoning. Thoreau considers freedom as the fundamental precondition of moral life. By his reckoning, the only purpose of government seems to be to coerce men to do what their consciences would prevent them from doing were they but left alone. "The mass of men serve the State thus, not as men mainly, but as machines....in most cases there is no free exercise of judgement or of the moral sense... yet such as these are commonly esteemed good citizens."³⁴ The essential characteristic of democracy is that, in theory at least, it shares out moral responsibility and moral authority equally to individuals and thus makes every citizen responsible, to some degree, for the actions of the body politic and for his or her own relations with it. In Thoreau's view, this could only work if each citizen exercised her moral judgement and brought the force of her own conscience to bear on the collective will. Aristocracy, in contrast, absolves the mass of citizens from certain kinds of moral responsibility by the structural arrangements which put power in the hands of an elite

who, by virtue of their position, take on moral authority, and thereby moral responsibility, for the whole community. Aristocrats, in a true aristocracy, function as a moral elite.³⁵ De Tocqueville seems to think that the sense of belonging inherent in aristocratic systems, is of sufficient worth that it renders the conditions which result from the desire for individual authority problematic. Thoreau's point is that moral responsibility can only be exercised by individuals, acting as individuals. In order to do this, they must be willing to trade the comfort of externally imposed order for the more dangerous world of self directed morality. Thoreau has a vision of a kind of moral aristocracy in which each individual has the potential to be a member of the moral nobility providing only that she accepts the responsibility that moral nobility entails.

Neither sees freedom as license but rather as obligation.

De Tocqueville acknowledges the necessity of freedom of choice in an age of disenchantment and the improved moral potential that equality offers but appears to see practical problems which make the actualization of individual potential very difficult. As he points out in the closing chapter of his analysis of the American phenomenon: "The object is not to retain the peculiar advantages which the inequality of conditions bestows upon mankind, but to secure the new benefits which equality may supply...for democratic nations to be virtuous and to prosper, they have but to will it."³⁶ But, the communitarian may validly object, how is this will to be

tamed to virtue without first being taught what virtue is?³⁷

Before turning to consider more contemporary objections to individualism, it would be useful to expand very briefly on the main practical problem alluded to above. In his chapter on the philosophical method of the Americans, De Tocqueville describes the difficulty of citizens who have no commonly accepted authority to subject their moral judgements to. According to him, in rejecting authority, at least in most of its more apparently arbitrary forms, the citizen is forced to reason his own way through every problem. The trouble is, each citizen is also required to work to secure a livelihood and therefore seldom has the time to concentrate on those few things that are really important.³⁸ Moreover, because of the democratic reluctance to situate intellectual authority "either beyond or above humanity, [democrats] commonly seek for the source of truth in themselves, or in those who are like themselves."³⁹ Lacking a commonly accepted external authority, a tradition of intellectual enquiry and time to do all the thinking which life without authority or tradition requires, citizens are inclined to look to each other for help and this leads to a strong urge to conform to public opinion. De Tocqueville holds that individualism runs the risk of trading one kind of authority for another with no clear improvement in the ultimate moral status of the individual. In bowing to public opinion, the citizen may enslave herself to a kind of authority that is potentially more arbitrary than that which results from

class difference. Though I will take this point up in more detail in discussing Bloom's work, it can already be seen that the question of moral authority will be crucial to any successful challenge to the individualist view. The concept of external authority has an element of arbitrariness which makes it morally problematic for agents thought to have free will. However, for the moment it is sufficient to note that slavery to public opinion and obedience to aristocratic dictum can both rob the individual moral agent of some important aspects of a full moral life.

Though De Tocqueville is not commonly cited as a reference, there is an interesting conceptual link between his version of individualism and the writings of a particular variety of present day liberalism. Individualism finds its purest (and most extreme) contemporary exposition in the works of libertarian theorists. In essence, libertarians advocate maximizing individual freedom by minimizing structural impediments to the free exercise of moral choice. Echoing Hobbes, libertarians generally believe that reason will lead every rational agent to see the virtue of cooperation with her fellows. However, unlike Hobbes, it is usually thought that reason needs only minimal assistance from government to establish harmonious arrangements among rational agents. Though libertarian arguments can generally be grounded on a claim of subjectivity, they are usually phrased in terms of rights.⁴⁰ Non-interference with these rights is the basic formula used to achieve inter-subjective harmony, though the term 'harmony' is

conspicuously absent from libertarian rhetoric.⁴¹ Law, in the libertarian view, is an unfortunate necessity that preserves the context of rationality by ensuring that the 'cost' of legal sanctions is added to the probabilities calculations of any would be transgressor of what self-interested reason dictates. Now, De Tocqueville argues that laws are a poor substitute for mores. "Laws are always unsteady if they are not based for support on morals. Mores are the only tough and durable power among a people." and "I am quite convinced that political societies are not what their laws make them, but what sentiments, beliefs, ideas, habits of the heart, and the spirit of men who form them, prepare them in advance to be..."⁴² Law cannot make people reasonable nor can it institute the habits necessary to freedom. One obeys laws because they are laws rather than because they make sense (though one always hopes that they are written because they make sense) and thus the habitual obedience that grows up around legislation stifles individual moral growth by reducing the domain of moral reason.⁴³ Neither De Tocqueville nor Narveson would claim that law is inherently bad but only that laws need to be minimized in order to maximize the moral potential of free individuals. And I suspect that both would agree that laws ought to be 'good' laws in the sense of not interfering with individual freedom unduly. They would, I believe, disagree on the dividing line between law and morality since libertarian thinking suggests that literally everyone ought to have equal access to moral freedom whereas De Tocqueville had reservations about the potentiality of equality.⁴⁴

Though many more arguments could be put forth on both sides of the main libertarian issues, the central point of this particular enquiry is whether contemporary concepts of individualism load the dice in their own favour by conceiving of a notion of individual rights which imposes an obligation of rationality on its members. If so, then it remains to be decided whether this rationality is of a particular kind that has appeal only to those with a bias towards it or whether it has some common elements to it which would allow it some sort of universal plausibility. To make any progress towards this goal, we need to discover whether we can argue to some idea of rationality that could serve as first principle of the kind that libertarians need as the basis for their claims. Given the scope of this endeavour, I propose to begin by allowing the communitarians to set the grounds of discovery in the hopes that the scope can thus be kept within limits that could be handled in such a short work.

III

COMMUNITARIANISM

Communitarianism has its roots set in the fertile soil of Aristotelian political thought. Indeed, its claims are somewhat difficult to piece together without reference to its classical antecedents since its most articulate proponents seem more interested in pointing out flaws in the liberal tradition than in elaborating a full and satisfactory version of an alternative. The fundamental communitarian thesis is given its most elegant articulation in Aristotle's opening chapter of *The Politics*: "Justice belongs to the Polis; for justice, which is the determination of what is just; is an ordering of the political association."⁴⁵ There is, of course, much more to be said if we are to achieve a satisfactory level of understanding of the particularities of the contemporary versions of Aristotle's thought.

Bloom and MacIntyre both make important contributions to the communitarian idea. Both lean heavily on the Aristotelian notion of *polis*, or political association, for much of their argumentation and thus both seem to walk dangerously close to the naturalistic precipice. MacIntyre suggests that we cannot have intelligible

values without some overarching concept of *telos* sufficient to allow an idea of human purpose to be sustained.⁴⁶ This, he claims, would allow us to develop a community of understanding within which rational moral debate could take place. Bloom, though more difficult to deal with because of the lack of notation in the book under discussion, makes the stronger claim that the community of enquirers into the 'nature of the Good' is not possible outside of a strong tradition which supports absolute notions of right and wrong. "At the very best, it is clear to me now that nature needs the cooperation of convention, just as man's art is needed to found the political order that is the condition of his natural completeness".(p51) These communitarian claims depend on convergent epistemological theses which are not explicit in either author's work. I propose to begin the task of discovery through Bloom's work, where the consequences of one thesis are more visible - and more dire.

BLOOM

Alan Bloom is an educator in despair over the youth of today. Their inability to see the importance of the cultural tradition from which they spring contributes to a level of indifference to philosophy which condemns them to 'unexamined lives'.⁴⁷ In describing the "virtues" of contemporary university students, he speaks of a degree of openness which has become so pervasive that moral conviction has all but disappeared.(pp26-27) In his view, the result is a degree of subjective relativism which paralyses

rational moral debate.(pp30-31) The trouble is, he says, "There is no enemy but the man who is not open to everything. But when there are no shared goals or vision of the public good, is the social contract possible?" (p27) Bloom describes contemporary American society as one in which scepticism has succeeded so well that there is nothing left, no culture-forming prejudice.

"The mind that has no prejudice at the outset is empty.....Could it be that our experience has been so impoverished by our various methods.... that there is nothing substantial enough left there to resist criticism, and therefore we have no world left of which to be ignorant?" (p43)

He argues further that the existence of prejudice is a necessary pre-condition of the ability to create and that if we strip away all prejudice we are left with only the power to destroy. He defines prejudice as a learned predisposition towards a set of values that enable one to discern the good from the bad, the artistic from the merely art-like and, more importantly for Bloom, the excellent from the mediocre.(pp41-42) Prejudices form the contextual parameters of judgement, without which one would be left without the power to form beliefs which are the basic building blocks of culture. "Prejudices, strong prejudices are visions about the way things are.....Only Socrates knew, after a lifetime of unceasing labour, that he was ignorant. Now every high school

student knows that. How did it become so easy?"(p43)

How indeed? Leaving aside both Platonic and Aristotelian arguments suggesting that the study of politics (which is, according to Bloom, the study of just social arrangements, and thus of morals) should be reserved for the mature student,⁴⁸ there seems to be something absurd lurking in the shadows here. Socrates claimed that his chief advantage over his interlocutors was that he was not so encumbered with false beliefs as they were. He did not claim to know anything, except the fact that he did not know, whereas his opponents usually began an argument by being trapped into a declaration of some "vision of how things are" that Socrates then showed to be absurd. Socrates' whole teaching effort was aimed at disabusing his students of their misconceptions as a prelude to setting them on the path to the Good. One can hardly imagine him arguing that his own arguments required the pre-existence of misconceptions. Surely, Plato would have preferred no answer to an answer that reason could not support.⁴⁹

Bloom believes that the young glory in scepticism to the extent that they are very nearly unteachable. In describing the gravity of the current state of affairs Bloom says: "I fear that spiritual entropy or an evaporation of the soul's boiling blood is taking place, a fear that Nietzsche thought justified and made the centre of all his thought....he believed..that the decay of culture meant not just the decay of man in this culture but the decay of

man simply." (p51) The American problem, as he sees it, is that Americans are a people of rational principle "without a book". They do not have a traditional literature which all educated persons must have read in their formative years. (pp55-57) This lack of authoritative tradition, married to a national propensity to seek rational authority which just is not there, leads to what Bloom calls "the clean slate": "Students now arrive at the university cynical about our political heritage, lacking the wherewithal to be either inspired by it or seriously critical of it". (p56) They arrive disenchanted with the muses and lacking the moral basics previously endowed by good family upbringing. According to Bloom, in one of his more passionately written passages, the contemporary family is so affected by the destruction of moral certainty that it can no longer function as the cradle of morality. (p57):

"The moral education that is today supposed to be the great responsibility of the family cannot exist if it cannot present to the imagination of the young a vision of a moral cosmos and of the rewards and punishments for good and evil, sublime speeches that accompany and interpret deeds, protagonists and antagonists in the drama of moral choice, a sense of the stakes involved in such choice and the despair that results when the world is disenchanted." (p60)

The passion resulting from deep spiritual love no longer

flourishes in the humanities nor does it work to create the empathic receptivity necessary to allow the ears of the present to appreciate music from the past. The chain of culture is broken.

In subsequent chapters, Bloom traces the disenchantment of the American ethos by way of an analysis of the effects of various continental thinkers on the American consciousness. Using Woody Allen and Talcott Parsons to illustrate his point, he claims that Americans generally have no defence against the nihilist tendency of modern moral thought since Nietzsche because they lack their own "home grown" philosophical traditions. The result is a strongly entrenched habit of embracing concepts out of context and then simplifying them to the level of pop-culture, à la Woody Allen. "Allen helps to make us feel comfortable with nihilism, to Americanize it. I'm O.K., thou art O.K. too, if we agree to be a bit haunted together".(p146)⁵⁰ The rationalist tendency of American thinkers contributes to a rejection of theories which do not stand up to rational analysis and thus, the notion of 'soul' does not fare well. This, in Bloom's eyes has a crippling effect on the American psyche. But, because moral systems of various theistic origins do not fare well under rational scrutiny when the criterion of rationality is nearly always materialist, and because Americans tend to search for meaning within themselves rather than as parts of something else, "the self is the modern substitute for the soul".(p174) This is problematic when effected, as Bloom claims it is, by Hobbes' dictum that "each man should look to what

he feels-feels not thinks; he, not another." (p175) From this, Bloom concludes that "the psychology of the self" has been so successful that each man turns inwards for understanding of his problems rather than searching for truth in the wider world of the particular culture in which he happens to exist. This, in Bloom's view, is a thrust which reduces society to the lowest common denominator. The self which has not drunk deep at the well springs of culture is, for Bloom, a frail vessel, incapable of absorbing the real nectar of thought.

Bloom's description of the "meaningful relationships", to which the contemporary American 'self' is condemned, is rather frightening. One begins to get an understanding of the level of his concern and the gravity of the philosophical problem he is trying to get at when one grasps the impossibility of love between two of Bloom's 'selves'. The 'self', stripped of all the romantic notions that used to form it in the days when love was the subject of poetry rather than Freudian analysis, no longer has the resources at its disposal to love. Spiritual love is impossible without spirit. When love is defined in terms of physical craving rather than poetry, it loses its power to transcend the bonds of materiality. Without the tension of unrequited love, of yearning which blends sexual desire with an effort of restraint, the student cannot begin to understand the depth of passion that has made love the creative force behind so much great literature, music and art. For Bloom, the modern student is like Huxley's citizen of **Brave New**

World: "Sated with easy, clinical and sterile satisfactions of body and soul, the students arriving at the university today... pass by the ruins without imagining what was once there." (p136)

There is something more than just nostalgia in Bloom's description of the present 'condition humaine'. There is a challenge of considerable proportions laid at the door of contemporary individualists. He asks for an explanation of what meaning life could possibly have if passion is no longer possible. Without soul, emotion and desire are reducible to physiological explanations which diminish what they describe to the point of disappearance. Bloom's section on *eros* (pp132-137) stands as poetic testimony of its own. When passion is dispensed with, as Bloom claims that it is when individuals postulate the 'self' as an entity isolated from culture and constituted solely by material elements, the restraining influence of virtue is no longer necessary and thus the tension between passion and virtue cannot work its creative magic on the soul. The result, for Bloom, is the loss of one of the essential ingredients of life, one of the fundamental elements of life which separates living from mere existence -love. Profound love, as opposed to expectant lust, is no longer conceivable because its 'container' no longer exists. Love is to soul what thinking is to being in the Cartesian cogito.

Perhaps Bloom is right in this: the ability to reduce emotion

to scientific explanations may increase one's understanding of the physical aspects of emotional phenomena but the contemplation of 'stimulus response mechanisms' is unlikely to inspire the wonder necessary to art.⁵¹ The intelligibility that reductionists seek might make the physiological aspects of emotion more comprehensible, but it would almost certainly destroy the possibility of passion. "Reduction has robbed eros of its divinatory powers. Because they do not trust it, students have no reverence for themselves. There is almost no remaining link to them between what they learn in sex education and Plato's *Symposium*." (p133) This is, however, an aesthetic problem rather than a question of truth. Life without magic is not as 'rich' as it could conceivably be with it either. The adult world of rational thought does not easily admit fairies and leprechauns that enriched my own childhood. The 'wealth' of our worlds in the time before the 'blessed box' began to spoil our powers of imagination and science began to erode the strength of our non-scientific interpretive metaphors was limited only by our creative abilities. Myths and magic delighted us. One wishes they could be made true for our lives would be 'richer', in some sense. But as any child knows, once the story telling starts, it is hard to figure out where fact ends and fiction begins. Perhaps this confusion could be avoided by establishing boundaries between aesthetic questions and questions of ultimate truth. In the final analysis, one hopes that one can still feel the beauty of love without worrying about its truth status. One hopes that there is a truth to be felt here

that no science can destroy.

On the other hand, the kind of romantic love that Bloom seeks to preserve may well be lost, along with the poetry that voiced it; however, that does not mean that the phenomenon of love itself is dead, only that the language used to describe it will be different. If, as I suspect, no scientific explanation will ever be sufficient to completely describe such a subjective experience as love, then I believe we can reassure ourselves with the thought that the process of striving to describe the ineffable will continue to work its creative magic. Is it not at least possible that love is a phenomenon that transcends the limitations of its mode of expression? One could go so far as to grant Bloom the claim that love is a good whose value makes soul worth the price for those who aspire to an aesthetically pleasing life of a certain kind without thereby having to concede that soul is necessary to love itself. More to the point for this work, the soul that Bloom wants as a context for love has yet to be proven useful as a context for morality.

It almost appears as if Bloom is intent on assigning a higher truth value to aesthetic claims than to claims of reality.⁵² But interpreting him thus does not quite do him justice. A more subtle message appears when one understands him to mean that aesthetic insight, particularly the insight that material man is incomplete, points the way to an objective truth which is ignored by reductive

materialism. I think, on the whole, that he is right. Materialism does not tell the whole story (at least not so far)⁵³ for reasons which Bloom explains quite plausibly in his account of creativity. "The faith in God and the belief in miracles are closer to the truth [about man] than any scientific explanation, which has to overlook or explain away the creative in man." (p199) The whole is, somehow, greater than the sum of its parts. But if the ability to create, which responds to aesthetic impulse, is the essential immaterial element in man then aesthetics attain far greater significance in the consideration of man than the objective urge whence rationalism springs. The trouble is, if aesthetic insights are allowed to influence decisions made in the moral domain, then questions of right and wrong will necessarily be settled by appeal to ineffable, 'creative' qualities. This brings us to the part of Bloom's thesis that is most important to my argument.

Bloom argues that education in an age of individualism is virtually impossible when each individual is an atomistic 'self'. Education, in this context, has the full meaning given it in the Platonic tradition; i.e., being brought to the level of consciousness at which one begins to grasp the enormity of man's ignorance. Bloom clearly holds that the self is the product of the community of interest in which he or she exists, defining herself initially by her consciousness of the heritage which gives her consciousness in the first place. In order for the individual 'self' to begin the journey to consciousness, he claims, there must

be a culture within which the self is formed. The embryonic 'self' needs the womb of culture in which to attain a level of maturity which will enable it to withstand the rigours of the journey of discovery that it must make in order to become a fully developed human. Accordingly, the 'self' which is born prematurely or which is grown outside of the cultural womb, nurtured on dispassionate science, is handicapped, misshapen and, in most cases, unable to grow to a level which would qualify as 'fully educated' in the sense that the term has been given here. In Bloom's view, the students of today are all prematurely exposed to the light outside of Plato's cave and, in the majority of cases, have had their eyesight permanently damaged. They are beyond education because, being creatures raised in the glare of unattenuated reason, they are blind to the beauty that exists within the dimmer reaches of the cave of culture. The cave in this sense takes on the meaning of "interpretive tradition constituted by beliefs". But, if the cave is necessary as a container of culture and if reason poses a threat to the cave then culture is impossible without restrictions on the activities of reason that endanger the existence of the cave.

As I shall attempt to show further on, even radical individualists do not deny the importance of either culture or tradition. They do, however, question both the authority and the transparency of traditions. Moreover, the significant educational challenge that individualism presents is generally admitted. The

most interesting debates are not about the chronology of emergence but about the nature of the relationship between individual and community, about the limits of authority that each is to have over the other. In any case, the main question at this point is whether Bloom is right in his contention that conviction is necessary to culture and that culture ought, in some sense, be beyond the range of rational enquiry. Transparency and authority are both important aspects of this question.

Some Practical Constraints on Tradition

Bloom advocates the value of tradition as a means of preserving culture: "The active presence of tradition in a man's soul gives him a resource against the ephemeral, the kind of resource that only the wise can find simply within themselves." (p247)⁵⁴ In order for tradition to operate as a sort of bulwark against the ephemeral that Bloom wants, it has to have the authority to deal with unanswerable questions of the kind that Bloom thinks have largely destroyed the American tradition. As he portrays things, the threat to the self comes chiefly from the errant subjectivity of the human actors involved. Because the modern American admits to no prejudice, her tendency is to question everything in search of rational answers. Bloom says that there are questions that have no rational answers and argues that the traditions that grow up around beliefs about areas of human concern that are beyond the reach of rational questions are inherently valuable even if irrational. Without a tradition to participate

in, the self has no defence against the ephemeral glitz of contemporary moral 'fad and fashion'. But, in order for traditions to have the authoritative place in human affairs that Bloom wants, they ought to be able to show themselves superior to what they are protecting us from. Since Bloom uses tradition as a protective device of the self, it would seem logical to argue that he ought to be able to demonstrate that the self is somehow better off inside a tradition and that the self is better off to a degree that licenses the level of authority of the prejudices that particular traditions might contain. Bloom wants there to be a generalized reverence for traditions so that the prejudices that traditions contain work to preserve them. There are two interesting ways in which this strategy might work. First, traditions could postulate virtues as truths that are somehow hidden from members. The second course would be for traditions to simply claim authority based on beliefs which are held to be valid whether true or not.

In the first case, Will Kymlicka argues that a tradition that operates from hidden authority: "generates confidence via a process which people can't acknowledge as the grounds for their confidence." ⁵⁵ In this case, he says, morality would operate behind the peoples' backs in the sense of giving them reasons for moral judgements that were not visible. "As Kant says:

We cannot possibly conceive of a reason as being consciously

directed from outside in regard to its judgements; for in that case the subject would attribute the determination of his power of judgement, not to his reason, but to an impulsion. Reason must look upon itself as the author of its own principles independently of alien influences." ⁵⁶

Kymlicka argues that the argument that moral confidence will result from having beliefs buttressed by other members of a tradition is a psychologically interesting claim that fails to deal with the epistemological issue satisfactorily. He rightly argues that one can only speak of the value of traditions as 'authoritative horizon's' in the third person since in the first person, one would always want to be able to see the reasons for one's judgements through one's own eyes.⁵⁷ Kymlicka suggests that we need to question the females, slaves and poor freedmen of Aristotelian society before deciding whether they are happy with the definition of the Good that assigns them their lot in life.

The second strategy is more interesting than it may first appear. By persuading the members of a tradition to opt for a given set of virtues, whether true or not, one could argue that tradition be given authority over individual reason because of the causal power of the tradition to bring about a good state of affairs. In this sense, the beliefs embodied in the tradition would act as the assumed premise of a kind of conditional proof whose conclusions just would be the state of affairs resulting from

the moral actions of those who sign up to the tradition. If, for instance, the members of a tradition agreed that, in the interests of harmony, they ought to accept the claim that their sovereign had divine powers and if it could be shown that this belief contributed to a more humane society than would exist without the belief, then it could be successfully argued that the truth claims of the tradition were authoritative regardless of their truth status. In a sense, this is not dissimilar from many contemporary claims about health and lifestyle in so far as individuals seldom need to consult science for proof since they sense that 'good' living results in better health. In both cases, there is a sense in which the 'right' beliefs could be understood as contributing to self fulfilling prophecies. Strangely, though communitarians clearly want there to be acceptance of common beliefs that might have this effect, there seems to be little interest in exploring the pragmatic possibilities evident in this line of thought.

In any case, Bloom seems to imply that traditions ought to have considerable authority over their members and I interpret this to commit him to a claim that traditions must put themselves beyond the reach of individual reason. Aside from the damage that results to concepts such as free will and the subjectivity of experience, there are three main problems with this view that make it difficult to accept from a purely practical perspective: a) traditions that evolve at time X to deal with conditions Y and Z may not work in time X! when condition P obtains, b) tradition that is too

authoritative may not permit the flexibility needed to adapt to rapid changes of condition, and c) traditions whose authority is beyond the reach of rational enquiry may actually prevent the emergence of the individual consciousness that is the essence of individual existence. Any one of these problems could be taken as grounds for challenging the benefit of authoritative traditions.

With regard to problem a), the trouble is that traditions develop around ways of knowing, thinking and doing that correspond with our beliefs about how the world is. If one postulates a changeless world then tradition could have all the authority Bloom wants to give it. Tradition, is accumulated wisdom. It reflects the successes of trial and error experience compounded and rendered on the assumption that the lessons of the past will have value for the future. But the future is not the past; and therefore, the past is not a reliable guide to the future. I do not dispute that there are indeed valuable lessons to be drawn from the past but only that traditions need a certain elasticity to cope with change. One does not have to look very far back into military history for illustrations of what happens when tradition solidifies into rigid custom that ignores the reality of change. The practical consequences of relying on a traditional elan (and red trousers) was made tragically clear to the French high command of WWI by German machine gunners. One could also cite the inadequacy of obedience to moral traditions promoting child birth to societies that have acquired the technology to raise their birth rate but not

the resources necessary to support large populations. Traditions draw on the experience of the past and thus serve to stabilize culture. They are immensely valuable as a means of storing and communicating knowledge but need to be checked against the actual states of affairs that they purport to guide us through.

Now Bloom speaks of the value of tradition as a guide to moral behaviour and to formulating convictions about right and wrong. But convictions about how one should behave are not detachable from one's beliefs about how things are in the world around one. One interprets the world and tries to structure one's interpretations into narratives that render the world intelligible. Traditions grow around these narratives. The fact that narrative X has a strong appeal to culture Y in condition P at time T does not make the narrative true. It only provides a shared metaphor that allows meaningful discussion of human actions that occur within the context of the narrative. If condition P no longer obtains at time T!, then the narrative loses its metaphoric value.

Consider the story of the Yanomamo tribes of the Amazon Basin.⁵⁸ Over the years, their tradition of bravery in single combat grew into a generalized respect for aggression. This tradition worked to preserve a way of life for many years until the conditions in which it prospered were changed dramatically by contact with 'civilized' cultures. The traditional narrative no longer made any sense for it assumed conditions that no longer

held. Aggression merely provoked cataclysmic vengeance from persons armed with weapons that made a mockery of bravery of the kind the old traditions had valued. This change was not merely a matter of changing military tactics but of revamping their whole interpretive myth to account for the existence of realities previously hidden from them. The old ways of behaving no longer made sense in the light of new information. If tradition is to be granted the status of "defence against the ephemeral" then clearly, there needs to be some means of challenging its authority when conditions really do change.

The second objection to Bloom's thesis has to do with cultural rigidity. Tradition tends to promote the metamorphosis of metaphor into truth. Bloom rejects 'the ephemeral' without apparently considering that the conditions of our existence may well be largely ephemeral. As Wojciechowski puts it, "We live in an epoch of exploding knowledge and evermore rapid evolution of the human condition."⁵⁹ According to Wojciechowski, the total quantity of human knowledge has been doubling every ten years and the result has been a need to adapt through new ways of 'knowing, thinking and doing' ever more rapidly. Cultures that fail to include a mechanism for adapting find themselves accumulating a residue of inappropriate traditions. The Spanish apparently have a tradition of considering manual labour, such as opening the hood of a car or fixing a leaking water faucet, to be beneath the dignity of any educated person.⁶⁰ This is extremely problematic in a country that

has recently acquired a great many water taps and cars but still has many more university graduates than plumbers. The old traditional valuation of intellectual over manual labour worked quite well when class differences were a meaningful part of the economic and social structure but not when the lives of all Spaniards are affected by new technology. Less trivially, the settled habit of obedience to church authority in matters of contraception no longer seems appropriate to an environment that is under increasing pressure from burgeoning population. As our knowledge evolves, so must our behaviour. To lock ourselves into traditional modes of behaviour because it worked in a relatively stable past just fails to give adequate importance to the exigencies of the present and future conditions.⁶¹ Our knowledge today is different from that of yesterday. Who knows what we will have learned by tomorrow? How can we decide today how we should behave tomorrow knowing that tomorrow will bring new knowledge that we don't now have?

Traditions that take on too much authority seem to stimulate a very human desire that manifests itself in a variety of devious ways. The very existence of intellect permits individuals to direct their thoughts along lines that seek answers to questions that traditions may refuse to answer.⁶² Traditions that are easy to follow may run into few difficulties but settled customs that are not conducive to easy obedience require some degree of enthusiasm from the individuals who make up the tradition if they

are to continue to work. To claim that authority is always resisted in some way or other would be too strong and well beyond the scope of this work, however, there is at least a *prima facie* case for the argument that tradition needs the active help of its subjects if it is to avoid sliding into entropy. Needless to say, the voluntary obedience necessary to preserve a tradition is made more difficult to obtain if the tradition attempts to coerce rather than persuade. The mere idea of coercive preservation conjures up images of inquisitions to most liberals but does not seem to daunt the communitarians. It remains to be seen whether or not either group has missed something important.

The third issue of authoritative tradition has to do with the problematic relationship of the self to the cultural traditions of which she is a part. As Kymlicka points out, the communitarian view seems to obligate individuals to accept roles that are defined for them by the traditions that they find themselves a part of.⁶³ He goes on to argue that this has the consequence of not permitting the individual to make choices that might redefine the role or change its narrative in some way. "A Christian housewife in a monogamous, heterosexual marriage can interpret what it means to be a Christian, or a housewife. But she can't stand back and decide that she doesn't want to be a Christian at all, or a housewife."⁶⁴ The individual thus becomes limited to her traditional role and is required by the common conception of the social good to take on ends that she might not choose had she the choice. In this sense,

her roles and her interpretation of them are a matter of discovery. But if one is reduced to the activity of discovery then one must begin by accepting a fixed status quo with which to work. To use Kymlicka's example, the role of traditional Christian housewife of the 50s and early 60s is not the same as the role of a working mother of the 90s, with a career of her own. In the social order of the 90s, women consider themselves persons with talents and potentialities at least equal to those of men and thus aspire to roles previously reserved for men. The authoritative tradition paradigm would render a transition to a new social arrangement of this ilk extremely problematic and, in addition to the rather distasteful consequence of foisting roles on persons who would choose otherwise were choice possible, would lock individuals into a set of pre-existing social arrangements. The tightly knit family groupings of the earlier decades in this century may have been the answer to the social challenges of the time but hardly seem well suited to a society that has finally recognized the full human potential of both sexes. The new social fact requires enough flexibility in the social conditions to allow the process of adaptation, experimentation and improvisation to occur without completely shredding the social fabric of our culture. One scarcely dares to contemplate the potential results of attempting to force roles on persons of this generation without very good rational arguments to convince them that the roles are appropriate for them.

I have belaboured the practical difficulties associated with authoritative traditions in order to illustrate an important quality that is missing in the communitarian notion of culture. The authority necessary to the preservation of a particular way of 'thinking, seeing and doing' achieves its goal largely by preventing the introduction of alternate ways of 'thinking, seeing and doing', by stifling experimentation and creativity. From a practical point of view, while the preservation strategy may maximize the efficiency of development of a particular tradition, it has the unfortunate consequence of minimizing access to other possibilities - possibilities which just might be better. Bloom is concerned with moral and interpretive traditions. He seems, on the whole, to be quite correct about the need to grow up in a particular interpretive tradition in order to appreciate its finer points but he seems to ignore the implications of his own arguments about creativity that I explored above. If we agree that there is some non-physical aspect of the creative part of human-kind that is not explainable in physical terms, then surely we could argue that whatever the quality of this mysterious part is, it manifests itself in the creation of culture. If moral traditions feed on the interpretive traditions native to a particular culture in the way Bloom seems to want, surely the new ways of behaving that draw on new ways of interpreting reality are yet another manifestation of human creativity. Why not just let creativity work?

This brings us to one of the most perplexing aspects of

Bloom's claims. He states: "It is not the immorality of relativism that I find appalling...[it] is the dogmatism with which we accept such relativism." (p239) and: "There is a lifetime and more of study here, which would turn our impoverishing certitudes into humanizing doubts." (p229) Contrast this with the sarcasm evident in my earlier attribution with reference to how Platonic ignorance became so easy. What precisely does he want? Is it possible that he sees the need for doubt and yet does not want us to be so sceptical that we believe nothing? How are we to get to "humanizing doubt" via the path of illicit certitude that he seems to want us to follow? To creatures raised within any moral tradition that purports to use its own existence to support moral conviction as a "defence against the ephemeral", moral conviction constitutes a significant hurdle which must somehow be cleared if truth is ever to consist of more than cultural preservation. Bloom sees tradition as a kind of protective barrier but, as I have tried to argue above, tradition also has the potential to become a wall that separates itself from its component parts. Tradition is not a simple means of protecting culture, it is also a potential roadblock to cultural development. If traditions are to work at all as means of truly nurturing individuals, then they must contain within them sufficient flexibility to cope with changing conditions and changing human aspirations.

Bloom deplores dogmatic relativism because it prevents the evolution of prejudices necessary to the process of cultural

development. He seems to use the notion of prejudice to mean a predisposition to accept cultural truths before proof is offered. In a sense then, he means 'prejudice' as in some way part of the protective apparatus of culture. If culture is required in order to develop protective prejudices, and if cultures can be judged on moral grounds, then it matters very much just what the prejudices are. Ideally, they would be true prejudices. But, being human, we cannot be certain of truth. Since moral scepticism is an acknowledgement of the necessity of our moral uncertainty, it follows that scepticism is 'truer' than any prejudice based on certainty could be. The most ideal prejudice then would be a prejudice to scepticism. And that is precisely what Bloom objects to.

Prejudices work to preserve a particular set of beliefs only in so far as they are beyond challenge. A prejudice that is open to challenge, proven to be false and yet persists in exerting an influence in spite of its falsehood, is highly irrational. The communitarian thesis seems to lean on a notion of prejudice remarkably similar to what Bloom is describing. If a culture knowingly sets truth aside in favour of beliefs that are not analytic and not communicable outside of its own particular cultural paradigm, there must be at least some legitimate doubt that the relevant culture could inspire a respect for truth at all. Indeed, there is little in the human experience so far that would lead one to believe that cultures with strong prejudices of this

kind ever find their way to "humanizing doubt" that leads to concern for truth at all. Prejudice, even in the weaker sense of artistic prejudice, has a notorious past which merits our scepticism towards any invitation to embrace it anew. Cultures in which the answers to moral questions have already been worked out on the basis of some prejudice beyond the reach of rational enquiry tend to stifle the philosophical urge far more effectively than cultures which deny themselves the kind of authority Bloom seeks. Bloom says that "Western rationalism has culminated in a rejection of reason." (p240) While not denying that we in the West have a number of significant philosophical problems, this is stretching things a bit. Moreover, I suggest that Bloom is asking us to do the same thing if he insists that we set reason aside in favour of some unexaminable cultural claims in the hopes that these will somehow create a taste for truth. How can truth be divorced from the rational exercise which just is reason?

There is one further problem to be dealt with here before examining another prominent communitarian writer. If, as Bloom and De Tocqueville claim, American democracy is such that each individual is forced to rely on her own resources when making judgements and, if individuals do not generally have time to do this because of the distractions of daily life, then one needs to know why conformity, which Bloom claims is the necessary effect of democratic causes, is in any way inferior to tradition in regards to its truth obscuring potential. Surely tradition and conformity,

which is mindlessness of another kind, can be classed in roughly the same category when it comes to the capacity to blur reality. If the ultimate purpose of society is to create illusions which must be pierced in order to achieve consciousness then there is little that Bloom can say about the evils of modern mass democracy for surely the problems which he so eagerly points out can be considered, on one point of view, as efficient obstacles to clarity and therefore as effective as tradition in providing a starting point for the awakening of consciousness. If the purpose of community is, as Bloom seems to claim, to provide a context for the search for the Good, then a tradition based community differs from an individualist society only in the character of its obstacles. What is to inform the choice between obstacles created by unexamined conformity and those resulting from unexamined tradition?

There is indeed much more that needs to be said about Bloom's educational argument however there is more discovery to be done before I can turn to a critique of what I believe are the salient aspects of a fully developed communitarian theory. It is important for the moment, however, to recognize what Bloom has promised; to wit, that a 'community of moral purpose' is possible and that it must be founded on the desire to philosophize. "The real community of man, in the midst of all the self-contradictory simulcra of community, is the community of those who seek the truth, of the potential knowers, that is, all men to the extent that they desire

to know." (p381) What he has not explained is how the desire for truth is to result from living within a culture formed by half-truths.

MacIntyre

Alasdair MacIntyre claims that "nothing less than the rejection of a large part of [the modern] ethos will provide us with a rationally and morally defensible standpoint from which to judge and to act - and in terms of which to evaluate various rival and heterogeneous moral schemes which compete for our attention." (AVpviii) He emphatically includes individualism in his list of components of the modern ethos and thus may legitimately be understood as proposing a substitute theory of rationality which will enable us to put individualist doctrines aside. Though there are many intriguing aspects of MacIntyre's thesis, I will concentrate on his reasons for rejecting individualism and on his theory of rationality for, while Bloom's thesis can be understood as resting on aesthetic underpinnings, MacIntyre attempts to ground his on reason.

MacIntyre launches his thesis on the "disquieting suggestion" that we have "lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality." (AVp2) He believes this to be the case because of what he characterizes as the interminable and irresolvable nature of moral debate. (AVpp6-8) There are, he

claims, three characteristics of modern moral debate: 1) conceptual incommensurability, 2) appeal to objectivity, and 3) linguistic disorder. (AV pp9-10) The first problem is caused by the simultaneous existence of competing theories with no common criterion by which the reasons for any of their foundations could be made rationally compelling. The trouble is, this fact is most often ignored, leading to claims of the second kind which really mask emotivist premises even further complicated by the third problem. Let us take these claims one at a time.

MacIntyre says that we cannot find a common criterion of morality because each competing theory can argue back to its own premises from its various claims but, once there, cannot reach across the bounds of its own context to other theories. Each theory provides a specific context for the terms it uses and thus the terms are theory bound. For example, 'good' in the Thomist tradition has a natural quality absent from 'good' in liberal theory. The meaning of a moral term loses its precision when the social or metaphysical theory, of which it is a moral postulate, changes.⁶⁵ This social and theoretic embeddedness of the concepts we use in moral debate leaves us struggling vainly to find a common standard by which we can measure the success of competing theories. MacIntyre claims that we commonly argue fruitlessly between a "concept of rights which has Lockean roots" and "a view of universalizability which is recognizably Kantian". (AVp9) We privately decide that morals are "irreducibly heterogeneous and

their acceptance is, and must be, unargued. At the foundation of moral thinking lie beliefs in statements for which no proof can be offered." (AVp63) One should like to have it entered in the record at this point that MacIntyre appears to be promising to offer us a way out of the box that he has just put us into. One should also like to point out that he acknowledges the need for there to be good reasons provided as the basis for the promised improvement. If reason is to count for anything in human affairs, it would seem to be obvious, from MacIntyre's account, that a plausible set of first principles of morality would have to be accessible to reason. It would also seem that if the problem is that there are too many competing theories in existence now, the new theory needs to be very powerful indeed. Such a theory would have to establish a common language, or at least a common measure with which to establish intertheoretic communication in order for the adherents of various moral traditions to be persuaded of its superior worth. To paraphrase Hemmingway: some theory!

With the above promise in mind, and in view of the subtlety with which the historical difficulties of its resolution are treated, it is somewhat disappointing to come face to face with the solution MacIntyre finally proposes. But I get ahead of myself for there is still some ground to cover before MacIntyre's intention can be clearly understood. He claims that Kant could not produce a solution which overcomes the obstacle of the naturalist fallacy nor could any other of the enlightenment philosophers produce a

"shared public rational justification for morality". (AVp48) The trouble was, in his view, that they robbed themselves of a functional context of man, qua conscious member of an ordered cosmos, which they needed to set up a coherent theory about what man ought to do. (AVp56) "Once the notion of essential human purposes or functions disappears from morality, it begins to appear implausible to treat moral judgements as factual statements." (AVp57) Without some coherent descriptive theory which includes human purpose, it is simply not possible to classify moral statements as true or false. Thus, he claims, post-enlightenment philosophers have either tried to invent new *teloi*, leading to utilitarian theses, or have tried to find rational appeal through grounding theories on practical rationality. According to MacIntyre, both projects fail. (AVp60)

MacIntyre suggests that liberalism of the enlightenment period denied itself a foundation by rejecting the notion of telos. He argues that liberal theorists stripped away the metaphysical notions on which moral claims had been grounded and, in so doing, took away the possibility of rational moral theory. The modern self was liberated from those "outmoded forms of social organisation which had imprisoned it simultaneously within a belief in a theistic and teleological world order and within those hierarchical structures which attempted to legitimate themselves as part of such a world order".⁶⁶ A consequence of this rejection of authoritative conceptions of world order was the loss of a commonly

accepted idea of function which would legitimate claims to rationality for statements about what one ought to do. Where there is no clear common concept of the order that one ought to fit into, there is no common criterion of rationality applicable to actions. One cannot say that "one ought to do X because X is good" unless one has some idea of the order that doing X would contribute to. The liberal version of self, according to MacIntyre, is isolated from order and has to define itself without reference to a community of belief.(AVp56) The problem is, he says, that the liberation of self entails the loss of the context which gives the self meaning in the first place - a context formed largely of agreement on what the ultimate ends of existence are. Without this order forming context, individual selves have no means of rationally deciding what is good and thus turn to emotivist claims or to claims based on some concept of Nietzschean will.⁶⁷ The only possible surviving criteria of moral rationality after the liberal theorists get through with their program is, according to MacIntyre, whatever the self wills. Since each individual postulates itself as the centre of its own rationality, interpersonal relations become exceedingly difficult and discussion of the morality of these relationships founders on the problem of incommensurability of moral terms - a problem which results from the variety of definitions of self possible to the individuals involved in moral relations. Because the liberal "self" is not tied to a *telos*, it operates as an indeterminate variable which, by its very nature, defies any attempt to fit it into an order.

Virtue is impossible simply because, without some broader pattern into which action fits, there can be no consensus where moral action is concerned.

At the bottom of the liberal program is a belief in the Weberian insight which MacIntyre describes as a view that "each man's conscience is irrefutable and that values rest on a choice whose justification is purely subjective....[consequently] no type of authority can appeal to rational criteria to vindicate itself except that type of bureaucratic authority which appeals precisely to its own effectiveness." (AVp25) This belief spills over into the social context of our own times such that the contemporary social world is bifurcated "into a realm of the organisational in which ends are taken as given and are not available for rational scrutiny and a realm of the personal in which judgement and debate about values are central factors , but in which no rational resolution of issues is available". (AVp33)

Now in one sense, MacIntyre's claim is absolutely correct for to succeed in establishing either a universally accepted **telos** or a theory of practical rationality 'that works' would be, according to the thesis so far advanced, to supplant all existing moral theories with one that provided the basis for resolution of virtually all moral disagreements. Since there continue to be irreconcilable moral disagreements, none of them can be taken as rationally superior to the rest without twisting the notion of

rationality out of all recognition. But this *modus tollens* formulation distorts the problem somewhat for it does not take into account the possibility that there are perfectly rational solutions to moral debates that require rational beings to understand. Perhaps man is imperfectly rational and this by itself accounts for the persistence of disagreement. Moreover, MacIntyre seems to overlook the implications of the disjunction in the first line of his argument; i.e., that if we accept that the lack of agreement proves the impossibility of universal rationality, it also proves the impossibility of a universally acceptable *telos*. However, even if MacIntyre's argument were true, it does not license the use to which it is put. MacIntyre wants to use it as the basis of a claim that we need to agree in order to overcome the logical impasse he outlines but then he fails to produce good reasons substantiating any particular thesis on which we could agree. But let me, in my turn, substantiate my claim.

MacIntyre began his argument by asking us to imagine a world in which some catastrophe had destroyed the coherence of natural science and left us with a puzzling residue of fragmented remnants. (AVpp1-5) He argues that the absence of coherent understanding would lead to competitive inventiveness in which the criterion of judging the relative worth of various hypotheses would be necessarily subjective. "What would appear to be rival and competing premises for which no further argument could be given would abound. Subjectivist theories of science would appear and be

criticized by those who held that the notion of truth embodied in what they took to be science was incompatible with subjectivism." (AVp2) MacIntyre suggests that moral discourse has suffered this precise fate. (AVp9)

To say, as MacIntyre does, that natural science would collapse into subjectivity if coherent theories were lost is to fail to understand the methods of science. In the science fiction literature to which I believe he alludes, albeit somewhat obliquely, post holocaust survivors are reduced to memorizing bits of gibberish. Since nothing is understood in a coherent way, everything that can be saved from pre-holocaust sources is considered to be of sacred, rather than practical, value.⁶⁸ The object of 'science' in this fictitious instance, is the preservation of sanctity, not the establishment of truth. This kind of 'science' has no truth values, only aesthetic claims. But the claims do, in this case, have authority and a means of resolving arguments which is based on the certainty with which the authoritative source speaks. Scientific utterances in this realm are resolved by declarative statements true relative to the power of the speaker. But this is not what we have come to understand as 'scientific utterance' in our own realm. Truth, in what we now call science, is established by the predictive success of whatever theory is under discussion.⁶⁹ If the claims of the adherents of various predictive theories of natural science were purely subjective, as in the hypothesis suggested by MacIntyre, there

would be not only no means of verifying the predictive power of claims, but no interest in it either. The subject of discussion would not be science at all - it would be speculative metaphysics. The 'proofs' themselves would be subjective.

In the story referred to, once an experimental method developed to provide some means of verification of the predictive power of various bits and pieces of theory, natural science began its process of recovery. Metaphysics gave way to science. The experimental method turned out to be far more important than either coherence or consistency criteria for it provided a criterion of verification that brought science into more direct contact with reality than reliance on religious or metaphysical metaphors permitted. The loss of content was not that big a tragedy in the long term for experimentation led to new explanations which thinking persons organized into coherent accounts with predictive power. To get out of the realm of fiction, the history of science is replete with instances of competing descriptions of events which, so Ian Hacking tells us, were irresolvable until some means of verification developed.⁷⁰ The coherence of theories alone tells us very little about the truth of their content. While a coherent account of what is known is an essential descriptive adjunct of understanding there is always the possibility that some new observation may render the old account incoherent. About the best we can get is an operational description which allows us to claim a level of certainty within the limits of a given set of

operational predictions; always subject to further discovery and therefore, always contingent.

The problem with MacIntyre's hypothesis is that it fails to recognize the differences between moral theory and science. As moral theories attempt to explain the nature of the relationships which ought to hold among humans, they lack a set of criteria against which their truth can be judged. Like scientific theories, moral theories all need a clear idea of the functional roles that the main entities which are its subject matter are supposed to fill. But the entities in question have no functional role at all beyond what some particular theory might give them.⁷¹ Scientific theories change as our understanding of the universe changes. Experimentation in science entails verification of operational functions through direct observation of results. The stories we make up to explain these observations are the scientific counterparts of moral theories. Scientific theories do not prescribe how entities should behave in order to achieve a desired outcome; they merely observe and predict based on what is known or suspected about the entities in question. Theories in science make no attempt to assess the desirability of natural phenomena per se. But the complete truth of a moral theory is neither wholly descriptive nor predictive. It is also prescriptive. In order to prescribe, a moral theory must first develop a hypothesis about the desirability of states of affairs. In giving us his imaginary problem, MacIntyre seems to think that the required desirability

would be demonstrable only on the criterion of coherence but overlooks the problem of causality which is the basis of science. This is where the blurred distinction between truth and theoretical coherency becomes important. If one were to try to draw an analogy from moral 'science' back to natural scientific method, one would have to imagine an experimental method which would allow the experimenter to manipulate the matter being used to conduct the experiment in such a way that it demonstrated the desirability of the outcome of the experiment at the same time that it demonstrated its likelihood. This is precisely where moral theory becomes problematic. The desirability of a moral theory is relative to the desirability of the state of affairs that it aims at. In order to have an idea of the desirability of various states of affairs, one might well need some kind of teleological theory sufficient to the job of figuring out what the 'natural' functions of entities are. But constructing a fully coherent teleological moral theory must begin with a transcendent insight.⁷² Only by understanding the entire riddle of the cosmos can one begin to construct a completely coherent theory of morality which aims to incorporate the function of man into harmonious interaction with the myriad other cosmic entities that share existence with us. Until we somehow manage to achieve the level of cosmic certainty necessary for that, we must content ourselves either with more limited truths or with some, inevitably problematic, notion of divine revelation. For the present, there just is no moral certainty which crosses the line drawn by human epistemic limitations.

One wonders if MacIntyre is not overstating his case somewhat in claiming that neither the concept of utility nor the concept of rights can be shown to be rationally compelling. In order to make the case against each, he argues that the conclusions that can be reached depend on the validity of the assumptions with which each begins. It is the nature of the assumptions on which each theory is grounded which leads to the incommensurability of the terms used in elaborating conclusions. MacIntyre seems to mean the term 'utility' to cover a fairly broad spectrum of social theories from the extreme of Jeremy Bentham's "greatest good for the greatest number" to modern liberal bureaucrats' more general idea of sacrifices required of individuals 'in the common good'. He uses the term 'rights' in much the same, rather broad, way with the result that one cannot quite put aside the feeling that important distinctions between versions of theories are being passed over too quickly. If one considers the minimalist individual rights theses of modern liberals following in the tradition of J.S. Mill, such as Robert Nozick, Anthony Flew or Jan Narveson, one finds a high degree of internal consistency in arguments which tend to converge on the task of working out precisely how a system of rights could be arranged in such a way as to not entail contradiction.⁷³ In order for MacIntyre to demonstrate the "rational fiction" of the concept of rights, he really needs to show that the concept disguises an emotivist thesis. He could, for instance, try to prove that there is a hollow core to the rights claims before he moves on to show that there must be a hidden aesthetic premise in

the rights argument. But he doesn't. He simply ignores the internal strengths or weaknesses of both rights based and utilitarian theories and uses the mere existence of debate between the two camps as grounds for dismissing both. The inadequacy of this approach is evident in the examples he uses in the beginning of his work. Indeed, to the attentive observer, his arguments smack of the old shell game. Since seeing that moving shells do not necessarily mean moving peas may help to prove my point, it is worth taking a closer look at one of his examples.

MacIntyre claims that moral debates in Western culture can not be rationally resolved because of the competing under pinnings of the moral theories that support each argument.(AVp6) He then cites several examples, the first of which concerns just war theory and contains three crudely wrought versions of it which blur the distinction between practical and value rationality.⁷⁴ He attempts to juxtapose a deontological argument, which considers the moral status of civilians and the impossibility of accurate calculation of outcomes, with a deterrence theory argument which makes claims about the best way to avoid war.(AVp6) The first argument is based on the morally innocent status of civilians and the impossibility of accurate calculation of final outcomes while the second claims to be able to protect all civilians without actually having to go to war because deterrence works. The arguments are not resolvable because neither one of them can eliminate uncertainty. The curious thing is that both arguments stem from a shared belief in the evils

of war and a shared concern for the innocent. The point of disagreement is over the means of avoiding war and thus the argument turns on purely rational issues; i.e., whether rationality supports the taking of risks or not. They do not dispute the deeper issues at all. The third argument under the just war rubric is not even remotely concerned with 'modern war' in the sense that the first two are but rather discusses the justice of 'wars of liberation'. Wars of liberation are not, as a rule, wars which employ weapons of mass destruction in which collateral damage or deterrence thinking have any role at all; though they may lead to such wars. It is not a competing argument but a different one entirely.

MacIntyre wants to show that contemporary debates are irreconcilable because of the hermetic character of the different systems of thought within which each of the arguments is formulated. Surely this fails to deal with the problem. The individualist is looking for arguments which 'will work'; i.e., that will serve as the basis for achieving moral agreement. But to claim, as MacIntyre does, that the solution to this problem is to find some basis for such agreement which is not anchored in rationality is to ignore the fact that our 'emotivist, incommensurable' individualist arguments share important elements of his 'emotivist, incommensurable' communal cultures. To argue for moral authority based on communal values is merely to move the moral debate one space to the left or right without getting

appreciably closer to agreement. In order to get the citizens of community X to resolve a moral debate with the citizens of community Y without recourse to emotive argument, or actions which both may come to regret, we need some basis of agreement. Surely the whole business of ethics is to find ways to reach agreement rather than to find excuses that allow people to remove themselves from the arena of disagreement.

More to the point, if my admittedly truncated analysis of one of his versions of moral impasse is correct, MacIntyre really has not shown that moral debate is either rationally irresolvable or emotivist. He has only shown that it occurs. Further, the fact that such arguments are not yet resolved to everyone's satisfaction does not mean that they never will be nor does it mean that no one is ever convinced by the rational force of one argument or another. One notes, with some interest, the rather abstract treatment of what could be considered rational enclaves. Surely the appearance of perpetual disagreement could be partially accounted for by the fact that the arguments themselves, once articulated, are fixed in time whatever happens in the minds of the participants in the debate. Whatever any one of them may have said, the potential for a change of mind in the future cannot be ruled out. Since the harmony that moral intercourse seeks needs just such a change of mind, we must next consider the grounds on which MacIntyre claims that such change is so difficult.

Cultural Rationality

MacIntyre states that concepts of rational enquiry vary according to the tradition in which they are embedded and that discussion of the nature of rationality must be informed by an understanding of four conditions: 1) that rational justification is historical and pertinent to particular traditions, 2) that doctrines, theses and arguments all have to be understood in their historical context (what has to be justified varies and that rationality is a concept with its own history), 3) that a prior understanding of the traditional biases of reason, including the bias to reason, is a condition of the resolution of moral conflict; and, 4) that tradition constituted and tradition constitutive rationality cannot be understood apart from its exemplifications. (WJWRpp9-10) In supporting these claims, he takes his readers on a lengthy, and very well conducted, tour of the history of four such traditions. Though one cannot help but be impressed by his grasp of Aristotle, Aquinas, Hume and others who contributed to the development of ideas in various forms, the effect of following MacIntyre is more mesmerizing than enlightening. He tries very hard to convince us that one who does not share in some particular tradition cannot enter the debates which characterize any tradition with any hope of understanding. (WJWR p398) He goes so far as to claim that without prior commitment to some particular tradition of enquiry, individuals simply cannot begin the difficult task of translating the language of a strange tradition into one that they can understand. (WJWRp399) He also states that traditions of moral

thought can only change through a dialectic process in which the participants begin by engaging in debate using the language of a particular tradition to reconceptualize the problems and solutions that constitutes each. "For such a tradition,...has to be embodied in a set of texts which function as the authoritative point of departure for tradition-constituted enquiry and activity, for argument, debate and conflict within that tradition." (WJWRp383)

The individual moral agent, so commonly encountered in moral theory in the liberal tradition, seems to disappear in the process of moral enquiry as MacIntyre describes it. According to the thesis so far advanced, active participation in some moral tradition is the precondition of moral becoming. The 'self' that takes part in communal moral exercise is a 'self' that has learned a communal language and acquired competence in framing moral arguments in a way which can be understood by the other members of the relevant community. This seems sound in so far as it goes. As we shall presently see, it does not go far enough for MacIntyre's needs.

MacIntyre says that the conception of truth is integral to "tradition constituted forms of enquiry" and that "to adopt the standpoint of a tradition thereby commits one to its view of what is true and false and, in so committing one, prohibits one from adopting any rival standpoint." (WJWR p367) But if one is committed

to the truth claims of a particular theory and if one is thereby debarred from admitting the truth claims of any other theory then truth is, in some way that is not at all clear, coeval with commitment. By engaging in dialectic that, as mentioned above, draws its participants into a deep understanding of the details of different particular traditions, MacIntyre thinks it possible to begin to reach out to understand the views of other particular moral traditions. Such views are not, strictly speaking, rational from a perspective outside of a particular tradition. Assuming that MacIntyre is aiming his argument at philosophers and others who have the time and the resources to devote to moral dialectics, one wants to know two things: how the incommunicable can be communicated and how one can be committed to a "view of what is true and false" if one knows in advance that "what is true" is only 'what is believed by culture X at time Y'. That which cannot be communicated through reason and which requires the level of commitment that MacIntyre claims, seems to require something other than reason to grasp. If reason is tradition bound in the way that he claims it is, then how does one get beyond the bounds of one's own particular tradition to a place at which one can begin to see a different truth? Further, if there are a number of true and conflicting possible statements about the same thing, then what has happened to our understanding of 'truth'?

Perhaps the mistake that MacIntyre makes here is in his equivocal usage of 'commitment' and 'understanding'. He clearly

believes that commitment, at least in the case of moral reasoning, must accompany understanding. By this logic, understanding would entail truth. To say that one understands that "X is good" in theory A would entail that one believes "X is good" to be absolutely true. But if that is so, how can MacIntyre, or any other historian, pretend to explain rival traditions in a way which allows us to understand what is being said. Would we not, in order to understand, have to become committed to each of many traditions in turn in order to grasp the point? Though his thesis would seem to be aimed at correcting just this problem, MacIntyre fails utterly in this regard for, in order for anyone to understand what he is saying, one would also have to be committed to the truth of what he says and this, frankly, I cannot accept. Surely he does not mean to assert that the phrase "I understand MacIntyre" entails the phrase "I am committed to the truth of what MacIntyre says".⁷⁵

Another perplexing area of MacIntyre's argument has to do with the difficulties of translation which he enunciates for us. In his chapter on tradition and translation, he claims that "A precondition of the adherents of two different traditions understanding those traditions as rival and competing is of course that in some significant measure they understand each other." (WJWRp370) He then goes on to say that translating the language of one tradition into the language of another requires that one learn the tradition to be translated from the inside so that one has the

complete grasp of the language necessary "to go on" to create new arguments and statements in that language. He once again refers to the incommensurability problem to explain that modern languages fail to provide the common measure which allows reduction to a common language to occur because they do not succeed in translating the coherent meanings contained in each tradition into something which preserves the precision and complexity of the originals. Thus far one could almost agree with MacIntyre, except perhaps for the over emphasis he gives to linguistic exactitude in a domain which has traditionally dealt in generalities.⁷⁶ But then MacIntyre trips himself up with the claim that particular traditions are warranted in their claims to untranslatable truth just in so far as they allow the possibility of disproof of their beliefs. (WJWRp388) If the language of each tradition is as private as MacIntyre claims, then how could any of them be disproven? If each has its own private proof, if the truth of each theory is hermetically contained by its own system of rationality, then what could serve as the basis for disproving any claim made within any one of them? The truth claims of all of them would be disprovable only in so far as they could be understood by members of other traditions but, since the language of each is private, the process of testing truth cannot really begin.⁷⁷ This is the difficulty which philosophy has confronted since Heraclitus pointed us to the "one, the truly wise...logos" and advised us to avoid conjectures in those areas in which we had no knowledge.⁷⁸ If reason is not sufficient to the task of translation from one moral theory to

another then what is? If different theories are open to disproof only to the extent that they may be understood and if understanding is not possible through the application of rational analysis, then any theory which puts itself beyond some common basis of reason also puts itself beyond disproof. Moreover, if one did at last succeed in learning a new language to a degree which would allow one to restate its claims in terms which would be acceptable to a native speaker of that language then how would one go about judging its truth value against the claims of one's original tradition? If not rationally then how?

MacIntyre's answer is, quite simply, through coherence. He implies an hermetic quality to moral theories that makes the task of intertheoretic judgment extremely difficult. What is needed to resolve a serious moral disagreement, in his view, is the emergence of a new theory with the capacity to synthesize the elements of competing moral theories into some coherent framework. This would bring forth a new moral paradigm that incorporates the important aspects of previous moral worldviews into one comprehensive picture. This comprehensive picture would necessarily incorporate a teleological hypothesis as part of its moral machinery. And this is precisely where I believe one will find the major problem standing in the way of a moral theory which could do the job in the way the MacIntyre, and Bloom for that matter, want. Let me put it thus: 1) a coherent theory is one that accounts for all of its entities and processes, 2) the degree of authority of a theory is

relative to its truth, 3) to give a true account of an entity means to be able to explain its particular role within the whole theory, 4) one cannot give an authoritative account of a theory bound entity until one can show that the theory itself is true, 5) a teleological theory is one that proposes to give a complete account of literally everything and; therefore, 6) an authoritative teleological theory which accounts for everything must itself be true. Since, in view of our inherent epistemic limitations, there is no way of assuring ourselves that such a theory is true, teleological theory cannot be an authoritative source of moral certainty. Coherence does not entail certainty.

If the adherents of a given teleological theory were prepared to use their insights as working hypotheses, one could perhaps find the notion of a *telos* based community of belief more compelling. If a tradition were to adopt a teleological theory as a tentative explanation of the cosmos, one could well imagine its members going back to the original hypothesis from time to time to make adjustments to it as a result of experience or social contact with other theories that seemed more plausible. But, as I mentioned above with respect to Bloom's arguments for tradition, communitarians have so far been unwilling to explore the pragmatic application of belief to the creation of moral states of affairs.

The trouble with the whole argument to this point is that its

does not address the fundamental problem of social existence. It deals with the realm of esoteric debate as if the consequences of moral disagreement could be separated from the abstract theories which support them. Underlying the whole argument is the assumption that traditions don't need to confront each other. Surely this misses the point. The Western tradition of agreeing to disagree about those things which are beyond rational explanation allows us to avoid the consequences of radical disagreement, particularly in areas where the most likely outcome is violence. It is something of a sacred dictum in ethics that moral theory aims at social harmony.⁷⁹ What is the point of discussing the grounds on which we could achieve perfect integration of two theories in a world in which so many theories come into contact and are proclaimed by voices more noted for their vehemence than by the clarity of the thoughts they utter? The passions of belief may lead to beautifully coherent arguments but they may also be deadly if they substitute unshakable certainty for the scepticism which, despite its more tentative nature, seems more appropriate as an approach of mere humans to the riddle of our existence. At its most basic level, certainty has questionable survival value in a world in which so many versions of the truth are possible and in which so many forms of violence can be unleashed in support of belief. If this is so, surely the most important part of ethics has to do with tempering belief with doubt.

Before turning to other problems which illustrate the

convergence of MacIntyre and Bloom, I would like to emphasize my objection to what I take to be the critical parts of MacIntyre's moral claims; i.e., that contemporary moral debates are typified by three kinds of characteristics: 1)conceptual incommensurability, 2)universal appeal to rationality which is not universal; and,3)ignorance of the cultural/traditional embeddedness of concepts of rationality.(AVpp8-10) If these are the reasons for the purported lack of progress in resolving moral disagreements, then one wants to know how the notion of community is going to help. If coherence is to be the ultimate criterion of rationality then it must be used to judge competing communitarian moral claims. But surely concepts of coherence would be culturally embedded too. If coherence is allowed the status of truth then any claim at all can be added to any theory at all in order to give it coherence. I suggest that this could only aggravate the problem of conceptual incommensurability as it would almost certainly lead to the addition of certainty to moral postulates emanating from the closed coherencies of a nearly infinite number of traditions. The very suggestion of it conjures up pictures of impenetrable moral fortresses with flying buttresses, towers and extra wings added to them to give them the appearance of substance as desired by the adherents of coherence. But in denying themselves rational foundations, such structures could only hold themselves up with the aid of strong passions. It is perhaps quite fitting that MacIntyre ends his first book with a suggestion that St. Benedict might be a more appropriate guide to morality than Godot.⁸⁰

Metaphysical and Epistemological Obligations of Community

The communitarian thesis raises some interesting problems for contemporary moral theory. Both Bloom and MacIntyre argue that the search for rational underpinnings of morality lead today's liberals to nothingness. (AV pp103-106) There simply are no rational foundations; at least, not in the sense of foundations which can be arrived at by some universally acceptable process. Tradition, they claim, provides the necessary condition of selfhood that is the essence of the ability to begin the search for meaning and consequently, those who attempt to reject tradition must first embrace it. Both would agree that the self is nothing if not a participant in some tradition which offers it a chance to develop itself through a process of deep involvement with the intellectual and spiritual questions which constitute a particular tradition. These are not trivial claims for there needs to be some answer which describes the positive aspects of individualism if there are to be individuals which are more than negatively conceived entities - what communitarians could describe as non-entities. I take this part of the communitarian thesis to be a challenge to individualists to cease proclaiming what they are not and to say what they are. That they are obviously "not communitarians" is only part of the answer which individualists will want to offer if they are to meet the communitarian critique head on. But

understanding what the individualist could not accept is a necessary step in grasping how the individualist thesis may be positively framed. In this section, I will attempt to point out precisely what parts of community scare individualists off. Principally, I will deal with the impression one gets of being drawn into collusion with communitarians by winks and nods in the direction of metaphysical and epistemological assumptions which one will recognize as true the moment that one has come to believe in them.

I have introduced and discussed Bloom and MacIntyre separately in the hope of developing a clear picture of a complete version of community. Both situate the individual within some particular cultural and intellectual heritage which needs to have considerable authority over individual conceptions of justice and norms of behaviour if it is to be constitutive of individuals. While Bloom and MacIntyre emphasize the poverty of existence outside of the "community of the searchers after good", MacIntyre stresses the conceptual difficulties involved in trying to develop a notion of existence which allows for intelligible moral speech across the boundaries of such communities. In advocating community as the locus of rationality or, in Bloom's case, the locus of aesthetic standards, the communitarians shoulder a moral load with epistemic and metaphysical baggage that needs to be carefully unpacked in order to fairly evaluate the plausibility of their argument.

The communitarian thesis postulates a social order within which individuals come into existence and from which they draw their understanding of morality. An individual's consciousness of morality is largely focused by her cultural traditions, by her interaction with the questions which are considered important by her culture. The communitarian position just is that some notion of order is a precondition of moral tradition and is thereby a precondition of individual moral consciousness. It follows, by communitarian logic, that moral utterances are embedded in some particular shared notion of order. Since it is difficult to speak of ends, with respect to human action, without some wider notion of order to which the ends contribute, the ends which moral theories seek must be derivable from corresponding theories of order which attempt to explain the relationship between a particular human community and the cosmos. The rather obvious difficulty here, as liberals since Hume have pointed out, is simply that theories of order abound and none of them can be proven right or wrong without recourse to standards of proof which are, by communitarian logic, themselves theory bound.

As MacIntyre takes great pains to explain, Aristotle's theory of the Good is defensible only if one accepts the standard of the polis as its own truth test. (WJWR pp124-145) The 'naturalness' of the polis is only discernable from the perspective of Aristotle's telos.⁸¹ To distort one of MacIntyre's arguments slightly, the function of man is derivable only within a teleological theory

which draws its strength from its coherence. A coherent teleological theory is, as discussed above, one which renders human action intelligible as part of some particular conception of cosmic order but, as MacIntyre points out in his discussion of Aquinas, "nothing can render [reality] other than what it is; necessarily therefore, it is whatever it is".(WRWJ p171) But MacIntyre's use of the Aristotelian **telos** leads us to believe that he means moral reality to be that which is created by different moral traditions. If one begins from the hypothesis that reality is what it is and if one then acknowledges the imperfection of human knowledge then how does one get to some particular notion of what reality should be without some sort of naturalist claims which are both unprovable and unfalsifiable? Since this is what the communitarian is logically committed to, there is an obvious epistemic problem to be dealt with.

The major problem for the communitarian is to explain standards of truth by which one can judge moral claims. If moral theories may be true without being analytically true, which is a central part of the communitarian thesis, then 'reality' can be used to support any moral theory whatever without needing to prove itself beyond what careful theoretic introspection would allow. MacIntyre does not help much with the somewhat feeble claim that theories should, in principle, be disprovable since he also insists that they are true only by their own criteria. The communitarian argument could be roughly restated thus: X is a true statement in

theory A if A is a coherent theory and X is consistent; A is a coherent theory if it is internally consistent and is disprovable; but, since A could only be disproven by its own rules of reason and since those rules entail its own truth, X is always true even if, in principle, it is disprovable. I do not think that this is too great a distortion of either the words or the spirit of the communitarian thesis and I believe the implication is quite obvious. They substitute coherence for truth. In so doing they take themselves right back to the era of ontological proof.

Now on one hand one is tempted to agree with Bloom's impassioned plea for coherence in education out of sympathy with his desire to see some level of societal order emerge which would stem what appears to be a headlong rush into social chaos. But when coherence and order are proclaimed as self sufficient truth tests then one needs very much to know how access to such truth is to be obtained and how it is to be communicated. The problem, I believe, is that communitarians do not address the problem of truth in any satisfactory way but rather offer up an account of human existence which would be "better" (in the sense of being more coherent) than that which liberals could make up. But communitarians make no attempt to situate their account within some particular cosmic theory nor do they explain how this could be done beyond making appeals to unarticulated versions of *telos*. Further, though MacIntyre devotes the lion's share of his work to discussing linguistic roadblocks to intertheoretic communication, neither he

nor Bloom appear to have any clear theory of communication to offer us. This is an important problem given that the function of teleologically embedded morality is to integrate human actions through common belief about what individual actions will best maintain the *telos*. Common belief does not just happen, it needs to be nurtured and coaxed by careful communication.

Bloom and MacIntyre both make heavy use of classical thought to establish their claims so it is perhaps poetic that one should turn to remnants of thought from before the time of Plato and Aristotle to explicate the problem of communication. One hopes that one may be forgiven the urge to dredge up childhood memories of one of C.S. Lewis' children's classics. He had one of his heroes defeat an opponent who had used magic from the dawn of time by using "deeper magic from before the dawn of time."⁸² Heraclitus, who predates the classic Greek period referred to by present day communitarians. There is a clarity of vision in his fragments which would reward our investigation.

LOGOS, AN ALTERNATIVE TO TELOS?

Putting aside the questions of order and juxtaposition that have driven many capable thinkers to the brink of distraction, one can twist several coherent messages out of the scraps of thought that are attributed to Heraclitus.⁸³ Of interest to my argument

is the intriguing alternative to the teleological paradigm that is central to communitarian theses. Though there is a wealth of interesting raw material of thought in the surviving fragments, for the purpose of this work, it will suffice to point out the emphasis on the need to speak of "things as they are" and to speak of them by reference to "that which is common". The communitarian thesis may, at first glance, appear to gain some support from this insight for, if the adherents of competing moral theories cannot find any "common" rational basis then theoretic incommensurability is the real state of affairs among moral traditions. But, by reference to Heraclitean epistemology, it would appear that the adherents of any tradition have the same problem of incommensurability of meaning among individuals within the tradition that communitarians believe prevents external communications.

Before there is some convention which allows thought to be shared among speakers of a given language, there must be some means of establishing agreement about the content of speech. For three of us sitting around a fire in a preverbal association to organize sounds to have the meaning of "it's your turn to get some more wood", we must have some common beliefs about the desirability of fire and some common understanding about the facts of combustion and wood. The grunts and hand signals one of us uses to try to convince the other to brave the dangers of the night may have less to do with the coherence of our beliefs about the nature of the

cosmos than our relative sizes but they also represent a common appreciation of the relativity of dangers to be faced in making a decision. Either one braves the unknown hazards of the night or one runs the risk of losing in a scuffle with the other two who took their turn last night. Language, when it is used to communicate about how things are, must assume a certain level of agreement about the facts of shared existence if it is to serve as an efficient means of communication. It is no good me using the fact that it is going to be cold tonight as a reason to get you moving beyond the circle of fire in search of wood if I cannot assume that it will be cold for both of us. What is common, what we share in this instance, is a relatively similar and constant relationship to a material reality.

As Heraclitus put it "to act and speak what is true, perceiving all things according to their nature" is the basis of reasoned speech about reality. Indeed, though the Logos theory has been taken as a strictly cosmological theory, it also can be interpreted as a theory about the relations between the substance of speech (what speech is about) and the conventions of language, (what we agree that its about). Heraclitus tells us that the world was not made by either man or Gods but always was "et sera toujours feu éternel s'allumant en mesure et s'éteignant en mesure" (fr30, Dumont) and "Human nature does not have right understanding; divine nature does." (fr. 78, Robinson) and finally, "the most beautiful order is found in a heap of sweepings, piled at random"

(fr. 124, Robinson). Popper and Kirk both made much of the fragments which deal with "measure" as the central cosmic claim however, when the concept of "measure" is juxtaposed with claims about the disorderly appearance of nature and the impossibility of humans ever piercing the Divine veil of obscurity, one gets a picture of blind men trying their best to cast stories about the way things really look. The tales they weave may be made beautiful without thereby being made true. Humans are in a similar situation even though they are not completely blind. The regularity of phenomena permits observation and hypothesis but the possibility of a hidden harmony may fool even the most perceptive human observer. For us to agree on what is true is for us to agree on what is. To reach agreement on what is, one has to describe what one believes is true in language the other can understand. But we cannot simply decide to agree on what is true, even in the sense of being intersubjectively 'true', without also establishing some common standard by which the truth of various claims is to be assessed. Before we can agree, there must be criteria on which agreement is to be based. Now if the language of a particular tradition constitutes the web of coherence which gives claims their meaning, it follows that language must itself contain tools for reaching agreement about the substance of the sentences which are possible in it. Coherence cannot obtain without some prior criteria by which it is to be established.

On the communitarian view, agreement can be viewed as a

socially constitutive act which has already happened. Our ancestors must have found their way to agree that "X is good" and, just because they agreed, it is. Why this particular "X" rather than that one was chosen in the first place is only understandable from within the worldview constituted by the tradition in question. But, one could object, any worldview must be expressed in a language which includes a set of statements which describes its cosmic or existential beliefs and so, any worldview must be largely constituted by the criteria of agreement which underlie the language in which the worldview is expressed. Thus, to say that "X is good" is to assume that there is some agreed on criterion of rationality which can be used to formulate reasons which support the initial claim. "X is good" is the moral counter part of the prelinguistic gesture to 'get more wood' in so far as the latter assumes a set of shared beliefs about how things are and how we all perceive them as a precondition of being able to formulate an intelligible set of meanings sufficient for action to occur. What the communitarians overlook is the public nature of the assumptions of language. As soon as one of our hirsute forebears was able to convince one of his fellows to go for wood without having to physically force him out of the fire circle, the communitarian game was up, for even if the argument that clinched action without bloodshed was a gentle wave of a prehistoric baseball bat, the fact that it worked would have to be based on a shared understanding of consequences which would serve as reasons for agreement. "Because" statements, in any form, constitute reasons. That a tap on the

head from time to time might be required to reinforce shared understanding would not negate the fact that, in inflicting pain, one was also attempting to communicate 'reasons' in a public manner. To lack a commonly understandable reason in this context would result in one of our ancestors being beaten insensible to no avail. Violence in this instance is, in itself, an attempt to communicate.

The philosophically interesting, common feature of language is its ability to communicate reasons for beliefs, about how things are and how we ought to act, to other members of the same linguistic community. For the communitarian claim of incommensurability to work, language itself must fail, for any language that can be used to formulate public reasons must be capable of being used in a way that can be understood, at least linguistically, by any person with the patience to learn the language. I do not argue with MacIntyre's claim that one needs to learn a language very carefully to grasp its subtlety, nor do I believe he is far wrong with his claim that one should really be able to read poetry in any second language if one is to claim to understand it fully. What I take issue with is his claim that different linguistic traditions have no 'common measure'. In as much as every language must have within it some conventional means of establishing grounds for belief about various claims, and in so far as every language must have some logical internal structure as means of preserving consistency of meaning, the structure of

language itself requires some deployment of reason which is, by nature, public.

If we accept that descriptive language evolves in response to our individual experience of the world and our need to confirm these experiences and explain them to others then we are logically committed to some concept of causality. Without a theory relating cause to effect, we simply cannot develop plausible accounts of what we have witnessed nor can we begin to explain our own actions. Language cannot be just convention but must have some causal theory built into it as a basis for discussion of individual experiences. One should, therefore, be able to reduce the important differences between two linguistic traditions by analysis of their respective causal claims.

The trouble comes, as Heraclitus warned us, when we make "random conjectures about the most important matters"(fr.47,Robinson). There are limits to human understanding and each tradition which embodies a set of conjectures about justice oversteps the bounds of this understanding if its members are not able to give reasons why they share a particular belief. If a language fails to provide the resources necessary to justify claims about what is then the language lacks the fundamental component of communication - reason. The communitarian claim that consciousness is formed by participation in some particular linguistic community is used to argue further that beliefs which

arise within a community arise out of language use and contain reasons which are not available for inspection without access to the linguistic context which contains them. But reasons which are so hidden in their own context can scarcely be 'understandable' to people who have internalised them to the point of unconscious acceptance. If the native speakers of each tradition are not able to exhume the reasons for the claims their use of language obligates them to, then we can hardly be expected to take the strength of reasons supporting such claims on faith. Language, on this view, is like layers of paint that thickly cover nothing. The problem is, unlike the proverbial onion, paint needs an object which it can cover. What gives language its form is, in this sense, reason. Moral language without reason is little more than a collection of meaningless sounds. One could as well try to paint over thin air as to get a meaningful moral debate going without some commonly accessible basis in reason.

Communitarians postulate agreement on better states of affairs which are not analyzable and which have no rational basis discernable from outside of particular communities. In place of the liberal search for rational understanding, they suggest coherence as grounds for acceptance. As I have shown above, coherence fails as a principle of understanding if it cannot be tied into reason in some public way. Moreover, because the perception of cosmic order is subjectively conceived, any tradition which tries to establish a consensus with regard to a given

perception of order will require reasons of its own as a means of communicating belief internally. Communitarians are thus faced with the choice between assuming common intentions as the basis for belief or finding some means of communicating the mystical to ^{the} ~~its~~ constituents. In the first case, they have to assume that perception of things as they are is common and needs no explanation beyond an account of its coherence. In the second case, they must appeal to metaphysical properties in hopes that no argument is needed beyond some kind of metaphysical description to obtain belief. This just will not work. The communitarians, in the end, are thrown back onto an ontological argument for morality. As long as moral claims are postulated from within a community which denies itself the right to rational self analysis, they can be understood as claims based on illicit coherence rather than claims of reason.

The main desire of the argument to community as MacIntyre presents it is to achieve a degree of certainty sufficient to license authoritative moral prescriptions.⁸⁴ Bloom wants moral authority as a buttress against the ephemeral world of our modern experience. No matter how eloquent the plea for moral confidence, it can only be achieved by ignoring certain features of human epistemic limitations. To be certain is to know. To know is to be able to give a true account of existence that includes a complete definition of man; i.e., one that explains all the qualities and functions of man and all of the qualities, functions and relations

of the context within which man is thought to operate. No such account has yet been formed which does not include a set of necessarily speculative statements to account for man's apparent freedom. The communitarian way around this roadblock to certainty is to define a portion of the cosmos in which reason is subordinated to a level of particularity which allows coherence to dictate the content of reason. Reason is thus bound by the horizons of coherence. This, they argue, will provide them with the certainty they need to maintain moral authority. But, the individualist could object, this certainty is based on conceit. It is based on the belief that the provisional certainty obtained through careful examination of the objectives selected will suffice to direct moral action to the right goals. How can goals be known to be right if they are declared to be beyond the reach of reason? How does the certainty legitimate itself?

If reason is demoted to a rank below that of coherence, then it would seem that the validity of the communitarian epistemological thesis will ultimately turn on the existence of some element of human makeup other than reason and the plausibility of attributing certain qualities to it. In order to establish moral authority based on cultural 'knowledge', there must be some locus of knowledge which is not concerned with rationality and the most likely candidate would appear to be something like soul. Whether soul exists or not is a moot point in this debate for, by adverting the problem of knowledge to some mysterious quality which

is neither knowable nor definable except in the vaguest of terms, the question of knowledge is put completely beyond rational concern. If this mysterious quality, be it soul or something else which we have not yet named, exists and is beyond our ken and if we subordinate reason to it, then we are reduced to a form of fatalism which makes the whole philosophical enterprise pointless. If soul is the locus of certainty and soul is beyond our intellectual reach then, if we prefer certainty to truth, we have to accept the consequences of any kind of certainty, be it from a black soul or a misguided one. We cannot judge moral action without coming up with some criterion for judging the correctness of soul's judgement. If soul is formed by its particular experience within a community then its judgement can only be judged in relation to community values. To borrow from Plato, does the community commend these values because they are right or are they right because the community commends them? Communitarians clearly argue for the latter forgetting that, without reason, we have no way of judging the actions of a moral community.

I began this section with a promise to unpack some baggage for inspection. I have done so only by leaving the question of rationality largely unmentioned. Yet it is this issue that stimulates my principal interest in the communitarian thesis. The claim that rational moral theories are culturally embedded has significant consequences for any advocate of individualism for individuals cannot begin to question the content of culture claims

if they cannot search for reasons which support them. It now remains to examine the nature of rationality and to consider what arguments can be formulated on behalf of the communitarian view of reason. As Habermas points out, communitarians need some help in this regard for they cannot enter into debate with individualists without producing reasons which substantiate their own claims, and so must accept the terms set by reason.⁸⁵

Community and Rationality

Having consecrated the greater part of this work to a consideration of what underpinnings will work as the basis for community, I should now take up the most vexatious issue more directly - rationality. Both MacIntyre and Bloom want there to be a level of coherence to our moral worlds which would license the exercise of authority in education and in morals. Having nicely dispensed with the problem of rationality by confining it to separate, community dependent domains, communitarians want to substitute belief in non-analytic moral coherence for the liberal notion of universal reason in the hope that such a move would allow them to focus human energy on the pursuit of 'virtue'. But here the mind begins to boggle at the difficulty of producing a list of virtues adequate to the task of dealing with the range and scope of present moral disagreements; a list which does not have the virtue of rationality at the top. Perhaps in the academic calm of the university, one can be forgiven for rhapsodizing over the classical virtues, as Bloom and MacIntyre are wont to do, but this does not help those who must live amidst the consequences of moral disagreement. Perhaps the bland comfort of contemporary North American middle class existence tends to shield us from some of the more unpleasant effects of deeply felt moral conflict and this may account for a desire to inflate our moral aspirations to loftier

levels than we really should expect given the somewhat messy nature of the world we live in. These are not insignificant problems. Any theory that attempts to promote itself as a plausible alternative to liberal theories of rationality, which at least have the advantage of providing some sort basis for agreement, ought to, at the very least, recognize the problem of the consequences of moral conflict. The world in which Palestinian houses are torn down in response to (usually inaccurate) sniper fire, whole sectors of Eritrean populations are purposely starved to death and Kurdish villages are attacked by Iraqi artillery officers who boast of their efficiency⁸⁶, is a world in which action quickly asserts itself as the predominant manifestation of what passes for moral authority. A rational approach to the problem of human existence must begin with an appreciation of the place of reason in human action. When all is said and done, whether or not moral thought is to be oriented by visions of cosmic order or by pure reason is a question which has to be answered by careful analysis of the prospects for harmonious action which are likely to ensue from either approach. Teleological interpretations which lack universal accessibility seem to likely to miss the point entirely. Knowledge is always uncertain but actions have a quality of certainty to them that cuts across community boundaries; too often with bloody consequences.

Though there are many ways of framing questions about rational action, it seems to me that the problems raised by the

communitarians can best be put into some sort of manageable order by considering the moral implications of communitarian epistemology. If one is to approach questions of justice without committing any of the more glaring sorts of philosophical sacrilege, one must begin by questioning what it is that we think that we know before passing to questions of how we ought to act. The liberal reluctance to allow transitions from 'is' to 'ought' is based on epistemological doubt. Prohibitions against naturalist claims spring from the inaccessibility of the ultimate purpose of nature. What the communitarians seem to overlook is the interconnectedness of natural entities and the difficulty of drawing a circle around any part of nature which isolates parts from wholes - particularly thinking parts. This is precisely what the notion of *telos* does when it includes an epistemological theory which disallows analysis, for analysis is a central component of reason and reason, for all its limitations, must at least be accounted for in any well formed teleological theory.

In this section I will explore the difficulties which arise when moral action follows from certainty. I will try to show that our lack of certainty is a truer and more rational guide to action than any vision of the Good that carries with it an assumption of certainty. I shall also discuss the relationship of moral certainty to moral authority in an effort to get at the dangers inherent in the communitarian approach without thereby resorting to an 'argumentum ad Hitlerium'.

This part of this project ought to begin with a discussion of the meaning of rationality as there is only a vague outline of a concept in the works cited so far. MacIntyre clearly rejects the possibility of a universal rationality arguing that practical reason cannot be divorced from value reasoning because the meaning of practical thought is integrated into a coherent system of thinking which is particular to its intellectual culture. In so doing he refers us back to the Aristotelian scheme in which practical reason and "reason to first principles" are inextricably linked. Before bringing out objections, it might be helpful to try to get a little clearer understanding of what we mean when we use the term 'rational'.

Max Weber gives us four kinds of rationality: traditional, affective/emotional, value directed, and instrumental (zweckrational).⁸⁷ Though he offers us a clear understanding of each kind as if it were a distinct category he stresses that this is for ease of abstraction only and advises against too rigorous a separation since behaviour usually embodies combinations of kinds. The distinctions are, however, quite significant and therefore need to be considered separately, at least in a preliminary way, before going further.

First, Weber labels behaviour which is "simply a dull reaction to accustomed stimuli along lines laid down by settled habits" as traditional.⁸⁸ What is important for Weber here is that behaviour

of this type may be inherently rational even though the reasons are not evident to the consciousness of the individual concerned. By this I mean that Weber realizes that traditional behaviour may indeed be a kind of structural rationality in which individual persons act to achieve some goal previously conceived by the relevant society but, in so far as the purpose of the action is hidden from the actor's consciousness, the action is unconsciously rational. This is problematic.⁸⁹ In one sense, tradition is an efficient mechanism that saves one the intellectual effort required to puzzle out the whys and wherefores of mundane matters, eg, driving on the right hand side of the road is a traditional practice in North America the historical reason for which no longer seems worthy of much deep thought. Traditional rationality can be a powerful force for order as it allows the members of societies to predict each other's behaviour with relative ease and thus contributes to the mutual confidence necessary to peaceful relations. The trouble is that tradition lends itself to abuse by clever manipulative persons and it can lead to easy acceptance of authority when it is not, strictly speaking, in the best interests of the persons i.e. irrational obedience. Traditional rationality can also lead to absurdities; eg, standing one's ground in a tight military formation after the introduction of accurate artillery weapons to the battle field or, the ancient Japanese custom of committing suicide rather than losing 'face' in an era when 'face' is no longer part of the social fabric.

Weber speaks of affective or emotional behaviour as a distinct kind in so far as it is rational in relation to the emotions that motivate it. Here one might be at a loss to understand just why Weber even bothers to consider this as a type of rationality at all were it not for the fact that he refers to it as a form of reasoning usually found in combination with instrumental or value rationality.⁹⁰ The interesting thing here is that Weber seems willing to accept that action which is itself reasonable with respect to the ends to be obtained is rational even if the motivation is not. This leads to several difficulties. First, if A hates B, then a rational way for A to act so as to resolve matters might be to plan B's demise. Weber's thesis would appear to allow him to judge the rationality of the ensuing premeditated murder only on the efficiency with which it deals with the hatred. Weber could say that the act is irrational if, and only if, he could point out a more efficient way of removing hatred eg, he could argue that A could deal with his own inner turmoil by seeking counselling or, perhaps, by moving away from the source of his hatred. But Weber could not address the question of whether or not the hatred itself is rational. The second and more important problem is that this distinction allows a very small category of action types to confuse the use to which the term 'rational' is later put. The difference, I believe, between rational and irrational emotional action is that rational emotional actions would tend to be more consistent with some particular end than irrational emotional actions might be. For instance, an irrational

emotional action in response to some deep personal offense may be to attack the offending person in a blind rage without calculating the consequences or the effectiveness of the act. This may be an important and subtle distinction in some cases but it confuses the central issue of whether or not emotional violence is a rational response to irritation. The action itself could be irrational with respect to the irritation so one is left, under this category, with the possibility of an action which is both rational and irrational.

Value-rationality, which is Weber's third type, concerns action taken in the attempt to "realise an absolute value."⁹¹ The important point that Weber stresses here is that such actions are characterized by an actor being indifferent to consequences, that he or she is concerned only with the value that motivates the act, regardless of the immediate consequences that this may have. The values in question usually have some kind of metaphysical, ethical or religious basis.

Last we have instrumental rationality. Here an actor chooses his actions according to both value and consequence. The actor does not so much ignore higher values as, realizing that they are subjectively relative, order them in priority so as to achieve only what is possible given the range of potential consequences.⁹² For Weber, whatever the category, action is irrational from the instrumental point of view if it is unconditional with respect to its consequences.

Weber tells us that the new age "is characterized by rationalization, intellectualization and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world'."⁹³(FMW p155) This phenomenon is, according to Weber, part of a general trend towards scientific modes of explanation. Intellectualization shakes the basis of claims to special knowledge made by authoritative figures; people now prefer 'scientific' explanations rather than appeals to authority based on charisma or the special knowledge of 'magicians'. The new magic is science and science is public. Science offers rational explanations i.e. explanations that relate cause to effect in a public manner and that permit the calculation of effects. Weber does not claim that intellectualization and rationalization "indicate an increased general knowledge of the conditions under which one lives" but rather that one could, in principle at least, "master all things by calculation". (FMWp139) But there is one important category which, according to Weber, defies calculation - the ultimate purpose or end of action.⁹⁴

It is this separation of means/ends rationality and rationality with respect to ends which serves as the focal point of communitarian thinking. As MacIntyre puts it, we are faced with a choice between Nietzsche and Aristotle.(AV,pp109-120) Precisely because contemporary moral agents find hidden Nietzschean premises whenever they analyze their own moral judgements, either we embrace Nietzsche and accept that reason is an adjunct of will or we choose the more coherent teleological premises of Aristotle. (AVpp103-106)

Our choice then, according to MacIntyre, is between the chaos of self created will and the order of a coherent cosmic account. How could we knowingly choose chaos?

MacIntyre moves from Weber to Nietzsche so easily that one might almost overlook the differences which separate the two. MacIntyre portrays Weber as holding to the central theme of an "irreducible plurality of values" such that resolutions of moral conflict can only be found on bureaucratic grounds; i.e., through the application of means/ends rationality. But this is not quite in the spirit of Nietzsche who declares that "there are altogether no moral facts. Moral judgements agree with religious ones in believing in realities which are no realities."⁹⁵ The difference between agreeing to disagree on metaphysical matters in order to agree on material action and declaring that the whole business of metaphysics is bunk is significant and should not be collapsed together quite so quickly. Weber does not disallow metaphysics so much as consign them to a private realm and direct our attention to the material world where consideration of consequences provides us with some common ground. One should also point out that Nietzsche's belief in the self constructing capacities of exceptional individuals leads to the creation of the problematic Overman, a creature interested more in domination than harmony, whereas Weber is clearly looking for a means to harmonize human action. Weber would not be able to object to the logic of the Overman but would want him to realize that his efforts at "self

overcoming" were a private matter. Weber would want him to come down to a lower plane of existence to figure out how he would live among his neighbours without violence. For Weber, the central issue has to do with the consequences of action.

There is, I believe, ample textual evidence to support the claim that Weber thinks instrumental rationality is the highest kind of reasoning applicable to the political sphere. In "Politics as Vocation", he says that we should set aside questions of guilt and look at the future consequences of our acts(FMWp118) and that the ethics of absolutism are ill-conceived because of the absurd consequences they lead to. (FMWp120) He claims that emotion and reason combine rationally when one is conscious of the consequences of one's actions (FMWp127) and that "Proponents of absolute ends cannot stand up under the ethical irrationality of the world" (FMWp122) and, further, that "from no ethics in the world can it be concluded when and to what extent the ethically good purpose 'justifies' the ethically dangerous means and ramifications." (FMWp121) Taken together, these excerpts describe an ethic of responsibility which has all the characteristics of instrumental rationality. Politicians, whose function is to manage national affairs, have no business acting without careful calculation of the effects of their actions. To do otherwise would be to ignore the practical problems and dangers inherent in their actions. Since irrational actions are potentially dangerous, and politicians have the functional responsibility to manage the affairs of state in

such a way as to further its ends, they ought to be guided by practical considerations which will allow them to fulfil their functional obligations.

In "Politics as Vocation", Weber claims that the state is an institution which defines itself by its means; i.e., it successfully claims an exclusive monopoly on the employment of violence against both internal and external threats.(FMWp78) The state exists because it is able to, because it has found the means to exist. It is the coercive potential of states which captures Weber's attention. But one begins to see the linkage between Weber's empirical studies and his ethics in his description of the ethic of responsibility.

"...it is immensely moving when a mature man- no matter whether old or young in years-is aware of a responsibility for the consequences of his conduct and really feels such responsibility with heart and soul. He then acts by following an ethic of responsibility and somewhere he reaches the point where he says: 'Here I stand; I can do no other.'.... In so far as this is true, an ethic of ultimate ends and an ethic of responsibility are not absolute contrasts but rather supplements which only in unison constitute a genuine man-a man who can have the 'calling for politics'." (FMWp127)

If read in the light of what Weber says about the need to consider

discrete individual ends and what he says about the need to carefully calculate the expectations of others we are left with an interpretation in which **zweckrational** is not only technically superior to any other means of organizing social action but is also the only truly responsible method.⁹⁶ The practice of **zweckrational** requires that an actor consider other values as well as his own and that he take responsibility for the outcome of his own value position.

To put the matter as plainly as I can, human action has a common feature to it which makes the claims of incommensurability seem trivial. Whether or not the belief systems of different communities are commensurable quickly fades into insignificance when one considers that, what ever thoughts, beliefs and ideas motivate it, action has material consequences which are commensurable. As soon as the transition from thought to action is made, there are material effects that can be measured and calculated and which meet the Heraclitean requirement of being "that which is common". The strength of Weber's theory is that issues that pass into the realm of action can be sorted out with regard to their material consequences. This does not mean that agreements reached on the basis of practical reason are necessarily the best that could be accomplished in a perfect world, merely that such agreements are the least bad that we can achieve in an imperfect world. The problem of harmonizing action is that it needs some basis upon which it can be judged as good or bad based

on the interests of all concerned and therefore in the eyes of all concerned. Thus, it is critically important to find some criterion which will serve as a basis of communication prior to action.

In the previous section, I argued that the epistemological assumptions required to make a given community work tripped over the problem of public accessibility to the justification of belief. In order to make a viable community, the whole population of it would have to sign up to the requisite beliefs without reserving the right to rational analysis. In such a community, it would be nonsense to seek rational justification for beliefs which were not rationally explicable and thus the business of justifying belief remains problematic. But that is not the whole story, for if it could be shown that individual members of communities had more to gain by signing over their rights to reason than by retaining them, then it could be shown that community, despite its epistemic flaws, might be a more rational choice than individualism. This possibility is not negligible given the apparent difficulties and paradoxes that plague the unrestrained use of reason. Communitarians need only point to the apparent poverty of a system in which every person seeks his own good without regard to others, a system in which each considers the whole to exist for her private good or, as Bloom tells us, the lack of aesthetic worth in societies that lack coherence.⁹⁷

Let us, for the moment, give Bloom and MacIntyre the benefit

of the doubt and consider the consequences of a communitarian system as it might be conceived. Assuming that a given community had developed a coherent account of the cosmos which included some special status for itself and its component parts, individual members of that community would be bound by shared concepts of truth and virtue. In keeping with the communitarian thesis, the moral grounds of this community are not analytic and so education into the moral domain would be accomplished by a regimen of study in which emphasis would be placed on developing reason relative to value, emotion and tradition, to use Weber's labels. The soul would be nurtured by careful exposure to aesthetically correct art and literature, by games which reinforce the approved virtues and by courses in dialectical reasoning aimed at developing a full appreciation for the contextual parameters of moral thinking. Authority would present itself in the form of mature, experienced judgement and would manifest itself in an ability to formulate coherent accounts of what is. The sources of authority would vary according to the ability to integrate new observations into a new coherent account which also accounted for the old convictions. It is fully possible that, with careful attention to the nature of the *telos* from which educational material is drawn, a complete and satisfying intellectual life may be attained; for some, at least. It is also possible that there would evolve a respect for the beautiful, for sound thinking and for excellence in general all worked into an harmonious system. But there would be several problems.

First, dialectic argument would always be constrained by faith in what has already been agreed to as the boundaries of reason. Second, there would be constant tension between the natural sciences and moral belief for new discoveries, new theories, would be required to present their case to the court of *telos* to determine whether or not the current world view would permit the new ideas to exist. Third, and most important, there would always be unforeseen problems caused by competing views of just what the content of the *telos* that is agreed upon should consist of. This last point is crucial for without some compelling description of a substantive nature, there is nothing to argue about or to agree on - there is simply an empty promise. By this I mean that nearly every rational person could probably be convinced that agreement on the meaning of existence would be a far better basis for peaceful and meaningful co-existence than chaos but convincing them of the specific nature of such an agreement is a different matter entirely. While communitarians hasten to tell us how much better (clearer, more authoritative) our moral lives would be within communities, they are suspiciously silent when it comes to the task of describing what cosmic theory it is that they think the members of their communities should all agree to. This last problem has a corollary which is also given scant attention; the problem of inter-community dispute.

The facts of our existence include the actuality of many competing conceptions of the Good. Human history consists, in

large part, of accounts of war. Surely any morality which sends us back into the entrenched communities which have, since the beginnings of recorded history, fortified themselves with absolute certainties, is a morality which fails to deal adequately with its subject. It is a morality which trivializes conflict and which fails to deal with the need to find ways of settling fundamental issues as a basis for coexistence and for collective action.⁹⁸ Even assuming that all of the other problems mentioned above can be overcome, there is little hope for harmony in the recipe of community, primarily because of its authoritative ingredient. Authority which is put beyond the reach of reason is authority which has no means of dealing with other voices of authority except means which are based on unreason.

The final point of discussion on this subject is based, once again, on an ancient insight and cuts across the categories to which elements of contemporary philosophy are assigned. If the cosmos has the appearance of order, as proponents of *telos* are bound to admit, then how does one integrate the existence of rationality into it? Rationality is. That is, as long as there are humans who think, reason exists. Admitting this as an existential fact, how can one build a theory of existence which limits it to the extent that it no longer is? The communitarian thesis attempts to do just that. It limits the concept of rationality by denying it freedom to search for its own justification and yet, search it must, for that is its nature. The

communitarian approach is to direct rationality to the task of rendering intelligible accounts of the cosmos but it does not address the issue of how reason itself is to be given a place within any of these accounts. A consequence of communitarianism is that it must deny the full significance of rationality to any account of the cosmos which could be formed.

At this point, having exposed what I believe the major weaknesses of the communitarian thesis to be, it is necessary, in order to avoid a debate based entirely on negative formulations of competing theories, to construct a modest version of a rational moral system in which the good of the individual is taken as the point of departure. The aim of this next step is to consider whether individualism offers any superior opportunities for dealing directly with the epistemological obligations which I have accused communitarians of ignoring. In order to accomplish this aim, I will pick up the strands of individualism that I began to develop earlier in this work and go on to see what can be made of the post modern individual with the help of some contemporary arguments.

VIRationality and Individualism

As Jan Narveson puts it:

"The idea that attributions of rightness and wrongness are claims that certain actions have certain occult, nonphysical, exotic **properties** is wildly, completely and fundamentally off base. Morality is lived in the streets of ordinary life, and it has to do with getting ordinary people to do or refrain from doing quite ordinary things. The idea that the way to get them to do this is by prattling about metaphysics is too absurd to be contemplated outside the hoary halls of Oxbridge."⁹⁹

The fundamental task of morals, in Narveson's view, is to achieve practical results in the interests of human harmony. On this view, the communitarian approach simply fails to address the problem. Of course one could point out that "prattling about metaphysics" has been a fairly effective device for obtaining social action for millennia and is still the preferred method throughout much of the Middle East; however, such an objection would not do a serious injustice to Narveson who is really objecting to the authority that is claimed on the basis of private intuitions more than the existence of metaphysics. As Narveson, and indeed pluralists of all stripes argue, the problem of morality is the realization of harmony in the realm of action. His "objection to appeal to

intuitions in moral theory is, in brief, that when (not merely 'if'!) intuitions conflict, we are bereft of conceptual tools for reaching reasoned agreement."¹⁰⁰

The Libertarian position, which I will take as representative of liberalism primarily because it is not plagued by the temptation to sneak in appeals to traditional values,¹⁰¹ can be rendered thus: 1) individuals cannot base moral arguments on private intuitions without resort to claims of authority which cannot be made public, 2) teleological insights are private intuitions in so far as they are not publicly verifiable, 3) private intuitions, though they may add enormous wealth to one's understanding, may lead to irresolvable conflict in the realm of action, 4) since we can derive no universally acceptable way of establishing social harmony in the realm of action which is based on private intuition, we are obligated to allow each individual sovereignty over his own intuition and to insist on mutual tolerance, 5) further, since private intuitions have no effect on others until they are translated into moral action, we are obligated to limit the motivations for moral action to those which are public, 6) reason is public but only when it is rationally intelligible to all concerned; 7) therefore, moral action ought to be based on reason and the ends sought by action ought to be rationally intelligible to all concerned. The corollary is that teleological insights do not qualify.¹⁰²

The whole issue of moral action needs to be seen in the light of consequences that result from any particular formulation of moral rules. In order for the communitarian thesis to work, the rules must be drawn up by a dialectical process which, as I have argued above, runs into problems of public access. While this could, as the communitarians suggest, have fairly strong appeal in worlds where social stability is possible and where the dialectical process can be given the time and intellectual resources needed to achieve the social beauty which communitarians, somewhat nostalgically, appeal to, it has little appeal in a world where communities are not homogeneous, stable or hermetically sealed. Such is our world. Pluralism is a fact of late 20th century existence and the argument that traditional values can retreat into isolation in the face of this fact ignores both the salient facts of post modern existence and the main problem of morality. Actions have public effects on communities or on individuals who are not necessarily part of the community that initiates them. If there is to be some means of resolving the inevitable conflicts of moral opinion over these effects, there must be public a basis for moral speech.

The main dispute between liberal and communitarian concerns the locus of moral authority. As I have argued above, the communitarian runs into difficulty as soon as she wishes to extend moral authority beyond the dominion of those who already see the truth of her community embedded claims. The strength of the

opposing position is that it claims to be capable of universal appeal. But it would also seem that the communitarian is owed an answer to the question of whether or not libertarians, and indeed, all liberal individualists, do not hoist themselves with their own rational petards. If reason of a particular kind; i.e., rational self concern, is necessary to morality as defined by liberals, does individualism not impose a duty of rationality of a certain kind on its participants? If that is the case, and I think it is, how do liberals propose to impose a requirement to act rationally, at least in the moral sphere, without thereby imposing a requirement which is purely arbitrary?¹⁰³

The answer to this vexing problem is not as difficult as it at first appears. In accepting the liberal thesis, one rejects moral arbitrariness but concedes that the somewhat arbitrary distribution of natural talent and metaphysical insight creates a mutual problem among the members of any moral community. That one exists as a material being is an existential fact that need not be contested here. The liberal merely holds that it is at least possible that the material world may be ordered in purely arbitrary fashion and that the epistemic status of this possibility must be taken as coeval with any particular teleologically based moral theory. As material beings, we may have different moral insights upon which we base our interpretations of the meaning of what ever order we perceive and which may give us strong moral convictions but, on liberal thinking, we must accept the ultimate contingency of

whatever we choose to believe. But moral insights have no material effects until they are translated into action. It is not the arbitrariness of moral insight that the liberal rejects but the possibility of basing normative claims upon such an insight. Normative claims are necessarily public in so far as they attempt to share a moral opinion that affects other persons. The problem is not in the private domain of introspective insight, what Narveson calls personal morality,¹⁰⁴ but in the transition to the public domain of social action. All that the liberal individual needs to escape the accusation of arbitrariness is an account of how matters that affect us all, or at least a good number of us, require common speech. Viewed in this light, rationality is a precondition of morality because it is a precondition of the communication that is necessary to moral agreement.

If we accept that the ultimate aim of morality is uncoerced, harmonized human action then we are obligated to accept either some teleological theory in which harmony is, in some sense, predetermined, or we must accept the need for independent entities to communicate in order to arrive at some level of harmonious action. To accept any moral theory founded on intuitions that cannot be communicated is to limit the usefulness of the theory to individuals or groups who are already predisposed to agreement and thus to change the meaning of the term 'morality'. The kind of moral closedness that this brand of morality evokes would leave the members of pluralistic societies completely dependant on formal law

and bereft of the possibilities that a more ambitious conception of 'morality' would allow.

Charles Taylor argues that the liberal individualist lives in an 'atomistic' society. He defines atomism as a "vision of society in some sense constituted by individuals for the fulfilment of ends which are primarily individual".¹⁰⁵ The debate between atomists (a term that he substitutes for 'individualist') and communitarians, he says, "goes deep; it touches the nature of freedom, and beyond this what it is to be a human subject; what is a human subject and how it is defined and sustained. It is not surprising then that the two sides talk past each other."¹⁰⁶ What is surprising is that Robert Nozick's ill-fated appeal to a 'common intuition' regarding essential rights seems to be taken as the focus of this disagreement.¹⁰⁷ Nozick's attempt to establish a carefully articulated account of rights on a foundation of intuition is, fortunately, not the last word in liberal thinking nor is it really worth the amount of ink that has been dedicated to its demise. Obviously, any moral theory that substitutes one intuition for another locks itself into an aesthetic debate which can only be decided by appeals to private insight. Surely, in making the transition from insight to action, moral theory must be grounded on something which can be communicated.

Taylor puts his finger squarely on the main issue separating communitarian and liberal arguments: different conceptions of what

the ultimate aim of morality is. Though we have already addressed this point at length, there is yet another perspective on the debate which needs to be considered. Some communitarians see morality as a tool to be employed in the construction and maintenance of culture so that moral existence can become part of an aesthetically pleasing life.¹⁰⁸ Liberals seem to have the same end in view but argue that the only way that this can be achieved is to get the practical issues sorted out first so that cultural delights can be pursued without conflict.¹⁰⁹ The curious thing is the different directions that proponents of each theory go off in once they have decided that the whole business of morals has to do with the problematic notion of the 'will'. The communitarian proposes to form a collective ethos so that the problem of individual 'wills' does not arise. The liberal individualist argues that, no matter how a community is conceived, the problem of individual 'will' will arise. The best way of dealing with this will is to help it learn the sweet music of reason so that it may learn self restraint. This brings us back to de Tocqueville's notion of 'freedom as interdependency' and his observation that democracy is admirably suited to provide the context for learning morality providing that the independence of spirit typical of democracies is harnessed to the task of collective decision making.¹¹⁰ This implies, as argued above, that channels of communication are kept open and that citizens shoulder their responsibilities as active participants in the process. The need to be able to communicate about moral judgements is an inherent

part of the process of governing and thus, moral communication needs a basis accessible to all citizens. We have already established the difficulties that communities face in this regard. The question is, can liberals solve the problem in such a way that life does not become a mere spectre of what community offers?

According to Narveson, the answer is an emphatic yes.¹¹¹ Arguing from Locke, he suggests that separating aesthetics from morals just is the necessary precondition of aesthetic life. The argument, though not as rich as a full study of it would allow me to show, goes back to the problem of action. A 'will' inspired by some private insight, be it aesthetic or otherwise, can believe whatever it likes without problem. A 'will' which translates this belief into action without regard to the conflicts that may result from other 'wills' guided by other beliefs is a problem. The 'will' that wants to live aesthetically must, therefore restrain itself from action which leads to conflict with other 'wills' as a condition of the freedom that it desires for itself. This entails not infringing on the desire of others to develop and hold their own aesthetic views, provided only that these views do not infringe on any other person's fundamental rights to hold other aesthetic views.¹¹² Liberals point out that action can be discussed rationally; i.e. publicly. Aesthetic insights routinely escape our best rational efforts. Since morality deals with action, it must deal in a rational mode or lead, inevitably, to a conflict of mute 'wills'.

The atomistic description may successfully capture the empiric facts about the moral status quo in a nation that has become so large that government is in the hands of faceless bureaucrats. Citizens of this nation may no longer have the practical obligations that De Tocqueville felt necessary to ensure that the need to communication about moral matters would protect them from the dangers of indifference. But this is not a consequence of individualism so much as it is a failure in application of practical rationality. Practical rationality is the matching of means to ends. Bureaucracy is a manifestation of the attempt to rationalize the administration of means, at least, it is in so far as it is a legitimate attempt to administer according to the rules and not a subversion of public intent for private gain. That the bureaucratic approach has so many failings is itself part of the calculus available to practical reason. The individualist, seeing the ultimate goal of political association as the provision of a context for morality, has the conceptual resources necessary to minimize bureaucracy by restricting her aspirations - by restricting her own expectations of perfection. In principle, as De Tocqueville and modern libertarians both agree, the free association of individuals is a promising practical approach to moral relations at both the individual and group level, providing only that one is dealing with 'rational' individuals. The need to communicate forces them to find common ground and thus to seek public reasons for their moral judgements. Individualism does not suggest itself as an easy solution to moral difference but only as

the best means available given the need to find a means to communicate.

In the Buddhist tradition, one believes that each person has been given a portion of Godhood. The traditional salutation is designed to pay obeisance to the portion of Buddha that exists within each individual. In a sense, the individualist thesis leans on a similar thought. It recognizes the possibility that there are private truths that can only be perceived subjectively and then tries to instantiate a context that will allow us to live with this possibility. The result is anything but atomistic. As De Tocqueville pointed out, the whole individualist programme requires moral communication in order to reach a level of consciousness that leads to self restraint. Indifference can be, and perhaps largely has been, the result of broadening the range of communication to the point that the individuals who inhabit our huge mass nations can be largely deaf to each other's moral speech. When it is not essential for us to agree on a course of action in order to get something done, then there is no visible outcome of disagreements. When the control of political and social action is in the hands of bureaucracies that do not need to steer themselves by moral consensus then there is little need for communication. Perhaps the current rupture in moral meaning that communitarians decry has more to do with the alienation of decision making than with some other entropic force. If so, can we reasonably hope that a renewed concern for the ecological and human consequences of allowing

social action to fall under bureaucratic control will lead again to a recognition of the individual locus of moral responsibility for the outcome of social action and the consequent realization of the danger of bureaucratizing morals? Perhaps we have more to fear from structures of decision making that have destroyed the context of collective action that De Tocqueville posited as the basis for moral consciousness than we have from the idea of individualism.

Conclusion

I began this work with the aim of exposing the critical weaknesses of a version of communitarianism. I have argued, using an insight borrowed from Heraclitus, that acknowledging our epistemic limitations ought to save us from the dangers of certainty with respect to our own interpretive metaphors. Lacking interpretive certainty, moral certainty of the kind suggested by the communitarian thesis that I have presented here is highly suspect. Moreover, the search for such certainty fails to deal with the salient features of post modern existence. I have suggested that the lack of homogeneity of most contemporary societies prevents any of them from getting very far with projects to found morality on communities of moral belief. I have also suggested that if such hermetic communities of belief could be found, developing moral certainty using private theories of morality would be a dangerous business for it would prevent meaningful communication and would almost certainly conduce to conflicts between mute moral wills. Further, I have suggested that the prospects for founding such communities are not good given the difficulty of moral speech among their own members.

The Weberian argument, that the best we can do to avoid resort to force in the realm of action is to agree to disagree on what cannot be explained and to consider the consequences of actions as 'guiding reasons' affecting action, is a claim that seems to offend

a certain vision of man as a being with the potential for great glory, as a being with the potential for moral excellence. I do not believe Weber is advocating a path to some glorious vision of human happiness at all so much as reluctantly stating what he believes to be obvious; i.e. that when will is attached to moral insight without the capacity to explain itself in terms that others can understand, then the action which results may be terribly destructive. He seems to be saying that we can do no better than to curb our moral convictions through careful consideration of consequences - chiefly the consequence that others may not see truth in quite the same light that we do. It is simply a "faute de mieux" claim. The liberal programme begins with an understanding of this insight and tries to see what can be made of it when it is made part of a set of assumptions which includes the assumption that the 'worth' of each human life is subjective.

I have not gone very far with my secondary aim of developing a rational theory of intersubjective morality nor have I fully examined communitarianism. I have, however, given considerable attention to the phenomenon of individualism and to trying to trace the conceptual links among ancient, modern and post modern thinkers. Part of my fascination with this subject stems from an observation that the further back one goes in one's research, the more elegant the articulations of philosophers seem to be. Undoubtedly part of the reason for this is a natural winnowing process that ensures that only the most interesting fragments of

the earliest sources survive. In comparison, the present philosophical domain is cluttered with all variety of 'noise'. Perhaps it is fitting then that the final thought that I offer in this work comes from the earliest source that I have cited. Heraclitus tells us that "L'homme dans la nuit se prépare une lampe bien que ses yeux soient éteints. Mais vivant il touche la mort en dormant. Éveillé il touche le dormant."¹¹³ When put together with the Logos fragments quoted above, one can derive a picture of man as a question mark in the cosmic puzzle. Freedom gives individual men the power to stumble through life as if asleep but reason, when applied to the lessons of the cosmic system, a system which includes other men, leads the wise man to see the wisdom of balance in human affairs. But the rational capacity we make so much of is both the means by which we escape the bonds of cosmic measure, for it allows us to overcome our 'natural' cravings, and the means by which the wise bind themselves to it. There is an intriguing ethical implication in this; although there is also a great deal of ambiguity. Man is an erratic element in an otherwise orderly cosmos¹¹⁴ and must use reason to figure out what the riddle of his rational capacity if he is to work out how to behave so as not to upset the cosmic system. One of the only tools that we have at our disposal to pierce the cosmic veil is communication with each other. Since we are all epistemically limited, we must constantly verify our meagre observations against the reports of others and thus are driven to rely on "that which is common" in an attempt to separate private illusions from the ones that we can

hope to share. In order to live together in a way that will permit us to take responsibility for the effects of our illusions, we must approach programmes offering a path to moral conviction with a great deal of caution. Ultimately, we need to remember that the anxiety entailed by the loss of communities of belief necessary for the preservation of strong traditions may be preferable to the comfort of moral conviction simply because it has better survival value.

NOTES

1. Ursula K. LeGuin, The Left Hand of Darkness (New York: Ace Books, 1969) p 71.
2. Walter Kaufmann (ed & trans) The Portable Nietzsche (Markham: Penguin Books ltd., 1982) p 508. As Nietzsche put it: "there are altogether no moral facts. Moral judgements agree with religious ones in believing in realities which are no realities....Moral judgements, like religious ones, belong to a state of ignorance at which the very concept of the real and the distinction between what is real and what is imaginary, are still lacking: thus "truth", at this stage, designates all sorts of things that we today call "imaginings"."
3. T.M. Robinson, Heraclitus: Fragments, (Ontario, University of Toronto Press, 1987) fragment 72.
4. Though I am not sure who is to be credited with coining the term 'communitarian', it appears to have been in common use for some time. See Amy Gutman's "Communitarian Critics of Liberalism" in Philosophy and Public Affairs. MacIntyre and Bloom both make liberal use of the term 'community' in the major works cited below.
5. Ernest Barker, ed, The Politics of Aristotle (London: Oxford University Press, 1946) 1253, a, 15.
6. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1094a in Richard Mckeon, The Basic Works of Aristotle (New York: Random House, 1941)
7. Ursula K. Leguin, The Dispossessed (New York, Avon Books, 1974). I am compelled to refer occasionally to novelists in an effort to remind myself that the more rigorous brands of philosophy which one usually relies on seem too abstract to be plausible when one is dealing with questions and issues which affect real people. Good novels put flesh on "rational actors". In this particular work, Leguin manages to develop a delightfully ambiguous relationship between individual and community precisely because she does not try to abstract away from the "human factor".
8. Ibid., p5.
9. Op. Cit., Leguin 1969.
10. Alan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind, (New York: Touchstone Edition, 1988), p.85. Bloom attributes a rather evocative metaphor, in which "civic virtue is a ghost town in which anyone can play sheriff", to Saul Bellow. Well, yes, in a way, but only with himself. But there seem to be a lot of

people trying to wear the badge and they have to come to some arrangement with each other in order to do it.

11. Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue, Notre Damme Press, Indiana, (1981) p 68.
12. John Donne, "The Anatomy of the World", in The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne (New York: The Modern Library, 1941) p. 191.
13. Roger Boesche, The Strange Liberalism of Alexis de Tocqueville (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1987) p 145.
14. Alexis De Toqueville, Democracy in America, Richard D. Heffner ed., Mentor Books, Scarborough, 1956. p.193.
15. Ibid., p.193.
16. Ibid., p.193.
17. Ibid.,p 194.
18. Ibid.,p 194.
19. Ibid, pp.145-6.
20. Ibid.,p 158.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., pp 115-156. See particularly Boesche's excellent analysis of the importance of political involvement in his chapter on Freedom as Interdependence.
23. In the Aristotelian version of Aristocracy discussed in the Politics, the political association ought to be ordered according to its purpose, which is derivable from careful consideration of nature. Aristocracy is, he claims, the best theoretical arrangement given the natural limits of individual capacities. He likens a political association to a ship in which each person has a duty relative to the 'constitution' of the ship.(Politics 1276 b) A just ordering of the political association is that which allows each to reach his natural potential. "We must not regard a citizen as belonging just to himself: we must rather regard every citizen as belonging to the state. Each is a part of the state; and the provision made for each will naturally be adjusted to the provision made for the whole." (Politics 1337 a 11 4) The good of the whole is thus, in some sense, prior to the good of the individual though the collective good will ultimately conduce to the good of individuals as well. But the 'good' in question is a collective conception thus the notion of order to the parts of

the collectivity is important in a way which is difficult to grasp without reference to community.

24. Gottfried Von Leibnitz, The Monadology, see particularly sections 7 and 11 in which it is claimed that monads move according to their own internal principles without reference to external causes.
25. Ibid., pp 194-204.
26. Boesch, loc. cit., makes much of de Tocqueville's emphasis on the practical experience in government in the New World. The acceptance of responsibility that it entails is, according to de Tocqueville, the closest that one can come to the ideal of friends associating voluntarily to accomplish some purpose. In the process, each participant is forced to express his views in an open forum and debate the merits of different issues and thus to take an active part in actualizing his own moral potential. One has great difficulty overcoming one's scepticism towards this romanticization of town meetings until one considers the alternatives. Participatory democracy of this kind has the merit of drawing each member of it into the exercise of a kind of **phronesis**. At least, it does if everyone plays by the rules and if factionalism is avoided. It seldom is.
27. Op. Cit., p 194.
28. I mean this term in the Weberian sense and will discuss its implications further on.
29. I can find no better expression for the kind of practical morality Tocqueville refers to than the Aristotelian term **phronesis**.
30. See note 17.
31. I refer here to the Aristotelian notion of 'true' aristocracy, meaning the rule of the most virtuous, as described in Book III, Part B of the Politics. Aristotle separates aristocracy from its 'wrong' counter part, oligarchy. A 'true' aristocracy is rule by the few in the interests of the many as opposed to the mere grasping of power by the few in the service of themselves.
32. I refer to Aristotle's account of the naturalness of various character types found in part one of the Politics. The idea of some persons being natural slaves is abhorrent to those who reject the idea of nature setting limits that legitimate non-natural social arrangements. On this view, the concept of slavery is a particular social idea that has no natural status whatever. See also Will Kymlicka's note 8, p 99 in

Liberalism, Community and Culture (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989)

33. Henry David Thoreau, Walden and On the Duty of Civil Disobedience (New York: Signet, 1960) The essay could have as easily been entitled "On the Responsibility of Political Morality". I take the main point to be that individuals have a duty to act in accordance with their moral convictions and thus, a duty to refrain from giving even tacit support to governments whose actions they disagree with.
34. Ibid., p.224.
35. Aristotle discusses the various forms of government that could provide the best context for the living of the 'good life' and suggests that it will exist where good men can be found who have the character and ability to be trusted to put their judgement to work on behalf of the polity. He clearly thought that these good men should have the power to allow the rest of the polity to profit from their just decisions. "Aristocracy is that name given to the species [of government] because the best (aristoi) are its rulers, or because its object is what is best (ariston) for the state and its rulers". Barker, op.cit., p.114.
36. De Tocqueville, Op. Cit., p 317.
37. Boesche, Op. Cit., chaps 8 & 9. Boesche claims that De Tocqueville favoured aristocracy out of fear that the task of actually getting a broad base of moral responsibility would be too difficult. De Tocqueville believed that freedom requires self mastery in the form of general self restraint while democracy creates the conditions for unrestrained desire. Democracy tends to need laws to try to achieve what aristocracy does by mores. It needs to be said, however, that aristocrats through history have seemed only too willing to create the conditions of fear that made formal law unnecessary for the control of the peasants. The nobility may have acted with self restraint but the peasantry generally had the limits of moral freedom made pretty clear to them.
38. Ibid., p 147. Boesche says that De Tocqueville was quite surprised to find that there was no leisured class in America. (Boesche, op.cit., p.175) "Whatever may be the facilities of acquiring information, whatever may be the profusion of easy methods and cheap science, the human mind can never be instructed and developed without devoting considerable time to these objects." (Ibid., p.172)
39. Ibid., p 147.

40. Though there is considerable range in positions of various libertarians concerning what constitutes the basic scale of individual rights, there seems to be general agreement that the right to non-interference with one's innocent projects, the right to security of person and the right to one's own quiet opinion are all derivable from practical considerations. The truly interesting arguments among libertarians seem to concern various suggestions for extending the limits of freedom by free market techniques. See for instance Tibor Machan's "Dissolving the Problem of Public Goods: Financing Government without Coercive Measures" and Walter Block's "A Free Market in Roads" in The Libertarian Reader, Tibor Machan, ed., (New Jersey: Rowman & Allan, 1982.)
41. Perhaps cacophony might be a better term for libertarians seem to be less concerned with the total sound quality than with the freedom for each to sing the song she wishes. The libertarian band would seem to prefer the discordancy of jazz to the sweetness of choral music.
42. De Tocqueville's "Journey to America" and "Selected Letters" in Roger Boesche, The Strange Liberalism of Alexis de Tocqueville (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1987) p 183.
43. Professor Narveson hates having to stop for red lights at 3 A.M. when the lights served no useful purpose other than frustrating him. (anecdotal: lecture notes winter 1985)
44. This is quite problematic for libertarians for they seem obliged by the facts of the imperfect world around them to admit the need to coerce those who are not fully rational to comply with rules set down by those who are. Their general strategy is to seek the minimal set of rules to get a state to run. See Nozik's description of the minimal state in Anarchy, State and Utopia, (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1974).
45. Op.Cit., Barker, 1253,a,16.
46. Op. Cit., MacIntyre, AV, p.52.
47. Bloom, Op.cit. Page numbers will be given in parentheses throughout this section where it is sufficiently clear that no further detail is required to fix the reference.
48. "And at the age of fifty those who have survived the tests an approved themselves the best in every task and form of knowledge must be brought at last to the goal. We shall require them to turn upward the vision of their souls and fix their gaze on that which sheds light on all..." Republic VII, 540,a. and, "Hence, a young man is not a proper hearer of lectures on political science; for he is inexperienced in the actions that occur in life.." Nicomachean Ethics, Book One,

1095,a.

49. I do not believe that an interpretation has ever been constructed that contains a compelling argument for the necessary pre-existence of prejudice to the Platonic method, though I am prepared to concede this point to Bloom's superior scholarship. Such an argument would make very interesting reading.

50. 'Haunted' has an existential sense in this sentence. Bloom means that contemporary American artists reach their audience by playing on psychological fears rather by reference to shared artistic norms.

51. Paul Churchland, in Scientific Realism and Plasticity of Mind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), argues the alternative view that "folk psychology" contains many metaphors that could be replaced with the aid of a more complete neural science. Churchland suggests that beauty is a notion that could possibly be reconceived to include more accurate descriptions of physical phenomena such as the whole range of brain states that constitute love. Perhaps he can be accused of putting too much store in the mind's plasticity; however, the suggestion that the mind could be taught to appreciate the beauty of true descriptions is not entirely implausible in light of the broad appeal that scientific modes of thought currently have.

52. Bloom, op.cit., p60. "I am not saying anything so trite as that life is fuller when people have myths to live by. I mean rather that life based on the Book is closer to the truth.." Well, one asks, what is truth if we can create it ourselves by agreeing to use the same references? Does this not result in a more complete state of relativism than that which Bloom objected to at the beginning? Presumably, Bloom could answer that truth tests for the 'Books' that any of us could write would come from some cultural criteria which would include a standard of excellence. But how do we derive the standard?

53. Op.Cit., Churchland. There are those who claim that a fully developed neural science may one day provide us with a complete set of materialist theories to describe human phenomena. Churchland is perhaps the most enthusiastic of these. I do not think that the more extreme versions of materialism hold much real hope because of the difficulty of incorporating an explanation of free will into any materialist account of causality. If will is merely an agency of material forces then one has to account for the chaotic element that human possessors of will introduce into the cosmic equation.

54. This argument is made brilliantly clear, perhaps over-brilliantly, by Gilles Lipovetsky in L'empire de l'ephemere, Gallimard, Paris, 1987. He points to the phenomenon of contemporary fashion to show that modern society has sunk into a dazed fascination with the ephemeral glitter of passing fads. He seems to think that this pre-occupation with appearance is a sign that contemporary society has no depth whatever. A debatable interpretation of modern a phenomenon which seems to be rendered groundless by the success of his book. If people in high society have lost interest in thought, why would they buy a book which challenges them to think?
55. Kymlicka, op.cit., p62.
56. Ibid., p.62.
57. Ibid., p. 63.
58. Napoleon A. Chagnon, Yanomamo: The Fierce People (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968)
59. Jerzy Wojciechowski, "Progress of Knowledge and Right-Left Dichotomy: Are Existing Ideologies Adequate?" in Man and Development, India, March 1989.
60. This little tidbit of cultural insight was dropped from the lips of a Spanish professor during a brief exchange of views about the relative merits of our two cultures. According to her, the main difference is that in Canada, "everything works and it is all very boring".
61. Mervin Peake's, Titus Groan and Gormenghast (London: Eyre & Spottiswode, 1946) are well worth reading in this context.
62. Several years ago, a friend of mine returned to command the regiment he had left four years earlier. He was appalled to discover the extent of change in what he had always considered to be the traditions of his regiment. On investigation, he found that every change could be explained by someone but none had any idea of the purpose that each tradition served. He was so intrigued that he sent a plea around to all of the officers who had served with the unit during the previous 40 years to try to find out what the 'real' traditions were. He eventually gave up, issued his own decrees, and got on with creating his own 'traditions'. Two years after his departure, the traditions had changed again.
63. Kymlicka, op.cit., p57.
64. Ibid.

65. Ian Hacking, Representing and Intervening, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983) p66. "It has been said that successive and competing theories within the same domain 'speak different languages'. They cannot strictly be compared to each other nor translated into each other. The languages of different theories are the linguistic counterparts of the different worlds we inhabit".
66. MacIntyre, op. cit., p58.
67. This is a rather loose reconstruction of MacIntyre's chapters on liberalism and its difficulties found in Op.Cit., pp49-65. He discusses emotivism as the belief that moral debate is eristic.
68. Though there is no citation in MacIntyre, the hypothesis could have been inspired by Walter M. Miller's science fiction classic, A Canticle for Leibowitz (New York: Bantam Books, 1982). The task of preserving remnants of pre-holocaust writings is taken up by a religious order. When one of the more troublesome acolytes falls into an old construction sight and discovers a lunch box with a shopping list and a blueprint, both are considered to be major finds.
69. It does not matter here whether one goes at the task of testing the extension of complete theories, à la Popper, or one merely tests hypotheses as they arise, à la Carnap. As long as one is on a quest for scientific truth, one can develop the means to test causal conjectures by keeping to the simple criterion of predictive capacity - not that the task itself is simple. The scientific realist does not generally try to suggest answers to meaning of life questions but rather restricts himself to more directly verifiable claims. See Hacking, op.cit.
70. Hacking, op.cit.,**** Hacking describes Carnap's definition of science as centred on manipulation of nature. The method involves careful experimentation, testing, theory construction by reference to results of experimentation and, finally, theoretic adaption to new observations. It is in the actual handling of nature that correspondence and verification have a place.
71. Ibid., pp65-76. According to Hacking, the term electron referred to an entity with slightly different qualities in each of the theories put forward by Millikan, Lorentz and Bohr.
72. Transcendant rather than transcendental to avoid the confusion introduced by Kant.

73. See for instance, Machan, op.cit. and A. Phillips Griffiths (ed) Of Liberty, Cambridge University Press, 1983, for anthologies of contemporary libertarian thought.
74. The distinction I make here is Weberian and will be discussed in some detail further on.
75. The trouble is, I believe that MacIntyre does believe this to be the case. What else can the claim that reason cannot suffice to establish moral authority mean when it is stated in conjunction with a claim that participation in a moral tradition commits one to its truths? Even after months of thought, I have difficulty deciding whether this is just an appalling philosophic heresy or a legitimate claim which I have failed to understand.
76. "We must be content then, in speaking of such subjects and with such premises to indicate the truth roughly and in outline...for it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision just so far as the nature of the subject admits" (Nicomachean Ethics, 1094b2)
77. But then, given what we have just said about truth being established by commitment, one would not have a problem since the proponents of every tradition would only be able to speak to people who could understand them and thus to people who agreed with them. Moral onanism?
78. Robinson, op.cit. "The one, the truly wise, is to understand the one by which all things are directed" (frag 41). The message is ambiguous but seems to be clear in so far as it claims that one can seek wisdom only by seeking an explanation which accounts for, literally, everything. Great, but as Heraclitus realized and MacIntyre does not, at least not apparently, the 'One' that we are to seek is terribly obscure and is almost certainly beyond mere human capacity.
79. From Heraclitus' enigmatic allusion to the hidden harmony of opposites to Aristotle's more explicit claims concerning the harmonizing effects of nature, early philosophers seemed quite clear that debates about how man ought to conduct himself were debates about what would lead to social harmony. This clarity seems to have disappeared in modern debate.
80. Martha Nussbaum, "New York Review of Books", December 7, 1989, p36, suggests that the reference to St Benedict is meant to convey approval of a monastic model of community of a particular kind. I find this interpretation fairly plausible given MacIntyre's general tone and the direction that his arguments seem to go.

81. WRWJ pp139-141. In his discussion of Aristotle's practical syllogism, MacIntyre explains that the major premise always entails a teleological claim which Aristotle means as true. According to MacIntyre, using practical reason to judge moral action assumes that the judgement is rendered with a full understanding of the rules of the game. He uses the analogy of a hockey player's move being right or wrong relative to the context of the game as formulated by its rules. In the Aristotelian moral 'game', the rules are formed by the understanding one has of the 'Good' to which all things end. This understanding is derivable from intelligent contemplation of nature and the perception that all things have a purpose.
82. C.S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (New York, MacMillan Publishing, 1950) p. 127. This book offers a coherent story of a completely imaginary world in which the meaning of actions is relative to the existence of a magical lion capable of singing a magical world into existence. In a not completely trivial sense, the characters who inhabit this world would seem to meet the requirements of community as I have described them. They all have functions to perform as part of a telos which, unfortunately as far as my children are concerned, does not happen to exist.
83. The intended order of Heraclitus' fragments is still open to discussion despite the best efforts of some very astute philosophers. For example, Kirk seems to agree with Aristotle that frs. 1 and 2 should be placed at the beginning of the work though he argues that there seems to be a gap between the two which would accommodate his rendering of fr. 114 very nicely. (G.S. Kirk, Heraclitus, the Cosmic Fragments (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1954) pp32-65.) Kahn accepts fr. 1 but inserts fr. 34 between it and fr. 2 (Charles H. Kahn, The Art and Thought of Heraclitus (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1971) p28.), while Axelos groups frs. 1 & 2 followed immediately by frs. 72 & 108. (Kostas Axelos, Heraclite et la Philosophie (Paris: les Editions de Minuit, 1962) pp57-58) The body of the work has a kaleidoscopic quality, providing a new pattern, and thus a new meaning, with every new arrangement of the parts. Keeping this in mind I have grouped those fragments which deal with the Logos and which, I believe, have considerable relevance here, as follows:

50. It is wise, listening not to me but to the report, to agree that all things are one. (Kahn, op. cit. p45)

1. Although this account holds forever, men ever fail to comprehend, both before hearing it and once they have heard. Although all things come to pass in accordance with this account, men are like the untried when they try such words as

I set forth, distinguishing each according to its nature and telling how it is. But other men are oblivious of what they do awake, just as they are forgetful of what they do asleep. (Ibid, p29.)

114. Speaking with understanding they must hold fast to what is shared by all, as a city holds to its law, and even more firmly. For all human laws are nourished by the divine one. It prevails as it will and suffices for all and is more than enough. (Ibid, p43.)

113. Thinking is shared by all. (Ibid, p 43.)

112. Thinking well is the greatest excellence and wisdom: to act and speak what is true, perceiving all things according to their nature. (Ibid, p 43.)

2. Although the account is shared, most men live as though their thinking were a private possession. (Ibid, p29.)

Rendering the above into modern English, one gets something like:

According to this account, wisdom consists of perceiving the underlying unity of the universe. Although it is universally apparent, most people have trouble understanding what is going on even when I explain it to them carefully. Some act as if asleep while some are even worse off, acting as if they were permanently unconscious. Once people understand, they can only communicate their understanding through what is common. Thinking is common. Thinking well and speaking truth about things as they are is the greatest achievement. Although the account should be public, most

84. I take the central argument to be that moral agreement is highly desirable but not possible across the whole of humanity. The first chapter of After Virtue is quite explicit on this score and the theme is picked up repeatedly in Whose Justice, Which Rationality?
85. See David Ingram's Habermas and the Dialectic of Reason (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) for a clear analysis of the somewhat difficult work of Habermas. Ingram interprets Habermas as intending, in part, to refute the claims of culture relativists "who argue that occidental rationality merely reflects the peculiar standpoint of scientific culture....by showing that the relativist cannot criticize rationalism without presupposing its superiority." p23
86. An acquaintance who is a Canadian Artillery Officer returned from a tour of duty as a member of the United Nations force stationed in between the Iraqi and Iranian forces with a

harrowing tale of Iraqi tactics. Apparently, they would drop several artillery rounds of chemical blister agent into an Iranian town square and wait until the people started to come up out of their family bunkers in panic before opening up with a barrage of high explosive. They were, reputedly, quite proud of having developed this tactic since it provided a more efficient means of 'destroying targets' of this type than any tactic yet developed.

87. Max Weber, "Foundations of Social Theory", in Weber Selections in Translation, Eric Mathews (trans) (Cambridge: University Press, 1987) pp28-29.
88. Ibid p. 28
89. See Kymlicka's objection to reasons that are not available for inspection discussed above.
90. Mathews, loc cit.
91. Mathews, loc cit.
92. Weber includes the whole gamut of side effects such as intentional, accidental and long term collateral along with directly intended results under the term 'consequences'.
93. Gerth and Mills, (trans) From Max Weber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958) p155. This work will be referred to in the main text hereinafter as (FMW).
94. Anthony Giddens, Capitalism and Modern Social Theory, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge), 1971, pp 134/5.
95. Taken from Twilight of the Idols, in The Portable Nietzsche, Walter Kaufman (ed) (Kingsport: Viking Press Inc., 1968) p501.
96. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, (trans) Max Weber: The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations (Illinois: The Free Press, 1947) p116.
97. There is also ample evidence that pure practical reason applied to human relations necessarily leads to bureaucratized relationships which, by their very nature, lack the capacity to add very much of worth to the human condition. But this argument can be overcome by suggesting that reason itself is sufficient to the task of setting limits on the perfection of justice because reason allows us to see the consequences of trying to instantiate a perfect system. Reason is itself the best defence against the tyranny of reason.

98. We appear to be on the edge of a new age of environmental awareness that seems to be exerting pressure on governments and corporate bodies across a broad spectrum to cooperate in the common cause of environmental protection. The logic behind the environmental movement is quite interesting in this context since it seems to call for the adoption of a number of protective steps that cut into cultural domains.
99. Jan Narveson, The Libertarian Idea (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988) p118.
100. Ibid., p122.
101. Actually, it has been. Nozik's appeal to intuition set him up for a great deal of criticism. Narveson makes no such attempt and for this reason alone, is well worth consulting.
102. This my own rendering of the libertarian thesis however the gist of it is to be found in Narveson, op.cit., Part One. I have, however, blended in some of both De Tocqueville and Heraclitus. I hope, sometime in the future to spell out this thesis in considerably more detail but have avoided doing so now in order to restrict the scope of the present work to manageable proportions.
103. I take MacIntyre's suggestion that the enlightenment project failed (AV, chap 4) and his framing of contemporary moral impasse under the heading of what he calls emotivism as indicating his belief that liberals choose rational analysis over telos for purely arbitrary reasons.
104. Ibid., p.123.
105. Charles Taylor, "Atomism" in Alkis Kontos (ed) Powers, Possessions and Freedom (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979) p39.
106. Ibid., p60.
107. Robert Nozik, Anarchy, State and Utopia (New York: Basic Books, 1974) pp48-51.
108. "Authentic values are those by which a life can be lived, which can form a people that produces great deeds and thoughts. ... It is not the truth of their thought that distinguishes them, but its capacity to generate culture." Bloom, Op. Cit., p.201. The tone Bloom uses often reproaches the Americans for their lack of cultural ambition.
109. Narveson is particularly clear on this issue. "Morality in general, and liberty in particular, are to be defended here as means, not as ends." Op. Cit., p. 166. There are also

repeated, and amusing, allusions to the demarcation between moral and aesthetic judgements in the world of classical music. "A terrible performance of **"Hammerklavier"** is an aesthetic outrage, a sin, an offense against everything that is true and good - but even so the miserable cur who inflicts it upon us may not literally be molested as he slinks from the stage, nor slung into the local jail to atone for his errors. Whereas the person who picks his pocket on the way out...is eligible for just this treatment." p. 121.

110. Boesche, Op. Cit., pp. 194-204.

111. Loc. Cit.

112. "The only part of the conduct of anyone for which he is amenable to society is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is absolute." J.S. Mill, On Liberty, (New York: Penguin Books, 1984) p. 69.

113. Frag 26, Dumont

114. I do not mean to imply that the universe is intelligibly ordered, only that many phenomena have a consistency of occurrence that makes it seem so. Moreover, as Heraclitus also said; "There is more order in a heap of sweepings..." than man can appreciate. In so far as things in nature appear orderly, they seem to have some natural function that gives us hope for some level of intelligibility. But what is the function of intelligence? If it has a natural function, what is it? If it is just part of the chaos of nature then it has potential in many directions, not the least of which is self destructive.

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