



www.PreciousHeart.net/ti

Volume 3 – 2011

The Self, Individual Moral Responsibility and Community

Dr. Edwin Etieyibo, Ph.D., Department of Philosophy
School of Social Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg, South Africa¹

Abstract.....	2
Introduction.....	2
I. Foundations of IMP and CMP.....	5
II. The Self and Moral Outlook of IMP and CMP.....	6
III. IMP and CMP, Norms and Goal.....	8
IV. Virtues and Flourishing	10
V. IMP, CMP and Civic Virtues.....	13
VI. Civic Virtues and Wellbeing	16
VII. IMP, Virtues and Community.....	19
Conclusion.....	25

¹ See www.Wits.ac.za and edwin.etieyibo@wits.ac.za.

Abstract

The debate between individualism or an individualistic moral philosophy and communitarianism or a communitarian moral philosophy centers, on the one hand, on the nature of the self and, on the other, on moral responsibility. A communitarian moral philosophy defends an embedded view of the self and communal moral responsibility while an individualistic moral philosophy defends an unembedded notion of the self and individual moral responsibility. The individualistic moral philosophy's view of the self has been criticised by communitarians and others as deficient, as remarkably too thin and impoverished to sustain a robust conception of a good life for human beings. I defend a version of this criticism by arguing that a moral outlook that upholds individual moral responsibility or oriented towards it breaks down community.

Introduction

Some of the things that make philosophy endearing and fascinating—whether as a discipline or an activity—are the sorts of the issues it engages with and the way it engages with them. One such issue, a perennial one² and which has pitched advocates of liberalism (or individualism) with defenders of communitarianism in the last couple of decades, concerns the *ontic* of the nature of the self or to put it differently and succinctly, the question of the self and its relationship with community.³ On this issue, the conceptualization of the self from the standpoint of liberalism is generally taken to be different from that of communitarianism. Whereas liberalism

² Some of the most notable enduring issues in philosophy involve being (and its nature), mind and body, free will and determinism, nature of truth, and the nature and existence of God. I think that the question of the self and its relation to the community can be added to this list.

³ There are two dimensions about the nature of the self. The first involves the constitutivity of the self and the second is about its substantive content. The former, which I am interested in in this paper, concerns the issue of what determines the self, and the latter concerns the question of whether the self is inherently good or bad. On the question of the substantive content of the self, there are two extreme positions, the *optimistic* and *pessimistic* views. The *optimistic* view assumes that people are basically benign and reasonable by nature and the *pessimistic* view assumes that people are nasty and brutish, or at least governed by impulses and other irrational forces.

theorizes the self individualistically or as unencumbered, communitarianism conceptualizes it corporately⁴ or as encumbered.

If liberalism and communitarianism are respectively individualistic and corporate about the nature of the self, then the moral theories that flow from such metaphysical standpoints about the self would broadly reflect such postures. That is to say that insofar as liberalism is oriented towards the individual, its account of ethical norms and moral responsibility would *ipso facto* be individualistic, and that of communitarianism would be corporate insofar as it is oriented towards the community.⁵ Thus in this paper I will refer to the liberal account of the nature of the self and the moral outlook that such a view generates as an *individualistic moral philosophy* (hereinafter IMP) and the communitarian account of the nature of the self and the moral outlook that such a view generates as a *communitarian moral philosophy* (hereinafter CMP), where IMP embodies individual-oriented norms of conduct and CMP embodies norms that are community-oriented.

Critics of IMP, in particular communitarian critics claim that IMP is deficient. Call this the “deficiency criticism”. There are two related ways that this deficiency is cashed out. The first is in terms of its notion of the self and the other is about the moral life that such a notion supports. On this criticism, the central thought is that IMP’s idea of the self is remarkably thin and impoverished; and because it is so thin and impoverished that it perhaps is incapable of providing us a robust moral ideal and/or of sustaining a rich conception of a good life for human beings. The main idea here is that given the paucity of a moral ideal IMP cannot be called upon to support projects and commitments that can only be sustained in political communities of a

⁴ My use of the term corporate in this paper is meant strictly as a contrast to individualism and refers to communal or a group that has shared existence and experience. In this sense the term is non-individualistic and is to be taken to refer exclusively to community.

⁵ In this paper, I will be using community rather broadly—whether in a sense in which a *community* is natural or artificial—to refer to any groupings that could be said to transcend the individual and which may impose certain limits and obligations on the individual. The idea such community would play on such concepts as solidarity, of people being bond by a shared concern, of relationships as forming the basis of duties and reciprocity, etc. For the different ways that community has been conceptualized see Jack Crittenden, “Veneration of Community”, *Beyond Individualism: Reconstituting the Liberal Self*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp129-146.

certain kind, in which common affairs, and the virtues that sustain them, are constitutive of a life well lived. In this paper I want to defend a version of the “deficiency criticism”. The version I defend is that a moral outlook that upholds individual moral responsibility or oriented towards it breaks down community.

To argue for above claim I’ll be examining IMP and CMP with regards to their various conceptions of the self and the norms that such conceptions generate. In particular, I’ll be looking at the relationship between IMP’s and CMP’s conceptions of the self and the goals that they seek to actualize, on the one hand, and the implications of this for individual and community flourishing, on the other. The primary question that I am interested in is this: does the foundation of IMP undermine the actualization of its goal? Stated differently, if the foundation of IMP is individualistic or anti-communitarian can such a foundation undercut some of the very same praiseworthy virtues it seeks to uphold? I shall argue that if it is the case that the virtues are integral to the flourishing of the individual and if they are best exercised in a political community of a certain sort by orienting itself towards individual moral responsibility IMP undermines these same virtues and consequently breaks down community.

I want to begin by making five claims. The first claim is that both IMP and CMP embody the same goal—the flourishing or wellbeing of citizens or, if you like, the individuals that make up a body polity. The second is that certain virtues are integral to such flourishing. Thirdly, that some praiseworthy civic virtues are affirmed by both IMP and CMP. Fourth, that although both IMP and CMP affirm similar civic virtues they have different foundations. Lastly, that the foundation of IMP seems to undermine the very same virtues it seeks to uphold and for this it breaks down community. I take the first claim to be straightforwardly undisputable given both the nature of norms and of virtues. I will say a bit more about this in section III. In section I, I’ll discuss part of the fourth claim focusing on a couple of differences between IMP and CMP re their foundations. The second, third and fifth claims are not uncontroversial and need to be argued for. I try to do this in sections IV-VII as part of my defense of the version of the deficiency criticism.

I. Foundations of IMP and CMP

The ontology or foundation of IMP is in a lot of ways different from that of CMP. These ontologies generate different conceptions of the nature of the self.⁶ The self for IMP is an unencumbered or unembedded self. It is a self that stands in a distance in terms of its relations to other things, other selves, values, its experiences, commitments, etc. On the other hand, the self for CMP is encumbered or embedded. It is a self that stands not at a distance in terms of its relations to other things, but *with* them.

A helpful way of looking at the notion of *embeddedness* and *unembeddedness* of the self is to approach it from the idea of the constitutivity of the self, that is how it is constituted ontologically. Call this is the “constitutivity thesis”, the thesis that if the self *is* or *exists* then it must be constituted by something. The view of an embedded notion of the self which is the view of the self from a CMP standpoint holds that the self or individual is constituted by the community that it belongs to. This is a holistic, social, thickly-constituted conception of the self. By contrast, an unembedded self, the view of the self from an IMP standpoint holds that the self or individual is constituted by nothing other than itself. This is the view of the self that Michael Sandel describes as putting a distance between the self and its experiences, aims and ends. It is a view that “rules out the possibility of...*constitutive* ends”, that takes selves as “free to join in voluntary association with others and only capable of community not in the constitutive sense but in the cooperative sense.”⁷ Or what Charles Taylor calls an atomistic view of the self, the view that individuals are self-*sufficient* and may develop and exercise their capacities *qua* human beings independently of (any) society.⁸

⁶ Since every social political philosophy contains an implicit or explicit conception of human nature or the self we would expect liberalism (or IMP) and communitarianism (or CMP) to endorse some particular views of the self. See Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, Totowa, NJ, Rowman and Allanheld, 1983.

⁷ Michael Sandel, “The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self” in Shlomo Avineri and Avner De-Shalit, *Communitarianism and Individualism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp.18-19.

⁸ Taylor not only criticizes the atomistic view of the self he defends as well the Aristotelian view that “Man is a social animal, indeed a political animal, because he is not self-sufficient alone, and in an important sense is not self-sufficient outside a polis.” He develops this view and his objection to the atomistic view that “men are self-sufficient [Footnote continued on next page ...]

On the unembedded view of the self, the self could be said to be aloof and a voluntary self. It is shaped by its own internal critical reflective nature and by itself is free to choose particular life plans, projects, goals, relationships and obligations. A voluntary self chooses its ends for itself. It is only contingently related to these ends and could set them aside by an act of will. The important question that this view asks is, “Has the self *chosen* its ends by an act of will?” And on the embedded view of the self, the self is non-aloof, a non-voluntary self—it is a cognitive self. It is shaped by the rich social context of its very being and chooses and pursues life plans, projects, goals, relationships and obligations on the basis of this. A cognitive self doesn’t choose ends for itself since they don’t lie outside of it. The ends are a part of the self and are discovered by it. That is, the self is related to its ends not contingently but as a knowing subject to the objects of understanding. The important question that this view asks is, “Has the self *discovered* the ends made available to it by its community?”

Communitarians claim that the unembedded account of the self espoused by IMP is deficient and that the embedded view of the self is a richer and more plausible account of the self. I do agree with this claim and will show going forward in the paper that the unembedded view of the self is misleading and flawed. In particular, that it cannot be called upon to maintain a shared concern and to support affairs and activities that can only be supported by a view of the self that is oriented towards communal responsibility.

II. The Self and Moral Outlook of IMP and CMP

To speak of the ontologies of IMP and CMP in terms of the notion of *unembeddedness* and *embeddedness* of the self is not simply to rest them on two separate pedestals but also to first think of them or present them as metaphysical positions before the moral and political outlooks that they suggest. As metaphysical standpoints the notion of *unembeddedness* and *embeddedness* is an articulation of some particular ideas about *beingness*, in this instance the *beingness* of the self. In their moral outlook they both prescribe norms of conduct and

outside of society” in an influential essay titled “Atomism”. See Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp187-210.

foster some standard of behavior consistent with their various conceptions of the self. And in their political garb they kindle all sorts of ideas about social life and politics which are either individualistic or community-centred.

To take the moral outlook that arises from the view of the self championed by IMP and CMP consider what each will say with regards to the locus of moral responsibility. Since their conceptions of the self are different we would at least on the strength of that expect that what they will say about the locus of moral responsibility will be different. IMP will situate moral responsibility within the individual's interests and choice as they are determined by the individual whereas CMP will situate it on the individual's interest and choice as they are determined by the community that the individual belongs to. This is expected given that on the constitutivity dimension of the self CMP takes the self to be constituted by the community whereas IMP takes it not to be constituted by the community.

If we look closely at IMP's *beingness* of the self it is clear that its moral outlook has to be straightforwardly individualistic; it has to prescribe moral norms and holds out ends on the basis of the *self's* interest. Its account of moral responsibility is wedged around the individual, hence it speaks of individual moral responsibility. That is, its moral norms as well as the story it tells about ends are circumscribed not just by the individual's choice or act of will but also such act of will is expected to be the primary determinant of moral obligations. Tersely, this has been described as the view that the right is prior to or independent of any conception of the good.⁹ But this is quite different from the moral outlook of CMP, which takes the good to be prior to the right. Given CMP's *beingness* of the self it is clear that its moral outlook is straightforwardly community-oriented; it has to prescribe moral norms and holds out ends not on the basis of the *self's* interest but its belonging to the community. That is, it has to take the community of which the individual is part of as the basis of moral obligations.¹⁰ On this view, moral responsibility is

⁹ Or as communitarians like Sandel and others have put it variously, the view that "the right is unconditionally prior to the good", "justice has moral primacy", "justice has justificatory primacy",

¹⁰ There do also seem to be a difference on how social policies are understood as far the substantive content of the dimension of the self is concerned. Since the *optimistic* view [Footnote continued on next page ...]

wedged around the community, hence it speaks of communal moral responsibility.

III. IMP and CMP, Norms and Goal

Moral philosophies prescribe norms of conduct. For example, as a general rule, utilitarianism advocates for the maximization of the happiness or welfare of those affected by an act; Kantian ethics prescribes action done in conformity with some universal standard (duty or the categorical imperative); and virtue ethics recommends acting in accordance with virtues. Beyond prescribing norms of behavior and being wedded to some foundation moral philosophies embody a goal or *telos*. If a particular moral philosophy prescribes some norms of conduct, then it embodies a specific goal associated with its normative prescription. Thus, simply in virtue of its prescribing the maximization of the welfare of those affected by an act it is clear that utilitarianism embodies the goal of promoting aggregate welfare. In this section, I examine the goal of IMP and CMP in relationship to their norms.

IMP and CMP are moral philosophies that prescribe norms of behavior. For whereas the norms of conduct prescribed by IMP is individualistic and limited by the conception of the individual or self that it subscribes to, that of CMP is corporate and limited by the extent it takes the self to be shaped by the community. That is to say that although both IMP's and CMP's norms of behavior are built on ideas of the self, their notions of the nature of the norms are different partly because of their different theses about the nature of the self. IMP doesn't see the norms as legitimizing a community-wide set of obligations such as sacrificing the individual's interests for the common good no matter what. Contrarily, CMP sees the norms as legitimizing a community-wide set of obligations, whereby the

sees individuals as basically benign and reasonable by nature defenders of the view are likely to see individuals as inherently inclined to do what is right and beneficial for the commons. Hence, liberals in particular libertarians generally urge the government not to interfere with choices of individuals and to allow individuals to set the collective and personal course on their own. On the other hand, since the *pessimistic* view assume that people are nasty and brutish, or at least governed by impulses and other irrational forces defenders of this view are likely to see individuals as not as inherently inclined to do what is right and beneficial for the commons. Hence, social conservatives will likely seek to imbue people with values of what is right and wrong.

common good could be said to richly determine the interests and aims of the individual.¹¹ Hence, IMP commonly speaks of individual rights and of the importance of respecting them, whereas CMP talks of the rights of the individual within certain well-defined duties in a community. To put it differently, while IMP celebrates and promotes the individual, doing so within strictly defined abstract rights, CMP celebrates and promotes the individual, doing so only within the synergy between the individual and the community. Nevertheless, both embody the same goal of the wellbeing of citizens within a given polity. This is the first of my five claims.

But how can it be said that both IMP and CMP embody the same goal of the wellbeing of citizens even though the latter is limited by the conception of the community and the former by that of the individual? On the face of it this seems problematic, but on closer examination the sense in which both moral philosophies embody the same goal of the wellbeing of citizens becomes clear. The norms that they both endorse center on the individual even though they differ as to the role the community plays both in the shaping of the individual and such norms. I take both IMP and CMP to be seeking to address one fundamental question: what norms will be appropriate in organizing such and such state of affairs so as to maximize the potentials of and for the individual? That is they are both interested on how best to promote and celebrate the individual. Simply put, the norms that both moral philosophies take to be central connect in important ways to our wellbeing. This in the first place is one of the primary reasons why these philosophies or the norms they subscribe to would commend themselves to us. The point is that we are not interested in the norms in and of themselves nor only because they are for us or directed at us, but also because they target something essential about us—how we ought to live in a way that is appropriate for humans. So although the norms of IMP are limited by the

¹¹ Think of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's idea of the *general will* (or common good) as giving us an idea of what it will mean to talk of a view that legitimizes a community-wide set of obligations, a view according to which the individual—either on her own (voluntarily) or by being compelled (involuntarily)—aligns his or her will with that of the *general will*. See for example Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract*, 1762, bk. 1, cp. 7 § 8; and Andrew Levine, *The General Will: Rousseau, Marx, Communism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.18.

conception of the individual and that of CMP by the community they both are connected with individual wellbeing and concerned with how the individual should live so as to maximize his or her potentials or welfare.

Of course, norms of conduct would be pointless if they do significant harm to both the individual and the community.¹² As well, it will be a pointless exercise to try to foster strong communities if doing so compromises or depreciates the welfare of individuals that make up that community. Thus it could be said that the life of a community is the life of living well just as politics and the political life is one of wellbeing. The point is that politics, for that matter is a “handmaiden” or attendant of the individual; it is an attendant insofar as it organizes conflicting interests in society for the purpose of not only maximizing benefits for citizens but also creating the best possible conditions for the realization of wellbeing. A particular moral philosophy or the norms it endorses or even for that matter a political system can be said to succeed or fail simply on the strength of the fostering or realization of this goal.

IV. Virtues and Flourishing

My second claim is that certain virtues are integral to human or individual flourishing.¹³ The term virtue comes from the Latin word “virtus” which literally means being “moral” or “good”. Thus a virtue can be understood as the dispositions of character that enables an individual to act morally where such behaviour is necessary for the attainment of the internal goods of practices of excellence necessary for wellbeing. The practices of excellence are necessary for wellbeing insofar as they give rise to certain goods that are internal to them. And being virtuous is simply behaving in ways or engaging in particular

¹² This point seems utilitarian but it is not insofar as harm is understood broadly. Thus, we can say it is consistent with moral theories like Kantian ethics. For indeed, even Kant could not have thought that we have a duty to act if acting according to the duty will cause the destruction of humanity. For it does seem that such a “duty” cannot be a duty since it does not respect one’s humanity, as I think Kant understands humanity. Thus, the duty to respect one’s humanity and the humanity of those of others could be taken to be a duty not to harm or destroy what is essential to our humanity, i.e. our rational nature.

¹³ By saying that certain virtues are integral to wellbeing or flourishing I follow the view that understands the virtues as necessary to attaining the goods internal to practices of excellences. See Alasdair account of virtues in *After Virtue* second edition with postscript, Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.

activities that allow us to achieve those standards of excellence which define those activities.¹⁴ So to take the example of the virtues of courage and moderation, which are cardinal virtues in most topology of virtues and certainly in Aristotle's.¹⁵ How can it be said that courage and moderation are necessary for wellbeing?

First of all, courage is indispensable for human life because various risks—no matter how small they may seem—are always undertaken in the pursuit of various goods that are important for flourishing. From the risk of losing big on investment in one's career or the stock markets to the risk of being heartbroken in a relationship. From the risk of being hit by a vehicle as one commutes every day to the risk of dying in defence of one's country or political community. We are always engaged in one form of risk or activities that place us in presence of different risks. Thus, one can say that life is risky or that we live in the midst or presence of risks. Since we are not in a position to avoid all risks in our life we do need some courage to deal with those that are unavoidable or as economists would put it we need to insure ourselves against the "risk of luck". Even if we suppose that all or most risks are avoidable trying to avoid them would mean losing out on the goods that come out of certain risk-taking. And losing out on those goods will certainly affect how well one flourishes. Moreover, courage commends certain activities and practices and enables one that has the virtue to act in appropriate ways and to achieve the goods that are necessary for wellbeing. For example, in situations of war or conflict, a courageous person knows

¹⁴ Alasdair provides one of the best accounts of the practices of excellence in *After Virtue*: "By a 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods intrinsic to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended."

¹⁵ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Terrence Irwin (trans.), and Hackett Publishing Co. 2nd edition, 1999. And for a discussion of Aristotle's view of wellbeing and virtues see Douglas S. Hutchinson, *The Virtues of Aristotle*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986; Gavin Lawrence, "Aristotle and the Ideal Life," *Philosophical Review*, 102 (1993), pp1–34; Edward Halper, "The Unity of the Virtues in Aristotle", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 17 (1999), pp115–44; Stephen M. Gardiner, "Aristotle's Basic and Non-Basic Virtues", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 20 (Summer 2001), pp261–95.

when to march on and to retreat; and in adversity, how to bear up and to give up. The individual by so acting attains various goods that enhance her life overall. Thus, it can be said that the virtue of courage enables a person to behave in ways that are important to her attainment of the internal goods of practices of excellence necessary for her wellbeing.

Like courage, the virtue of moderation also enables a person to behave in ways that are important for her attainment of the internal goods of practices of excellence necessary for her wellbeing. Epicurus captures brilliantly the virtue of moderation and its connection to wellbeing when he says: “*Be moderate in order to taste the joys of life in abundance.*” This quote is encapsulated by one of Epicurus’ principal doctrine that speaks generally about living wisely, well, and justly “It is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely and well and justly and it is impossible to live wisely and well and justly without living a pleasant life.”¹⁶ The point here is that the absence of certain virtues such as that of moderation may be indicative of a lack of knowledge on the part of the person that lacks such a virtue and would prevent him or her from living fully well. And conversely, living wisely and well may be indicative of a person that is moderate both in disposition and in habit.

There are several reasons for thinking that moderation is central to the attainment of the internal goods of practices of excellence necessary for an individual’s wellbeing. First of all, moderation keeps in check certain desires for bodily goods. This is important because uncontrolled bodily desire is costly and can do a lot of harm.¹⁷ For one it can undermine our relationships with others. Also, if left unchecked it can threaten our health. We can say that an individual that leaves unchecked his or her bodily desires is immoderate with regards to desires of the body. For such a person, the sole preoccupation is that of the body, of himself and the satisfaction of his bodily desire. Because he has such a fixation his frustration is likely to increase whenever he fails to satisfy such a desire, not to mention the fact that he is likely to lose out on other goods integral for

¹⁶ Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines*, translated by Robert Drew Hicks, 1925, doctrine five.

¹⁷ The case of the rapist or sexual harasser, insofar as either exemplifies the idea of the satisfaction of bodily desire do seem to suggest what may be wrong about what is harmful about immoderation and commendable about moderation.

wellbeing. That is to say because an individual that has an uncontrolled bodily desire wants to always satisfy the desire he more than likely has less time for others, less time to develop and maintain friendship and other relationships, and sustain a family—practices which are important for flourishing. Hence, we can say this about immoderation with regards to a desire in particular and one’s life in general: the more an individual gets from satisfying a particular desire the less overall satisfaction the individual is likely to get both in terms of that desire and life as a whole. As the economic law of marginal utility poignantly reminds us that there is a decline in the marginal utility that one derives from consuming each additional unit of a particular product as one increases consumption of that product. Simply put, the vice of immoderation with regards to particular activities undermines a practice of excellence and conversely, the virtue of moderation encourages such practice simply because immoderation pushes an individual to constantly seek personal aggrandisement or to enmesh oneself in one’s *self* to the neglect of goods that are integral for wellbeing. But moderation with regards to particular activities promotes a practice of excellence insofar as it enables one to also seek goods such as friendship, relationships that are integral for wellbeing.

V. IMP, CMP and Civic Virtues

In this section I want to discuss some civic virtues that I think are affirmed by both IMP and CMP (this is my third claim).¹⁸ Civic virtues relate to the good behavior of citizens in society or a social setting. This emerges partly from the meaning of virtue as the dispositions of character that enables an individual to act morally and partly from the meaning of civic as living in society.¹⁹ If virtue is

¹⁸ The claim that both IMP and CMP affirm civic virtues is not inconsistent with the view that there is a tension between a liberal commitment to individual autonomy and civic virtues. David Hogan states this tension this way, “Arguably, the greatest single challenge confronting a post-liberal-democratic theory of education and citizenship is to find an intellectually coherent way of reconciling a liberal-commitment to individual autonomy and a civic republican commitment to civic virtue.” *Autonomy and Civic Virtue: A Republican Education Fantasy*, *Change: Transformations in Education*, 3(1):17 May, 2000. The tension I claim exists insofar as liberalism requires citizens to be ideal liberals and not minimal liberals.

¹⁹ Etymologically civic is derived from the Latin word “civitas” which means “civilized” or living in a city.

about being good and civic is about being civilized or living in society, then, civic virtues can be said to be the cultivation of habits of personal living that are important for moral conduct necessary for the practices of excellence necessary for the flourishing of both the individual and community. Examples of some notable civic virtues include open-mindedness and toleration (of diversity of views, opinions, beliefs, values, etc.).

Open-mindedness and toleration seem to be encompassed by what John Rawls calls “reasonableness”.²⁰ He, of course, adds another virtue which he calls “fair-mindedness”. As Rawls puts it, the political values selected at the original position by individual Archimedean choosers thereby set the parameters of the political discourse regarding society’s governing principles which “include not only appropriate use of the fundamental concepts of judgment, inference, and evidence, but also the *virtues of reasonableness and fair-mindedness*.”²¹ Reasonableness relates to public reason while fair-mindedness relates to justice. By public reason is meant circumscribing one’s public (and sometimes private business) with morally and rationally justifiable principles or common values. In other words, resolving public debates and disagreements by recourse to publicly affirmed or shared political and moral principles.²² And by justice is meant treating and relating to others in ways that are fair and impartial. Henceforth, I shall refer to the civic virtues of open-mindedness and toleration of diversity simply as *reasonableness* and *justness*. The point then about these virtues is that an individual is “civically” virtuous, i.e. reasonable and just insofar as she circumscribes her life by shared values or political principles that could be said to be rational and just.

²⁰ In calling these civic virtues one takes the view that unlike non-civic virtues like courage and moderation they are strictly exercised in the context of other people. I can be courageous and moderate with regards to goods that do not necessarily involve others but I can only be open-minded and tolerant with regards to other people.

²¹ John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, Erin Kelly (ed.), Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001, pp91-92, emphasis mine.

²² See John Rawls, *The Idea of Public Reason (Feb.–Mar. 1990)*, in *Political Liberalism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993; John Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited”, *The University of Chicago Law Review*, 64(3) (Summer, 1997), pp765-807.

To see the way in which the virtues of reasonableness and justness are integral to IMP let us consider how liberalism typically understands the ideal liberal (IL). Liberalism takes the IL as a person who not only is capable of critically choosing her own path in life but also one that exhibits certain attitudes and habits. This liberal view is consistent with the idea of the self as unembedded, a self that is voluntary and shaped by its own internal critical reflective nature and by itself is free to choose particular life plans, projects, goals, relationships and obligations. Thus being an IL include being open to critical reflection on the beliefs and ideals with which one has been raised, and being sympathetic to a wide range of traditional and experimental ways of life. An IL is committed to advancing the institutions and practices of liberalism in the pursuit of her own good. In other words, an IL must be devoted to the principles of a liberal polity, which includes (a) thoughtful consideration for others or respect for and tolerance of the widest range of human visions of the good (insofar as they are consistent with the fundamental principles of liberalism; (b) disposed to compromise with others; (c) moderate in the pursuit of her own conception of the good; (d) being industrious and in ways that contribute to the economic life of the society she belongs to; (e) committed to following impartial laws and fair procedures for making them (f) willingness to bear the burdens of liberal regimes.

Principles (a) – (d) are captured by the civic virtue of reasonableness. Thus, we can generally say the following about a reasonable person. She is respectful and tolerant of others (visions of goods, beliefs, values, etc.). She is also willing to compromise with others and not immodest or showy with regards to pursuing her own ideas of the good. Principles (e) – (f) are captured by the civic virtue of justness. Where (e) is about the strict principle of justice with regards to individuals (f) is about justice with regards to the individual's relationship with others.

IMP is committed to these principles insofar as they describe the individual *qua* citizen or the IL. Now although IMP espouses these principles there is no reason to think that they are either discounted by CMP or cannot be supported by a communitarian regime. Of course, for CMP, community is as important as the individual and common affairs are taken to play a central role in any individual's life.

However, CMP requires people to act in ways that lead to the flourishing of the individual and the community. This will require the virtues of reasonableness and justness. It will call for being respectful and tolerant of others, willingness to work with others and to compromise, to participate and be engaged in communal life or the activities and practices of one's community. Thus, it could be said that although CMP takes a life devoted to society or a political community of a certain kind as a life that is worth living, exercising the virtues of reasonableness and justness are key to actualizing such a life.

If to live a life that takes a shared concern seriously or devoted to community the individual must consider the interests of others along with hers, then a measure or various aspects of the virtues of reasonableness and justness must clearly be on display. For to consider the interests of others along with ours is not just to respect or tolerate others or to be disposed to compromise with them on various matters but also to consider that their projects and life plans are intricately bound with those of ours. To take such a stance, to see ourselves implicated in such a rich social context, and to pursue projects in tandem with others is to exhibit some degree of reasonableness and justness.

VI. Civic Virtues and Wellbeing

One might claim that the civic virtues of reasonableness and justness are integral to wellbeing given what has been noted about the virtues in general. For if it is the case that the virtues, say courage, moderation and generosity, are integral to wellbeing, then perhaps one can say the same thing about the civic virtue of reasonableness and justness as being integral to wellbeing. To be sure, as virtues, reasonableness and justness lend themselves to different actions of all sorts including but not limited to industry, civilized behavior and active participation in social and political life, all of which enhances variously the utility profile of both the individual and community. The point is that these practices could be said to not only benefit the individual but the community as well insofar as the virtues that encourage these practices are civic and oriented towards public

interest.²³ They are beneficial to the individual as long as they enable her to engage in practices and to express other virtues that the virtues support, as well as contribute or can in principle contribute to her wellbeing. They benefit the community insofar as they support the pursuit of a shared concern, build and strengthen social and communal ties.

To highlight how civic virtues benefit the individual and community let us look at two components of the virtue of reasonableness and one aspect of the virtue of justness. As examples of the former, I will consider (a) thoughtful consideration for others or respect for and tolerance of the widest range of human visions of the good, and (d) industriousness. For the latter I will consider (f) willingness to bear the burdens of one's political regime.

Someone shows thoughtful consideration for others or respects and tolerates their different visions of the good when she does not mock them or seek to destroy the differences that exist within and in a political regime. Rather she strives to accommodate them and to do what enhances the differences. She strives to always engage in polite in conversation with others and listens respectfully to what others have to say. In addition, she presents herself decently in attire, grooming, language and temperament. That is, she does not engage in behavior that is intended to shock or offend others and cause social or public disorder. By doing this she benefits the community; rather than causing public disorder her actions enhance social relationships and communal ties. She benefits because they strengthen the exercise of non-civic virtues like good temper, moderation, friendliness and generosity with are integral to her overall wellbeing. In addition, because her reputation grows from the exercise of these virtues others are keen and interested to connect with her.

²³ This last point is different from the previous because it is strictly about an instrumental justification for acting virtuously. That is a reasonable and just person will be reasonable or just, say, will pay her taxes and obey rules and laws because it instrumentally benefits her to do so. Not only would she not have to worry about been found out to be reasonable or just or be punished for breaking the law she would have a good reputation. Those with bad reputation which precedes them will be avoided and most likely to be excluded from cooperative and social activities, which are the contexts by which she reasonably can expect to realize her conception of the good and pursue her wellbeing. In short, while a law breaker will have her projects frustrated that of a law abider will have hers enhanced.

Industriousness involves being hardworking at what one does or engages in. The following quote from Martin Luther King Jr. provides a useful way of unpacking some of the ideas of industriousness, “If a man [or woman] is called to be a street sweeper, he [or she] should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He [or she] should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, here lived a great street sweeper who did his [or her] job well”. This quote suggests that the industrious person is diligent, that is she works hard at her job or various endeavors. She is also productive in virtue of getting things done or accomplishing the different tasks before her. But in addition to this, the industrious person is conscientious. She is conscientious when she carefully considers the ramifications of her accomplishments, the things she does and their connection with other people. Thus, one that is industrious carefully applies herself very well to various endeavors and activities. She strives to unleash her potentials, develop whatever talents and capacities that she has and helps others to develop theirs as well. Indeed then, industriousness is useful, it is beneficial for both the individual that is hardworking and to others or society as a whole. It benefits the individual in many ways. She reaps the direct fruit of being industrious; this could be a raise at work, additional business revenue coming in, or just getting paid for being a hard worker. She also benefits from the praise that comes with her industriousness. These might be glowing praises that may show up on her CV and which will follow her wherever she goes. In short, industriousness can enhance her reputation and profile. And if we think of work as having its own benefit, some intrinsic benefit, then the industrious person benefits here too. She has the intrinsic satisfaction of being industrious. Not to mention the fact that the exercise of the virtue enables her to exercise non-civic virtues like magnanimity, generosity and friendliness. Others benefit too from the individual’s industriousness; from the material or non-material benefits coming in from her production, from her conscientious disposition in accomplishing her tasks and helping others. For example, others can go about their various business or plan and carry out their activities with little or no little disruption. A simple way to think of this benefit is to consider activities in an assembly line, which exhibits the sort of interdependence and division of labor that exists in

many work places and social setting. Workers in an assembly line rely on the other to complete their tasks. If one person fails to do her job or falls short of being hard working in her tasks others will be affected. Society can be thought of as a big assembly line where everyone benefits from everyone's labor and hard work, and where the display of conscientiousness means the fostering of strong relationships and pursuit of a shared concern.

Willingness to bear the burdens of one's social and political regime involves engaging in some sacrifice. Such sacrifice comes in different degrees. From being committed to learning about political and social life to engaging in debate about the institutions, practices, and policies of one's regime; from paying taxes to fighting and dying for society. A person willing to bear the burdens of one's regime participates in all kinds of social life. She participates in social life when she is actively involved in or engaged in political activities of all sorts. Such a person pays much attention to politics broadly construed and is an active participant in activities that help shape his society, not just when these activities are only directly related to the burdens she avoids or the instrumental benefits she seeks, but also when these only sometimes benefits others. She would always be willing to be informed about the going-ons in society and prepared to make positive contributions to moving it forward. And if it becomes necessary she is prepared to fight and die for her country. Hence, we may describe a just person as one that accepts the costs of freedom, where doing so means being an active participant in the social and political life of one's society, which requires being averse to freeriding, disposed to extending the practices of fairness, and willing to pay her taxes and to fight and die for society. She benefits as she strengthens other virtues like magnanimity and courage and others benefit from her various sacrifices as well.

VII. IMP, Virtues and Community

All that I have said above applies to virtues espoused by IMP (as well as by CMP). In this section I will argue that insofar as IMP is wedded to the notion of an unembedded self, i.e. has a foundation that is individualistic and is oriented towards individual moral responsibility it undermines these very same virtues and consequently breaks down community. I shall argue this claim in connection with the virtues of (a), (d) and (f) that I discussed above.

How does IMP undermine the very same virtues it upholds and how does it break down community? Simply in this way: that the virtues are integral to the flourishing of the individual and are best exercised in a political community of a certain sort, and since such a community can only be sustained by communal responsibility, by being sensitive to individual moral responsibility IMP both undermines the virtues and breaks down community. If what I have said from the foregoing about the virtues truly holds, then the individual is “better off” in terms of flourishing by fully exercising the virtues. And if we think of the realization of the virtues as possible only when the individual takes herself as part of and belonging to a political community of a certain sort, of the sort that involves common pursuit or having a shared concern, then it is only when she embraces communal responsibility that she truly flourishes. By embracing a shared concern the individual embraces a wider range of activities and experiences that in turn sharpen and hone the virtues that support those very same activities and experiences. Since civic virtues—as is the case with other virtues—are integral to the individual’s flourishing, embracing those activities and experiences that help sharpen and hone the virtues is important for such flourishing.

The individual embraces communal responsibility when she sees herself holistically, as bonded by other selves and as part of a community, and not an isolated, atomistic individual. It is this way of seeing herself that will enable the individual to pursue common affairs or exhibit the sorts of sacrifice that I have been talking about and thus to fully express the virtues and to flourish. Unlike CMP that is grounded on the idea of an embedded self and oriented towards communal moral responsibility, IMP is grounded on the idea of an unembedded self and is oriented towards individual moral responsibility. And because the idea of an unembedded self is thin, thin in the sense that it cannot support the pursuit of common affairs or a shared concern IMP undermines the very same virtues that it upholds, virtues that are best exercised in a community of shared concern. And because it undermines the pursuit of common affairs and shared concern IMP invariably breaks down community. Let me now illustrate this further by looking at the virtues associated with (a), (d) and (f).

I begin with (a). I said that one that has a thoughtful consideration for others would not only strive to accommodate them and the differences that exists between them in terms of the visions of the good but also *does what enhances the differences*. It is the italicized part that I want to focus on here. To do this it would be helpful that I distinguish between the IL that I mentioned in section V and a minimal liberal (ML). The idea of an IL requires that one be committed to fully expressing the virtue in question. Hence, it is an ideal. But the idea of the ML requires that one simply does all that one decides is appropriate and worth doing in the situation. It will ask that one does what one thinks is minimally sufficient given the goal(s) before that person and what he or she is morally responsible for. In terms of (a) the IL will ask us to both accommodate others and their differences and to do what enhances the differences. By contrast, the ML may require that one accommodates others and their differences but not to do what enhances the differences. For to do what enhances the differences could be said to be one way of accepting in some form that their own visions of the good is as good as one's or at the very least to give them a platform to germinate and reproduce. On this view, accommodating the differences is sufficient, for to ask that one does do what will enhance them is to ask one to do things that may go against one's own vision of the good or that may not be instrumentally beneficial to one but others. Simply, put it is to go beyond what individual moral responsibility calls for.

Now it is clear how IMP will lead to a breakdown of community. For if we act as ML, then we would have little or no reason to go beyond accommodating the differences in visions of the goods, values, etc. that others happen to have. We will take ourselves to be morally responsibly only with regards to accommodating the differences and not enhancing them. Thus to be ML is to diminish the differences that exist among people. And if we think of the acknowledgment and enhancement of differences as vital in building and strengthening communal ties and in the pursuits of shared concern, then ML undermines this. Shared concern is about communal affairs, about goals that are jointly pursued. To pursue such goals require that we are communally responsible. If we follow the path of the IL the individual would go beyond accommodating differences to enhancing them. In short, she would in some sense

move towards communal responsibility. But this is not what ML embraces; it recommends individual responsibility. Since it is the case that for us to build or strengthen communal ties and to promote a shared concern that exists in community we must not only consider the others when we act or pursue goals jointly with them but also act in ways that enhance such goals. And given that by promoting individual moral responsibility ML undercuts such communal ties and shared concern, it accordingly not only undermines the full exercise of the virtue of reasonableness but in doing so breaks down community.

IMP can also be said to undermine (d) and consequently to break down community. The industrious individual is indeed a likeable person. Being hardworking brings forth many benefits. From the quote by Martin Luther King Jr. the industrious person is one that is hardworking and the hardworking person is diligence and productive. But industriousness also involves being conscientious. The hard worker is one that conscientiously applies herself to her tasks in addition to being diligent and productive. The idea of IL requires the latter sense of industriousness and the idea of ML is satisfied with just being diligent and productive. On the IL account of industriousness, the person goes beyond what one job or specific tasks requires of one. One may be hard working and do one's job by being diligent and productive, but one is required to also lend a hand to others in the doing of their jobs.

But again, to lend a hand to others in the doing of their jobs require that we think in some way of communal responsibility rather than individual responsibility. That we see ourselves as being involved with others in common projects, in affairs that may be accomplished with others but for which there may not be strictly speaking personal instrumental benefits. So if I am a street sweeper I will have done my job by sweeping the street very well as Shakespeare wrote poetry. But given that I ought to also be conscientious I am also required to lend a hand to other street sweepers, who for whatever reasons are not able to do their jobs very well. Thus, in being conscientious the hard worker assists others in their work.

It is with (f) that we see clearly the contrast between IL and ML on the one hand, and how a foundation of a self that is individualistic

and an appeal to individual moral responsibility breaks down community, on the other. Since willingness to bear the burdens of one's social and political regime requires different degrees of sacrifice some sacrifice will surely be greater than others. It may be a small sacrifice to ask me to be informed about the going-ons in society or to be engaged in debate about the institutions, practices, and policies of the regime that I live under. It may even be little sacrifice for me to pay my taxes particularly if we think of what the taxes are used for and if they happen to benefit others more than they benefit me. For some all of these may be big sacrifices especially if they are balanced against other things that the person could have done or has a desire to do. That I should learn about the political and social life of the regime I live under or be engaged in debate about the institutions, practices, and policies of such a regime would require that I set aside time for these activities. But I could use the time to do something else that may now and then benefit only me. I could go mountain climbing, or scuba diving, or just be happy being home and watching my favourite shows on TV.

Although we may debate as to whether these aspects of bearing the burdens of regimes are little or big sacrifices surely there seem to be reasonable agreement that it is not a small sacrifice on matters of fighting for or dying for one's country. For to die for one's country is to give the ultimate sacrifice to others and to one's country. Now only the IL will require that we embark on and give the ultimate sacrifice for one's country. ML would not ask us to do that and many people would rather be ML in this situation. If we go by the history of liberal regimes it seems to be the case that most people have not sufficiently bought into the idea of the IL but rather have been persuaded more by the idea of ML. The different instances of conscriptions in liberal societies could be said to be illustrative of this view. One explanation for the existence of conscriptions is that citizens having rejected the idea of the IL and having been persuaded more by the idea of ML have always been prepared to do that which does not require giving the ultimate sacrifice.

I have been speaking of the deficiency of IMP, its undermining of some of the virtues it upholds, or the breaking down community from the standpoint of ML. But IMP embodies both the ideas of ML and IL. Since the IL embraces the ideal of communal responsibility one

can argue that the failure of liberal minimalism does not mean a failure or deficiency of IMP. It is true that the IL points towards communal responsibility and in that sense it could be said to accommodate the CMP's idea of the pursuit of shared concern, of building and strengthening of communal ties. However, I think that the IL only exists for IMP as an ideal and that given IMP's foundation it cannot be called upon to provide a basis of shared concern, of building and strengthening of communal ties.

The reason why the idea of the IL cannot be called upon is that the foundation of IMP provides no solid basis for which to ask people to be IL. If the idea of the IL were to be called upon, if people were to be asked to be IL it means one will be asking them to engage in various forms of sacrifice that may be difficult to justify from the embedded self point of view. That is, given that the call for such sacrifices may collide with how the individual views herself (from the embedded self perspective) it may be difficult to push individuals to be IL. The self for IMP is a voluntary self, not constituted by the community and takes on obligations on the basis of its choosing. If an individual has not taken upon itself the various responsibilities that require these sorts of sacrifice asking her to take them on is as far as individual moral responsibility is concerned to intrude into the individual's private space. Such an individual cannot be persuaded to pursue shared concern and to build and strengthen communal ties if doing so imposes upon her sacrifices that she is unwilling to bear.

The point then is that the IL is only sustainable under a different conception of the self, that of the self as embedded. So although the IL embraces communal thinking and responsibility the foundation of IMP points towards individual responsibility. And if we think in terms of individual responsibility the thinking is that of an individual that is responsible for what she has decided to take on. But to think of communal responsibility is to think not of what the individual has put upon herself but of obligations that are generated in virtue of her being constituted by the community. To think this way is to shift the focus away from the individual to the community. IMP cannot do this insofar as its notion of the self is atomistic or has a foundation that is individualistic and as long as it is sensitive to individual moral responsibility.

IMP affirms the virtues of reasonableness and justness, and points to the importance of promoting these for the individual. However, the idea of ML cannot be called upon to help in promoting these virtues and to fully express them. Such deficiency can be rectified through the idea of the IL. But like ML (and for different reasons) it too cannot be called upon to promote and express these virtues. The conception of the self that IMP endorses does not provide for it a proper pedestal for which the idea of the IL can fully shine through and to accommodate a shared concern, and consequently, individuals raised by the IMP view cannot fully embrace communal responsibility. IMP's grounding on the notion of an unembedded self and its appeal to individual moral responsibility thus set people up to be ML rather than to be IL. And if they try to be IL they have no proper foundation on which to anchor such thinking and idea on and to pursue a shared concern that builds and strengthens communal ties.

Conclusion

In this paper I have examined the civic virtues of reasonableness and justness and how they are both affirmed by IMP and CMP. I have argued that although both IMP and CMP affirm these virtues they have different foundations. The foundation of IMP is that of an unembedded self and that of CMP is that of an embedded self. I have further argued that the foundation of IMP does undermine the very virtues it seeks to uphold and consequently breaks down community. IMP encompasses both ML and the IL. The ML individual has little reason to go beyond projects that she thinks are strictly instrumentally beneficial to her. She is not persuaded by the idea of the IL. She may not do that which enhances the differences in her society, give the ultimate sacrifice or sacrifice much of her time with neighbors in debating about social and political life when such time could be spent in some other places or activities. Even when she embraces the ideal of the IL and chooses to go beyond projects that provide her instrumental benefits she does so only because she so choose. Thus only the idea of individual responsibility excites her.

The idea of communal responsibility which sustains a shared concern and builds and strengthens communal ties has no firm place for her. To be sure, IMP has the idea of the IL to call upon to ask questions about individual and communal responsibility, and to point towards communal responsibility. However, because the IL can only

be sustained by thinking of the self as embedded and the idea of communal responsibility can only be sustained in communities of a particular kind only CMP which promote the self as embedded is able to provide it. CMP and not IMP talks of the embedded self, it fosters a conception of the self that is different from that fostered by IMP. And because the virtues of reasonableness and justness—whether in the version affirmed by ML or that espoused by IL—are best expressed by thinking of the self as embedded and under the type of community that CMP promotes IMP cannot provide the platform from which individual can express them. On this account, IMP undermines the very virtues it seeks to promote and consequently can be said to break down community.



www.PreciousHeart.net/ti