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City life and community: complementary or incompatible ideals?

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The words 'city' and 'community' conjure up very different images. The city is often pictured as an arena where diverse social groups or networks may co-exist in an atmosphere of mutual toleration, while the community is seen as a cohesive unit where conformity is fostered at the expense of diversity, thereby breeding intolerance. So understood, community is an unattractive ideal, unlikely to endear itself to those with liberal sympathies. It may be able to meet the needs of its members to feel that they belong; but it does so at a high cost to them and to others. Cities, in contrast, promise to provide their inhabitants (and indeed their visitors) with a diverse range of possibilities that, even if they do not represent options that can be combined harmoniously, may nevertheless co-exist together.

My aim is to assess whether this picture of city life and community, and their relative merits, can be sustained. Some may find it hard to believe that it can withstand critical scrutiny: on the one hand it seems to idealise the city, while on the other ignoring the possibility of communities that are open to difference and respectful of it. But there are those such as Iris Young who think that this picture does represent a deeper truth that can be given philosophical defence. Without glamorising actually existing cities, Young argues that city life contains within it a liberating promise. In contrast, community in her view is a deeply flawed ideal: it manifests what she calls the logic of identity, which entails excluding or repressing difference.

Community is a complex notion, however. Against Young I shall maintain that her picture of city life is compatible with the ideal of community when the latter is properly conceived. Young's real target is a form of communitarianism that envisages a network of self-contained groups in which relations are face-to-face and wholly transparent. But those who value community need not be offering this vision. They can allow that communal relations may exist between those who do not know each other and do not fully understand each other. They can also acknowledge the value and importance of non-communal relations, and celebrate the way in which, in the context of the city, members of different communities can learn from

each other while at the same time coming to appreciate the limits of their own understanding and experience.

Following a path that has been well trodden, I shall also suggest that city life and community can be complementary ideals in another way. Not only may cities permit and encourage a variety of different communities to flourish, they may also themselves constitute communities of a kind that could facilitate an activist local politics committed to urban renewal, coupled with modest redistributive programmes.

Community and difference

Young has three main complaints against the ideal of community.¹ First, she contends that it requires full and complete mutual understanding and identification. As such, she believes it is valued as a means to satisfy a rather infantile desire for fusion, or as a way of accommodating 'a longing for harmony among persons, for consensus and mutual understanding'.² She maintains that in so far as full mutual understanding and identification are possible at all, they are likely to occur only between those who are alike in terms of history, cultural background, or point of view on the world.³ Therefore in practice community can be realised only by excluding some from membership or by repressing difference.

Second, Young maintains that those who value community are in the grip of a false ideal of face-to-face relations, conceiving these relations as transparent, unmediated and harmonious. Young argues that face-to-face relations cannot be transparent in the way required by ideals of community, for an individual is never fully present to herself let alone to others.⁴ These relations are necessarily mediated, since, for example, they involve the interpretation of speech and gestures. Furthermore, face-to-face relations are not necessarily harmonious, because they contain the possibility of separation and violence.⁵

Third, Young argues that the privileging of face-to-face relations inherent in the ideal of community serves to devalue non-communal encounters and divert our attention away from their importance. Relations between those who are not personally acquainted are judged to involve some degree of alienation simply because they are mediated. But, Young maintains, non-communal relations need not involve alienation and can be mutually enriching. In virtue of their commitment to the value of face-to-face relations, communitarians often envisage a society that consists of small decentralised units. But, Young maintains, this is unrealistic and fails to confront the political question of how different communities should relate to one another.⁶

In Young's view, city life provides a much more attractive social and political ideal than community, for it can allow difference to be truly respected. (When she talks of city life, she intends to include living in what we ordinarily call 'towns'; her ideal is not restricted to the huge metropolis.)⁷ City

life, as she conceives it, is a form of being together with strangers that involves encountering those with different cultures, histories and points of view.⁸ Modern cities can thereby cultivate a sense of difference: dwellers in them come to appreciate that there are forms of experience beyond their own, occurring in or near public spaces, and that as a result they will never be able fully to grasp the city as a whole.⁹ In cities there can be social differentiation without exclusion;¹⁰ individuals can be members of groups that overlap and intermingle, the character of which may change over time and the boundaries of which are porous. According to Young, this ideal of city life, unlike the ideal of community, does not require face-to-face relations, nor does it require full mutual understanding: relations in the city are often mediated by time and space, and we are made constantly aware of the limits of our understanding of others.

In Young's view, city life potentially incorporates the ideal of 'openness to unassimilated otherness'.¹¹ Young does not fully unpack this notion, but it is safe to infer that openness of this kind goes beyond what is required by toleration, although it is not incompatible with the latter ideal.¹² Toleration is called for only in contexts where one person or group disapproves of what others do. Openness to others, in contrast, is needed primarily when understanding is lacking. It is an ideal that should enter in before toleration becomes an issue, and in that sense is prior to it. It is manifested as a willingness to learn from others and to refrain from judging them when one lacks full understanding; as an appreciation that there may be valuable modes of being that one cannot fully grasp given the limits of one's own experience; and as a refusal to deny difference by illegitimately assimilating it to something familiar and already understood.

In order to evaluate Young's critique of community, and her proposal that city life can provide us with an alternative ideal, we need to be clear about what she means by 'community'. She points out that there are normative and non-normative uses of the term, and that her concern is with its normative use: for example, she has no objection to the sociological use of the term in the context of community studies, where it usually means something like a 'small town' or 'neighbourhood'.¹³ Here I agree with Young that some distinction needs to be drawn, but I think that more needs to be said about it.

'Community' is a much over-used term, both in ordinary language and in academic debates. So much so that we are entitled to some degree of scepticism about whether it can serve any useful analytical purpose. In my view, however, it is worth retaining the term, so long as we are clear about the different notions it is used to express.¹⁴ To develop my argument against Young, I propose to distinguish between an ordinary and a moralised sense of community by reference to two ideal types.¹⁵ According to the first ideal type, which I shall refer to as the ordinary concept or ordinary sense, a community is a group of people who share a range of values and a way of life, whose members identify with the group and its practices, and acknowl-

edge each other as members of that group. This account of community in the ordinary sense does not specify precise necessary conditions: a group of people may constitute a community in this sense even if, for example, they share only some of the same values, and the way of life in which they participate is not all-encompassing. As a result, community may be realised in degrees, and the ordinary concept of community is inherently vague: its application requires a judgement about whether members of a group share enough values, whether they participate in a way of life that is sufficiently encompassing, whether they identify sufficiently strongly with the group, and whether there is sufficient agreement amongst them concerning who counts as a member of the group.

According to the second ideal type, which I shall refer to as the moralised concept or moralised sense, two further conditions need to be met before a group can constitute a community. First, its members must be mutually concerned. What counts as mutual concern depends on the nature and scale of the group; but minimally it means that they must give each other's interests some non-instrumental weight in their practical reasoning. Second, there must be no systematic injustice or, at least, no systematic exploitation occurring between them. Like my account of community in the ordinary sense, however, this does not provide a precise list of necessary conditions for a group to be a community in the moralised sense, because it allows that people may constitute such a community even if, for example, they do not share a wide range of values. So, like the ordinary concept, the moralised concept allows for degrees of community. It also allows that communities may be of different kinds and exist at different levels.¹⁶ (The moralised concept is to be found particularly in the socialist tradition; but there are liberal, feminist, and conservative variants that provide their own distinctive interpretations of what counts as mutual concern, exploitation or injustice.)

It is clear, I think, that Young's critique is directed against ideals of community in the moralised sense.¹⁷ She in effect argues that they are incoherent: she maintains that it is impossible for communities to be free from exploitation and oppression in the way advocates of the ideal maintain, because they must inevitably repress or deny difference. But this argument cannot get off the ground without the premise that community requires its members fully to identify with each other and fully to understand each other. Young believes that this is impossible, and that striving for it results in either exclusion or the repression of difference. But full mutual identification and understanding is not essential for community as I have characterised it, even according to the moralised sense. A person can be concerned for the well-being of others without being in a face-to-face relationship with them and without identifying with them in the way that Young thinks the ideal of community requires. Nor do communal relations in the moralised sense need to be transparent or harmonious. Community does require some degree of shared values and some shared way of life, but these minimal

requirements can be satisfied in the face of considerable divergences in values and considerable variations in the way members lead their lives.

Young might argue that I have misunderstood the main thrust of her argument. In her view community is valued as a means to satisfy a desire for fusion, and that desire could only be met by repressing difference. At best I think this is a partial truth. Many communitarians have valued community for other reasons. They have argued that it satisfies a widespread desire to belong or to be recognised by others. (Some of them would say that this is a human need rather than simply a widely held desire, but they do not have to make such an extravagant claim.) Although a person might acquire a secure sense of belonging by fusing with other members of a group, such a sense might also be obtained without abandoning one's independence in the way that fusion would require. Recognition by others is not merely compatible with retaining one's independence, but appears to require it. For part of what it is to be recognised by others is to receive acknowledgement of one's own separate existence and independent worth.

Even if the attractions of community life cannot be explained by the idea that it is valued as a means to fusion, could it nevertheless be true that it is valued because of its (ultimately unrealistic) promise of harmony and consensus? In a critique of community that resonates with Young's, Elizabeth Frazer argues that 'the aspiration to community is an aspiration to a kind of connectedness that transcends the mundane and concrete tangle of social relations'.¹⁸ She maintains that such an experience of transcendence will be fleeting at best, and that the longing for it may be politically dangerous because it diverts attention away from the material conditions that are necessary for successful political organisation and action.¹⁹ Frazer is surely right that experiences of fully-fledged community in its moralised sense are likely to be rare and brief (even though communities of this sort may be realised in a truncated form more frequently). But it would be a mistake to suppose that the ideal of community requires complete harmony and consensus for its realisation. And although I do not want to deny that an exclusive preoccupation with ideals of community can have the damaging consequences that Frazer fears, it is hard to see why a commitment to these ideals cannot be coupled with a hard-headed appreciation of their limitations and material preconditions.

In some sense communities must exclude. Putting aside the possible exception represented by the ideal of global community, it is part of the logic of community that it will never be fully inclusive and there will always be insiders and outsiders.²⁰ But even Young must accept that this is true of the groups that will encounter each other in cities. The question is: why must communities, unlike these groups, exclude in an objectionable way, or stand opposed to her ideal of openness to unassimilated otherness? Communities too may overlap and intermingle; their membership may be fluid and their boundaries porous. And in principle there is no reason why members of a community shouldn't acknowledge, struggle to understand,

and even celebrate, the existence of diversity within their community, or the existence of other communities with different histories involving different values or ways of life.

Are there any arguments of a more empirical kind that might show that communities are likely to repress difference or fail to be open to it in one way or another? Young declares that self-identification as a member of a community 'often occurs as an oppositional differentiation from other groups, who are feared, despised or at best devalued'.²¹ It is not hard to find examples of communities in the ordinary sense that are in conflict with one another, dismissing each other's achievements and ways of life without making any genuine attempts to understand. But is there any general reason to think that relations between communities (in either the ordinary or moralised sense) will tend to be like this or worse? Joseph Raz appears to think so. He argues that even though communities founded upon very different ways of life may each be worthwhile because they realise incompatible values, individuals who are part of one way of life will tend to devalue the others because commitment to their way of life will encourage a dismissive attitude towards the genuine values contained in the others: 'pluralists can step back from their personal commitments and appreciate in the abstract the value of other ways of life and their attendant virtues. But this acknowledgement co-exists with, and cannot replace, the feelings of rejection and dismissiveness towards what one knows is valuable'.²² If Raz is right, members of a community will tend to repress or deny the reality of valuable difference when they encounter it, even when they have some appreciation of it. In effect, Raz's argument throws into question the extent to which Young's ideal of openness can be realised.²³

But even if there is an inevitable tension in practice between being committed to a way of life that realises one set of values, and admiring or respecting ways of life that realise different values, the nature of this tension will surely vary. One can participate in different ways of life and indeed be a member of a number of communities. Under such conditions, the tendency to devalue, which Raz claims is inevitable, may be relatively insignificant. It may be that it is acute only under adverse conditions, for example, when ways of life are geographically separated from each other or under threat in some way, or when there is a conflict of material interests between them. It is not naive to suppose that under relatively hospitable conditions city life may provide a good antidote to any tendency to devalue other ways of life, especially given the proximity of these ways of life and the likelihood that they will become interwoven.

City life and voluntary community

I would not want to exaggerate my disagreement with Young. I think that she fails to appreciate what many regard as the main source of the value of community, namely the way in which it satisfies a widely shared desire

to belong or to be recognised by others, and that this failure is reflected in the account of community she gives. But I do not deny that her critique is successful against *some* ideals of community.²⁴ Like her, I think that a vision of a society 'composed of decentralized, economically self-sufficient, face-to-face communities functioning as autonomous political identities' is deeply flawed and 'wildly utopian'.²⁵ And I agree with her that city life can provide us with an ideal of social existence. But I would put the point rather differently in order to draw out the way in which the ideal of city life and belonging to communities can be compatible. In my terms, city life could in principle be the setting for a vibrant civil society, in which a multiplicity of voluntary associations and communities *in the ordinary sense* flourish (existing alongside more transient networks of social relations), enriching each other in the process.

Civil society potentially provides an important sphere in which people might find fulfilment. As Michael Walzer points out, this conclusion is reinforced when we contemplate the main alternatives.²⁶ Work will provide some with fulfilling lives; but given the limits imposed by the division of labour, it is surely too optimistic to hope that it could do so for all. There are ways in which work could be reorganised so as to provide greater opportunities for self-realisation, perhaps even without compromising efficiency. But it would be unrealistic to expect such changes to eliminate boring or repetitive jobs, or even make them scarce. Political activity is sometimes held up as a practice within which individuals can transcend the realm of necessity and find fulfilment. But a life of political participation is not to everyone's taste, and it would be unjustifiable to regard it as an essential ingredient of a good life for everyone. In short, work and politics can provide fulfilment for some, but not for everyone. When there is a healthy civil society, the network of communities and voluntary associations that constitute it provide an important alternative source of fulfilment.

The idea that city life can be valuable in virtue of providing people with the space to form and join associations or communities that enable them to lead fulfilling lives might be questioned by some communitarian thinkers, on the grounds that civil society can provide only impoverished forms of community, or what Robert Bellah and his co-authors call 'lifestyle enclaves'.²⁷ Expressed in terms of language whose meaning is familiar from the work of Ferdinand Tönnies, these communitarian thinkers believe that only *Gemeinschaft* – something that one is born into and grows within – and not *Gesellschaft*, can meet our needs.²⁸ According to this view, the communities that are really important to us are those into which we are born rather than those we join, for only those we enter at birth are truly ours; only our ancestral communities, such as our families or ethnic communities, can satisfy our deeply felt need to belong or be recognised by others, and give depth to our practical reasoning.²⁹

To some extent at least this scepticism about the ability of civil society to respond to our deepest needs is misconceived. Even if civil society is

viewed as a network of *voluntary* associations and communities, this does not mean that it excludes the communities into which people are born. These can properly be regarded as voluntary so long as their members are free to leave, even if they had no choice in the first place about whether to become members. What constitutes freedom to leave is, of course, a hard question. The mere possibility of leaving does not seem sufficient to justify saying that a person is free to leave. For that to be the case, she must have meaningful alternatives available to her. She must also be in a position to assess the risks of leaving, at least in some rough and ready way, which requires that she have the capacities and information to do so. If these conditions are satisfied for the members of a community, they would seem to possess the freedom to leave it, and the community can properly be regarded as voluntary.

In any case, forms of communitarianism that attach overriding importance to people's ancestral communities seem to involve considerable exaggeration: people can often satisfy their need to feel that they belong, or to be recognised by others, by joining communities and associations, and their decision to join can be based upon deep commitments and need not be arbitrary. But we should not recoil from these exaggerated forms of communitarianism to the opposite extreme, namely, the idea that cities are valuable because they make space for the *only* authentic form of existence in the modern world, 'the cosmopolitan life'. The cosmopolitan in this context is someone who shops around, appropriates different cultural materials, and adapts them for his own purposes in the light of his own conception of what is worthwhile.

Jeremy Waldron presents this vision of the cosmopolitan in the following passage:

The cosmopolitan may live all his life in one city and maintain the same citizenship throughout. But he refuses to think of himself as *defined* by his location or his ancestry or his citizenship or his language. Though he may live in San Francisco and be of Irish ancestry, he does not take his identity to be compromised when he learns Spanish, eats Chinese, wears clothes made in Korea, listens to arias by Verdi sung by a Maori princess on Japanese equipment, follows Ukrainian politics, and practices Buddhist meditation techniques.³⁰

I do not deny that such an individual can flourish, and that he may represent the realisation of something genuinely valuable.³¹ But I have reservations about the provocative thesis that Waldron toys with, that the way of life of 'the cosmopolitan individual' is the only authentic one for us nowadays.³² For many people, the communities into which they are born exert a powerful attraction, and continue to provide deep sources of fulfilment. It is not obvious why their lives must be inauthentic if they see themselves as partly defined by membership of those communities and seek to protect and preserve what they regard as the best in them, by whatever legitimate means are at their disposal.

Giving clear content to the notion of what it is to be defined, or to think of oneself as being defined, partly or wholly, by one's membership of some community, is not easy. But it does not seem to preclude giving due weight to the fact that the community (or communities) that define a person's identity are likely to be fluid. These will evolve in the face of changing circumstances, and in the process the identity of their members will be transformed. Nor does the idea that a person's communal membership is constitutive of her identity imply that she cannot be true to herself whilst learning from other ways of life and seeking to change her own. Indeed she may remain authentic whilst striving to realise Young's ideal of openness to others.

The model of city life and civil society I have been presenting must steer a path between the two extremes I have described. It must acknowledge the importance many people attach to their ancestral communities, and accept that these communities co-exist and may sometimes interact in mutually enriching ways with other communities in the city, even permitting their members to carve out untraditional lives within them. But the model must also recognise the value of being able to reject one's inherited communities more radically, by ceasing to define oneself in terms of them and living a cosmopolitan life: when these communities allow their members genuine freedom to leave, city life can provide access to a range of cultural materials, social networks and ways of life. So cities can in principle provide a space in which individuals come to terms with their various inheritances, remain open to difference, and determine within limits their own mode of being with others.

Of course, this is a description of an ideal. No one – especially not Young – is claiming that cities as we know them always (or indeed ever) provide the respectful and open environment that would allow a variety of different associations and communities to flourish, and that would make possible a meaningful and enriching encounter between these communities. But we can see the way in which cities could provide a unique setting for this to happen, since they concentrate together a large and diverse group of people. What other conditions would be required to facilitate this is a complex issue. Social justice is no doubt important, and forms of civic education that cultivate not only respect for others but also openness to other ways of life.³³

Cities as communities

I began by drawing attention to two contrasting images projected by the terms 'city' and 'community': cities as a context of choice where diversity and toleration can thrive, and communities as claustrophobic, fostering uniformity at the expense of diversity. I have spent some time trying to dislodge the second of these images in order to make space for the thought that community and city life might provide us with complementary ideals.

But I have not yet entertained the idea that cities could themselves *be* communities. This idea has been presupposed by a number of those who defend the importance of a vibrant and activist local politics.

One feature of the concept of community, the importance of which has often been ignored by communitarian thinkers, is that community can, in principle at least, be realised at different levels. For example, it might be realised below the level of the state, between groups of its citizens, or at the level of the state, between all or most of its citizens; and there may be transnational communities that cut across the borders of states. In the context of the city, therefore, we can hardly avoid the question of whether it is possible to make sense of the idea that the inhabitants of a city might together form an overarching community.

Young would no doubt respond that this is a dangerously ‘totalising’ vision – that a community of this sort would have to deny difference. The diversity present within cities means that it would be rash to dismiss such a response out of hand. How could those who differ in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class and income be bound together in a single community? How could individuals residing in new housing developments, protected by gates and security systems, be in community with those who live in impoverished circumstances beyond those gates, perhaps under the daily threat of violence?

Divisions of these kinds act as a serious barrier to the idea that the inhabitants of really-existing cities might constitute communities. But we should not forget that community can be a matter of degree (and co-exist alongside voluntary associations and social networks of various kinds). Many cities seem already to be communities, in what I have called the ordinary sense, to some degree and in some respects. The inhabitants of a city often identify with it and describe themselves with pride as, for example, Londoners, Glaswegians or Geordies. Identification with the city may be strengthened by support for its football team, or where there is more than one, through local rivalries. Cities often support a distinctive way of life for their inhabitants, perhaps partly in virtue of the climate they suffer and their geographical setting, or perhaps in virtue of their festivals and their use of public spaces. Indeed cities may go some way towards satisfying the need to belong that communitarian theorists have claimed is important.

By partly defining the identities of their inhabitants, cities might also provide a locus for the realisation of other values. Some philosophical nationalists have maintained that a shared *national* identity makes feasible active citizenship and a politics of the common good. By extension, could it be argued that a shared local or civic identity provides the foundation for an activist local politics of a kind that seems badly needed if urban renewal or regeneration is to be more than just rhetoric in the mouths of politicians? This is the question I propose to explore briefly in the remainder of the chapter.

The philosophical nationalists I have in mind argue that only if citizens have a sense of belonging together will they attach importance to active citizenship. David Miller, for example, says that 'nationality gives people the common identity that makes it possible for them to conceive of shaping their world together'.³⁴ Miller also believes that in practice a shared national identity is important for the cultivation of social trust. That trust is necessary for a politics of the common good, since without it people will meet as advocates of particular groups, rather than 'as citizens whose main concerns are fairness between the different sections of the community and the pursuit of common ends'.³⁵ By extension it might be claimed that a shared *civic* identity makes possible active participation in *local* politics, and the successful implementation of policies that look to the good of the inhabitants of the city as a whole rather than a particular group of them, perhaps giving priority to the needs of the worst off, for example, by subsidising services of various kinds for the local homeless or unemployed.

I have not defended the value of participation in local politics or the legitimacy of redistribution of resources within the city.³⁶ And even those who share these normative commitments might regard the extension of the philosophical nationalist's position from nations to cities as far-fetched. The reason why some nationalists have thought that a shared national identity is important in a polity is precisely because it provides its citizens with a sense of belonging together. When citizens share a national identity there is a widespread belief amongst them that there is some reason why they should associate together other than that they happen to have ended up in the same polity. And it is just that which is missing in cities. Given the movement to and from cities, often driven by the labour market, it would require a massive dose of self-deception for city dwellers to believe that there is some special reason why they should associate together other than that they happen to have ended up in the same city. It might be replied that co-nationals as well require self-deception to sustain their belief that they belong together. But there is surely a difference in degree here, for movement across national borders is controlled in a way that movement to and from cities within the same state is not. The myths that play a role in binding together nations often cannot survive close scrutiny; but they are not usually manifestly false.

There is nevertheless a potential objection to the nationalist position, which makes possible a re-thinking of the conditions that are required for active citizenship and a politics responsive to the common good. This objection can be cast in the form of a question: why cannot politics take this shape when people have a sense of belonging *to* the appropriate political unit, even if they lack a sense of belonging *together* in the relevant sense? I do not propose to explore this question in the depth it would require to give it a proper answer; but let me explain the distinction it presupposes between a sense of belonging together and a sense of belonging to some political unit.³⁷

Suppose we stipulate that a person has a sense of belonging to some political unit, such as a polity or a city, if and only if she identifies with some of its major institutions and practices and feels at home in them. In principle at least, the inhabitants of a polity or city could identify with some of their institutions and practices, and feel at home in them, without believing that there was any deep reason why they should associate together of the sort that might be provided by the belief that they shared a culture, history, or particular conception of the good. In other words, the inhabitants of a city, or the citizens of a polity, might have a sense of *belonging to it* without thinking that there was any real sense in which they *belonged together*. People may move to a city for a variety of different reasons, for example, employment or easier access to the place where they already work, better leisure facilities, higher quality-schools – but they may nevertheless all come to feel that they belong to it. So the suggestion is that a participatory politics at the local level, involving a commitment to urban regeneration and modest forms of redistribution, might be possible without local inhabitants' possessing a sense of belonging together so long as they shared a sense of belonging to the locality.

This is hardly a novel idea. Many advocates of more robust forms of local democracy have said something similar. It is an empirical claim, however, and cannot be justified by armchair reflection alone, despite the attraction to the philosophically inclined of doing what Robert Nozick calls 'normative sociology'. Proper research on these matters appears, at best, inconclusive. William Hampton in his study of the connection between community and political activity in Sheffield concludes that a sense of belonging to a given area 'is connected only very tenuously to the enhanced civic consciousness which might be expected'.³⁸ In their study of six localities in Britain, Geraint Parry, George Moyser and Neil Day express some scepticism towards the idea that a sense of belonging to an area fosters participation in its political life, concluding that the best which can be said is that it is 'not proven'.³⁹

Though existing research does not support the idea that a sense of belonging to a locality fosters political participation, it is not sufficiently advanced to undermine the intuitive plausibility of that idea or some refined version of it. Indeed this research appears to leave open the possibility that some suitably qualified claim (of the form, 'under certain specifiable conditions, a sense of belonging to a locality will facilitate participation') might be sustained in the face of the evidence. A hypothesis of this kind can allow that other social conditions, including various non-communal relations (for example, social networks or coalitions formed around shared interests) are often more important for facilitating local political participation, and can concede that participation of this kind does not necessarily require a shared sense of belonging to a locality.

If a sense of belonging to a city can, under some circumstances, play a role in facilitating an activist local politics, this leaves open the question of

what conditions are conducive to fostering such a sense of belonging. Some of these conditions seem uncontroversial. It will be harder for those who live on housing states where they experience constant threats to their person or possessions to feel a sense of belonging to the city that fails to provide them with adequate security. Those who are constantly at the receiving end of racist abuse will also find it difficult to identify with the city in which they live. To the extent that the character and way of life of a city exclusively reflect the concerns of the dominant cultural community, this will make it difficult for those from other cultural communities to feel at home in it. In principle, however, none of these threats to a widespread sense of belonging is impossible to counter. In practice, whether they are countered will depend to a large extent on the existence of the necessary political will.

Conclusion

Far from being incompatible with the realisation of community, cities could in principle provide the setting for a robust civil society in which voluntary associations and communities offer important sources of fulfilment, and in which their individual members display what Young calls 'an openness to unassimilated otherness'. The notion of community is far less hostile to difference than Young maintains. Indeed, cities may themselves be communities in the ordinary sense, and under some circumstances fostering a sense of belonging to them may facilitate a vibrant local politics informed by a concern for the common good.

Notes

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1 See I. Young, 'The ideal of community and the politics of difference', in L. Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism and Postmodernism* (London, Routledge, 1990); *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), Chapter 8.

2 Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, p. 229.

3 Young, 'The ideal of community', p. 311.

4 Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, p. 232.

5 Young, 'The ideal of community', p. 314.

6 Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, p. 233.

7 Young, 'The ideal of community', p. 318.

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*

10 Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, pp. 238–9.

11 Young, 'The ideal of community', p. 319.

- 12 See C. McKinnon, 'Tolerance and the character of pluralism', chapter 3 in this volume.
- 13 Young, 'The ideal of community', p. 320n1. Young believes that this sociological use of the term is also present in ordinary speech: see *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, p. 234.
- 14 See E. Frazer, *The Problems of Communitarian Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Chapter 2, for a recent analysis of the concept of community that has some similarities with, but also some differences from, the one I proceed to offer.
- 15 I present this argument in more detail in my *Community, Solidarity and Belonging: Levels of Community and Their Normative Significance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Chapter 1.
- 16 See my *Community, Solidarity and Belonging*, pp. 61–3.
- 17 Young, 'The ideal of community', p. 320n1.
- 18 Frazer, *The Problems of Communitarian Politics*, p. 83.
- 19 *Ibid.*, pp. 83–4, 167–8, p. 220.
- 20 See also *ibid.*, pp. 166–7.
- 21 Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, pp. 234–5.
- 22 J. Raz, 'Multiculturalism: A liberal perspective', in *Ethics in the Public Domain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 165.
- 23 See McKinnon, 'Tolerance and the character of pluralism', chapter 3 in this volume.
- 24 Cf. Young, 'The ideal of community', p. 320.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 316.
- 26 For this argument, see M. Walzer, 'The civil society argument', in R. Beiner (ed.), *Theorizing Citizenship* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995).
- 27 R. Bellah *et al.*, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).
- 28 See F. Tönnies, *Community and Association*, trans. C. P. Loomis (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).
- 29 Michael Sandel comes close to presenting this sort of view: see his *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
- 30 J. Waldron, 'Minority cultures and the cosmopolitan alternative', in W. Kymlicka (ed.), *The Rights of Minority Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 95.
- 31 For some worries about whether the cosmopolitan life really can offer a stable vision of human flourishing, see S. Scheffler, 'Conceptions of cosmopolitanism', *Utilitas*, 11 (1999) 255–76, at pp. 270–1. Scheffler argues that communities, societies and cultural groups provide an 'infrastructure of responsibility' that sets out the responsibilities of their members as well as provides institutional mechanisms through which they can be discharged. Those who lead freewheeling cosmopolitan lives are deprived of these structures and therefore may be 'cut off from the forms of social support that structure and sustain individual responsibility' (*ibid.*, p. 271). Although this worry is not wholly misplaced, Scheffler does not seem to me to give due weight to the possibility that the cosmopolitan may be a member of various associations and participate in practices that carry with them responsibilities and provide their own forms of support. Social life is not exhausted by membership of communities and cultural groups.

- 32 J. Waldron, 'Minority cultures and the cosmopolitan alternative', pp. 100–1. Scheffler also notes the way in which Waldron flirts with this extreme thesis: see Scheffler, 'Conceptions of cosmopolitanism', p. 261. Waldron has now distanced himself from this thesis and I am not sure whether there is any residual disagreement between the position I develop here and the one he now advocates. See J. Waldron, 'What is cosmopolitan?', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (2000) 227–43, at pp. 231–3.
- 33 On the kind of education required to cultivate the former, see D. Heyd, 'Education to toleration: Some philosophical obstacles and their resolution', this volume.
- 34 D. Miller, *Market, State, and Community: Theoretical Foundations of Market Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 189.
- 35 D. Miller, 'Socialism and Toleration', in S. Mendus (ed.), *Justifying Toleration: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 247.
- 36 In Britain the last twenty years have seen much controversy over the best way of securing urban renewal or regeneration, with the New Right arguing that it needs to be market-driven, leaving local authorities to play at best an enabling or facilitating role. See D. Hill, *Citizens and Cities: Urban Policy in the 1990s* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), esp. Chapter 7, for a discussion of the relevant policies and debates. The idea that a more participatory local politics might be needed for urban regeneration of a desirable kind is premised on at least a partial rejection of these New Right ideas.
- 37 This distinction is developed further in my *Community, Solidarity and Belonging*, Chapter 5, and in my 'Political community, liberal-nationalism, and the ethics of assimilation', *Ethics*, 109 (1999) 261–86.
- 38 W. Hampton, *Democracy and Community: A Study of Sheffield* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 121.
- 39 G. Parry, G. Moyser and N. Day, *Political Participation and Democracy in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 344.