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# COMMUNITARIAN THEORY

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A. Allen Butcher, 1989

## INTRODUCTION

Intentional community is a lifestyle in which a group of people deliberately share material wealth and property in some degree of common ownership and control. Intentional community may arise merely as a result of a group's experience in working and living together over a period of years, or it may arise due to a common political, economic, philosophical, social, spiritual or other shared cultural identity.

In considering the importance of intentional community to those who enjoy the lifestyle, it is helpful to recognize that the basic social dynamic creating and sustaining community is the experience of sharing. The more that a group of people share, including beliefs, ideals, thoughts, feelings and emotions, as well as material objects and relationships, the greater will be their commitment to the community thus formed.\* The strength of member commitment in community then supports the community through adversities such as persecution or other external challenges, and internal dynamics such as a change in the community's identity or purpose.

The view that commitment in community is dependent upon the quality of mutual services provided is consistent with the view that the most successful intentional communities are those which have a charismatic leader or a strong ideological focus, since leadership and focus are two of the many services which a community seeks to provide to its members. With an emphasis upon encouraging the residents of a community to provide mutual services through their own effort, the potential result is a high level of satisfaction among individual community members.

Intentional community provides an opportunity for people to concentrate upon the ideals of cooperation and sharing in the creation of a responsible and caring society. Such a concerted effort often results in the discovery of innovations in social organization, political processes, economic systems or technological designs. In many cases, people form intentional communities for the express purpose of developing a solution for particular social, economic, environmental, religious or other problems of the outside world.

Alternative communities may be seen as self-directed experimental crucibles of culture, or as test-tube societies in which the many aspects of society and culture exist in a microcosm, creating an intensity of energy which sometimes results in new and influential ideas. Innovations developed within intentional community serve as models to the larger culture which are often then copied or adapted when recognized as valuable. Through this process communitarianism not only provides benefits to the communitarians, but also serves the larger society through its inherent ability to anticipate, reflect and quicken social change.

This paper focuses upon the importance of intentional community to the individual community member, its value to the people of the larger, outside world, and the greater ecological value of the cooperative lifestyle relative to the competitive, consumerist culture. The last sections present a review of how intentional community has influenced Western civilization in historical periods of change, and the potential value of intentional community through the future.

It may be said that intentional community encourages in the individual a personal responsibility for self, society and nature.

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\* These factors may be similar to what Rosabeth Moss-Kanter called "commitment mechanisms" in *Commitment and Community* (1972), and to what Kathleen Kinkade called "selectors" in "Selectors: Decisive Factors in Recruitment and Turnover," *Communities*, winter 1987.

## COMMUNITARIAN VALUES

Happiness in one's life is to a fair extent dependent upon the level of security we experience in our particular living situation. The more tightly woven the fabric of community, and the more intentional its design, the more likely the members of a community will be able to concentrate that particular essence that nurtures happiness.

There are many approaches to providing for happiness and peace of mind. For most people, being centered emotionally requires an awareness of having found one's niche; or private, social and work space within one's community. This is an important function of society. People need to feel integrated with their community, and this is an area of concentration for intentional community. In choosing to build one's happiness in concert with others, a person's ability to affect change or development is increased by the degree of effort devoted to reaching united agreement in their community. In this is much of the challenge of community; maintaining a sense of collectivity and of group spirit while at the same time providing for individual initiative and the pursuit of personal goals which are so important to individual happiness.

The challenge of keeping a balance between collectivity and individuality within community may be met in several different ways. For example some communities are comprised of individuals who work exclusively outside of the community for income. Other communities have their own businesses and employ all of their own members. Still other communities are a mixture of these two designs. These maintain an economic diversity in which some members may work outside the community for private income, supporting the community through the payment of living expenses and the offering of donations, while other members work entirely for the community and are supported by it. In any case, one of the keenest lessons distilled from the communitarian experience is the importance of maintaining individual access to the community's decision-making functions. Smoothly functioning communities, or those which have a high degree of individual commitment to the group, are generally those which maintain a participatory decision-making process which routinely asks for the views, ideas, needs and desires of the membership. People must know that there is a process for addressing their concerns, and that there is at least a possibility of seeing their dreams realized, or they may tend to detract from

the social harmony. The best response to this communication need is the community's focus upon the empowerment of the individual through what is often called shared leadership.

Communities which focus upon the value of equality work to encourage individual empowerment in community decision-making processes. Programs which maintain a sense of community involvement and a high morale include systems to aid clarity and accuracy of communication, encourage participation, facilitate constructive conflict resolution, relieve tension, and maintain trust and goal awareness. Sharing these functions in the same way task functions are shared is a means of keeping the members in charge of their community. Getting everything into the open and clarifying each individual's opportunities for maintaining and changing the group's direction helps to maintain commitment to community and reduces irresponsible withdrawal. Blame cannot be placed upon "the leader" since everyone can clearly see that the leadership functions are shared. Because everyone performs some leadership functions at some time, shared leadership builds appreciation for the work of leadership -- an appreciation rooted in our personal experience of power and responsibility. Shared leadership lends to the community that practices egalitarian processes a capacity for endurance and progress. (See: Kokopeli and Lakey, Leadership for Change, New Society Press, P.O. Box 582, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-0582.)

With the learned ability to make and carry through with decisions in one's community, a similar ability is extended to one's social life where a form of social discipline results from the need to be responsible for one's actions.

One learns the consequences of one's actions in community since a small village is essentially a closed system. One cannot ignore one's mistakes because they will be there tomorrow to be learned from, and similarly, one's successes are there too, providing for the individual a sense of ownership of the experience, resulting in a personal growth. Such experiences can further provide for the individual a compassionate understanding of or empathy toward the cares of other persons. This experience of community thus instills a sense of prudence and frugality in the individual as we begin to view our personal choices of action in the light of their more long range effects on our and others' well being, and emotional or psychological stability. An

example would be where the norms of an established community provide social restraints against the indulgence in self-destructive or debasing pleasures. In community there is a natural encouragement for participation in a wide range of group or individual activities that provide a sense of wholesome enjoyment.

It is this set of social dynamics that provide a shared and lasting value of cooperative community to both the participating individual and to society at large. A well established community will provide an example of how a society can uphold high moral and ethical values without the involvement of external governments in policing or providing social welfare support. An established community can take great pride in its experience of self-reliance and great enjoyment from a comfortable standard of living shared by all as a result of individual restraint from selfishness and greed. In the future as members become enfeebled, they may be able to rely upon the community's systems of sharing to provide relief from the mass of cares, and dread of misfortune or exposure in old age. With the community around, built upon the values of caring and responsibility for one another, advancing age may be as secure and enjoyable as childhood.

Households in neighborhood clusters, small living groups and extended families each provide the small scale context within which the individual may find personal support and nurturance. A number of such neighborhoods or small living groups together comprise a village or community. Primary and secondary social groupings (circles of friends) supported by appropriate spatial and architectural designs, provides the encouragement for shared parenting of children and for care of others unable to care for themselves. These social dynamics serve to create additional nurturance structures to that of the individual nuclear family model. The effect is the application of appropriate aspects of the more traditional extended family, clan, village or tribal model to the needs of people in the contemporary world.

One of the most basic aspects of traditional society which intentional community serves to preserve is that of sharing. In communal society, sharing can result in such an efficient use of resources that a middle-class lifestyle may be enjoyed even on poverty-level income. In other forms of community, such as land trusts and cohousing communities, the members find that, as the members of Oneida wrote; a beautiful rural estate is within reach of any group of people of even modest

income. Members may enjoy buildings designed and built by those living in them, wholesome fresh organic foods grown and processed by the community, and the privilege of leaving for a vacation and returning to a home well cared for in one's absence.

Sharing also enables a more environmentally sound lifestyle than private ownership of property. As people share tools, vehicles, buildings and land, fewer resources are needed. As the world's population increases, sharing in community can ease the burden on the earth's natural resources more than can private ownership and consumerism.

Intentional community encourages a closeness to the earth, as a pedestrian rather than a vehicle landuse design is stressed, and a closeness to one another as architectural design is used to encourage interactions among people rather than isolating them. Walkways, lounge areas, shady and sunny spots, as well as work spaces are all designed to be inviting and comfortable. Wild areas of the land are set aside for peace and quiet, while some of the buildings are concentrated in central complexes to create a feeling of vibrancy and social vitality. In a village design one is able to walk to work, to celebrations, to private secluded areas and home again in as unhurried a manner as one likes. Of course, if one prefers the fast pace, many communities also manage businesses and outreach programs, political and social service projects, meetings, deadlines and parties!

Certainly a rural community principally benefits the children. They learn much about life growing up in the country, especially if they participate in farming activities. And taking regular trips to experience the city without having to live in one has certain advantages. In a village-like community, children learn cooperation and sharing, and they observe and participate in adult work and recreation. Also, peer groups provide opportunities for children to learn together.

Perhaps the most appreciated value of community is simply the close association with one another of persons who share their time on this Earth. Friendship is priceless, and it is through sharing our life experiences, especially in building community, that we come to know and appreciate both our uniqueness as individuals and our common culture.

## DOMESTIC DESIGN

Intentional community is a lifestyle which provides opportunities for people to design their culture in ways consistent with their ideals and values. How domestic work or services are organized is one important aspect of culture which many community and cooperative organizations have sought to organize according to feminist or egalitarian ideals.

When the suffragist movement was strong, around the turn of the century, many visionaries expected that technological advances such as washing machines, vacuums and kitchen appliances along with collectivization of domestic functions of food preparation, cleaning and child-care, would provide freedom for women from the drudgery of domestic work. Material feminists, as Dolores Hayden refers to these visionaries and activists in The Grand Domestic Revolution (MIT Press:1981), challenged the isolation of the lone housewife, championed the right of women to control their own workspace, and designed domestic alternatives that would free women for career, artistic, political or other pursuits. Such alternatives included spacial redesign of housing such that collective day-care and other shared domestic services could be provided.

A number of feminist societies and associations were started, such as the Women's Commonwealth (1870) in Belton, Texas, and the Cambridge Cooperative House-keeping Society in Massachusettes (1870). One major problem with material feminism, however, was the failure of like numbers of men to support the ideal through lifestyle changes of their own. Before women and men can become truly equal members of society, both must work to create cooperative domestic services and shared child-care.

In The Grand Domestic Revolution (p.26), Dolores Hayden provides an excellent analysis of the development of what we know today as the consumer oriented suburban lifestyle. Material feminists achieved their greatest influence when strategies for housing Americans in dense urban neighborhoods was popular; their influence waned as efficient consumption was defined, not as the careful use of scarce resources, but as the maximum demand for mass-produced commodities. With fast food franchises, television serving as babysitter, and a myriad of electric appliances, capitalism had socialized only those aspects of household work that could be replaced by profitable services or commodities.

With over half of the U.S. working-age female population employed in the 1990s, and with a growing incidence of single-parent families among all social classes, both women and men are beginning to recognize that isolated housing and inadequate community services are making the pursuit-of-happiness a grinding ordeal. In response, a new communitarian strategy is emerging which encourages the creation of home-like neighborhoods. The result is a change of focus from the conservative ideal of preserving the isolated nuclear family lifestyle, to the concept of extending the nurturing values of the home to the small, neighborhood community.

There are today many forms of domestic relationships practiced in different intentional communities. Three are presented here: the cohousing model, communal society, and the polyfidelitous group marriage.

Cohousing is a community design which may take any of several different forms. Cohousing communities may be organized as housing cooperatives, as non-profit corporations involving common ownership of land and/or buildings, or as a for-profit condominium-like project. What distinguishes a cohousing development is the intentional organization of community services, especially food service, child-care, recreation and other group functions in a common building. Cohousing communities are usually organized, planned and managed by the residents themselves, resulting in a neighborhood community based upon the shared experiences of working together and mutual aid. Cluster housing around a central kitchen/dining/social building serves to integrate individuals within the community through its space use design emphasizing the gradual transition from private to semi-private to public space within the defined community.

As an intentional community the cohousing group is better able to manage its own affairs than the traditional urban or suburban neighborhood. Shared services, often including job creation as well as domestic support, reduces the individual's need to rely upon often inadequate government, corporate or private services, while also providing the organization necessary for the group to be socially and politically active in local, regional and national issues. The result is a net gain to society.

Communal societies are another form of intentional community which advance the practice of sharing as seen in cohousing and other cooperative and collective communities, to the point where all assets are commonly

owned by the group and very little, usually only personal effects, remain private property. Polyfidelity, as practiced at Kerista and in other communities, is a form of communal society in which there is no possessiveness even in human relationships. Group marriage is perhaps the ultimate form of sharing. Since material wellbeing is not dependent upon who one is married to in communal society, all sorts of relationships have been practiced.

Many communal societies recognize the value of the nurturing qualities of “the family,” and therefore have developed an architectural design which respects both the need for privacy and for small group or family functions, while also respecting the ideal of sharing domestic services. Residences with six to ten private rooms for adults, plus rooms for children, or family suites, results in a household which can organize collective child-care, cooking and cleaning. Single family apartments and houses are avoided in “egalitarian” communal societies as this architectural design tends to reinforce the development of traditional gender roles, resulting in women tending to assume more of the domestic responsibilities than men. With six to ten adults of mixed gender in a residence it is much more likely that domestic work will be shared, either through a rotating schedule or through assignment of tasks. The result is that women and men are encouraged to work together to provide free time for each to pursue their individual interests. This is the architectural and social design being developed at Twin Oaks Community which offers community wide domestic services such as a 24 hour child-care facility and a central food service building in addition to the smaller scale “small living group” collective household services.

The communal economy is also able to support the non-sexist or egalitarian ideal when a flex-time work schedule is organized by the members. The best example of this is the “labor credit system” at Twin Oaks and East Wind Communities. As the communal economy does not involve the exchange of money for goods and services, the community focuses upon the equitable organization of labor through managing a labor credit system. One hour of labor is worth one credit, and each member is responsible for meeting a weekly work quota (40 to 50 hours) in areas agreed upon by the community. Through keeping accurate records of what labor each member contributes to the community, it is easy to design a flex-time schedule in which individuals may switch from one job to another, often between several in a day. The result is that men and women may easily

divide their time between domestic and other work areas, encouraging a wide diffusion of skills and a sharing of all burdens, including income, domestic services, agricultural, maintenance and many other concerns of the community. The result is often a high rate of worker satisfaction and personal freedoms difficult to secure outside of community.

## TRANSFORMATION TODAY

The alternative social, economic and political structures existing parallel to the dominate culture have always served to anticipate, reflect and quicken social change. These parallel societies or alternative cultures are able to focus upon particular inadequacies of the larger culture, bringing these issues to focus and eventually developing solutions which gradually become widely adapted when found to be of value to the larger culture. This may eventually be the case with the cohousing design, and we may hope to see a similar development with the egalitarian “small living group” and the communal “labor credit” designs, described in the last section.

There are many different concepts and values involved in the very broad intentional communities movement. In addition to communities focused upon egalitarian and domestic issues, various other communities choose to focus more upon a range of other issues, such as: political activism, artistic expression, economic justice and cooperation, spiritual growth, human potential, social service, appropriate technology, land and nature conservation, survivalism, cultural separatism, or any number of other concerns. Each of these topics include many different approaches, as expressed by different communities. For a few examples, consider the many different spiritual orientations; Christian, Hindu, Zen, Islamic, Native American, pagan, metaphysics and others. Political concerns run from authoritarian to participatory to anarchist theory. Economic concerns include cooperatives, worker ownership, alternative exchange systems, communal systems, land trusts -- and the list goes on, including various mixtures of the above.

In their effort to build cultural designs different from the dominant society, intentional communities may serve as a form of cultural barometer, indicating general trends in society. Intentional communities tend to concentrate or distill out of the larger culture the more progressive ideals and values as they arise, develop them in small scale social experiments, and promote their successes to

the outside world. In this way, as Alfonse de Lamartine wrote, "Utopias are often only premature truths."

The intentional community movement today is best portrayed in two recent books. Builders of the Dawn by Corrine McLaughlin and Gordon Davidson (Sirius Publishers:1985) and the 1990 Communités Directory (Community Publications Cooperative, Fellowship for Intentional Community:1990). From these sources we may summarize the general focuses of the contemporary intentional community movement in the four following concepts:

- \* An emphasis upon cooperation and some form of sharing of resources and skills; norms of non-discrimination and non-sexism, of valuing individual equality and individual differences.

- \* A commitment to personal and social change: to individual psychological and spiritual growth, and to service to society carried out in a community setting where individual needs are balanced with group needs.

- \* A practice of "living lightly upon the earth," reducing consumption, recycling resources, embracing appropriate scale technology and renewable energy sources.

- \* An awareness of the oneness of humanity and of all life, and a conscious response to the global crisis through development of social and cultural designs for a more peaceful, ecological and egalitarian world.

## CULTURAL CHANGE

The beginning of each new era of Western civilization has been characterized by massive cultural change. These periods of change are often influenced by the technological and social innovations developed and practiced in intentional communities by groups of people seeking to find answers to the problems they recognize in the world.

The social experimentation carried on within intentional communities often arises as a result of persons voluntarily participating in self-government and mutual services. The result is the groups' ability to selectively support external authority structures, and to withdraw from those structures which are inadequate or destructive to persons or planet. The resulting parallel alternative social systems serve as models to the larger culture which, when copied or adapted, facilitate social change.

Each era of historical development witnessed the beginning of one or more intentional community traditions.

The social experimentation of those community traditions often anticipated changes happening in the larger culture, at times even acting as catalysts for social transformation toward the next historical era. Examples of this dynamic involving intentional community traditions which still exist will be cited as we discuss the particular eras.

## RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

The single greatest inspiration for intentional community movements, and perhaps the greatest influence upon Western civilization itself, has been the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Communal organizations existed before Christ in at least India (Hindu), China (Taoist), Tibet (Buddhist), Persia (Manachianism & Mazdaism) and Palestine (Essenes), as well as after Christ in Central and South America among at least the Mayan and Aztec peoples, and the indians of Peru.

Christian monasticism began in the third century A.D. with the solitary hermits in the Egyptian desert, eventually developing into communities or eremetical monasticism, and later into extensive European networks of monasteries. Christian communalism developed in two separate traditions, monasticism and what may be called the Christian underground. One analysis suggests that as the Church ascended to the Roman throne, the fall of Rome was hastened as many of Rome's best citizens decided to serve the Church rather than the state. Later, as the Holy Roman Empire consolidated control of the Catholic monasteries under the Pope, all other communal sects were heresied and persecuted. The underground Christian communal tradition continued, however, sometimes with influences from the dualist/Gnostic traditions of the Persian and Arabic worlds, until it grew to prominence during the Protestant Reformation.

Both of these Christian communal traditions, official monasticism and the underground Christian Brothers, or "primitive Christian church," played important roles in the evolution of Western culture. One important influence which both traditions have had upon the larger culture, today as well as in ancient and feudal times, is the example or spectacle of the self-less individual working for the common good in a world of men (and women?) grappling for individual power and wealth.

The best remembered contribution of monasticism to Western civilization is the painstaking transcription of ancient manuscripts into illuminated texts. This service

preserved much of ancient learning and wisdom through Europe's Dark Ages. During that period and later European monasteries and nunneries also served to preserve herbal lore and natural healing wisdom while much of that knowledge was being burned at the stake during the witch hunts. Monasticism also served the advance of civilization as the drive to constantly reform and purify the movement led to the continual establishment of new monasteries in wild and remote areas. Thus, monasticism aided frontier development in Europe, where during the 1200s Catholic monasticism occupied one-quarter of the developed land. This widespread development was partly a result of the Rule of Benedict which standardized much of monastic life, including the systematization of labor. Organized monastic labor resulted in the paradox of an ostensibly renunciate lifestyle nevertheless building an increasing material wealth, leading to the erosion of the original ideals as expressed in monastic vows. This dynamic then encouraged periodic monastic reform movements.

In the Americas the Catholic Church established many frontier monasteries. Some of these intended to pacify the native tribes through building Christian communal societies, especially the Jesuit missions in South America. In North America, Protestant communal sects often settled on the frontier in their drive to escape persecution. This pattern of frontier settlement was repeated again in the twentieth century as the nation of Israel was formed. The communal Israeli Kibbutz movement founded settlements in many border regions, developed productive agricultural programs in the desert, and nurtured many important military and government leaders.

The European Protestant Reformation of the 1500s is often credited to Martin Luther, but centuries of underground communal and other social movements (i.e., Waldenses, Cathars, Free Spirit, Flagelants, Beghards/Beguines, etc.) also played a large part, as did the beginning of the craft guilds and the market economy, and certain technological inventions such as the printing press and the resulting wider availability of the Bible. Intentional communities beginning in this period which still exist today include some Mennonite and Quaker cooperative societies and the communal Hutterites.

## **A TRADITION OF PARTICIPATION**

Through the Reformation era doctrine of the "Inner Light" and the practice of individual election, individuals

as lay ministers began to gather congregations, and to question the spiritual status quo. Eventually this tradition of individual thought and action progressed from confrontation with the Church to confrontation with the state. From this developed the democratic tradition, and the Constitution of the United States of America and of other nations.

In the latter twentieth century, the recognition of the importance of individual initiative and of free choice is leading to the demise of the authoritarian state-supported centralized economy known as "communism." Similarly in many countries formerly characterized as right wing dictatorships, the democratic ideal is also gaining strength. Good examples of these are the Latin American countries where the Roman Catholic "base communities" are important social movements. In all of these examples, religious, economic and political, the concept of voluntary participation in social systems and structures has or is replacing the practice of authoritarianism.

The issue identified in this outline of the progress of civilization is the question of the most appropriate process of human communication in society. As religion ruled early Western society (the Holy Roman Empire, for example), economics rules us now (e.g., multinational corporate capitalism and consumerism). In both time periods national governments only function within the boundaries created by the powers which are able to command the primary allegiance of the people. When people discover that they have no control over these institutions, they often turn to alternative social designs, empowering themselves through their creation of human scale community. Creating community has always been the most effective method for assuring that individuals have direct control over their own lives. This is because the process of individual participation in group decision-making is the most efficacious alternative to the problem of coercive institutions.

It was this problem of coercion and of brute economic force that characterized the early Industrial Revolution. The oppressions resulting from rapid industrialization in Europe, affecting especially the role of women in society, the enclosure of the village commons, environmental degradation and the usurpation of family functions by profit oriented corporations (the latter two happening especially today), all encouraged communitarian ideals such as those expressed in the 19th Century as Associationism by Charles Fourier and those of the

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Community Commonwealth as inspired by Robert Owen.

Charles Fourier, who's work was first published in 1808, was at times very eccentric, but as Dolores Hayden wrote (Seven American Utopias, MIT Press:1976, p.149) "He anticipated Freud's views on sexual repression and Marx's and Engels's criticisms of capitalist society. Probably the first twentieth century thinker to equal the scope of Fourier's ecological concerns was Buckminster Fuller." Dolores Hayden explains Charles Fourier's view of community as an environment which would stimulate all manner of personal exploration and growth. His theory of "passional attraction" used architectural design and space utilization to encourage an egalitarian, random distribution of spontaneous meetings. Attractive workplaces were designed to encourage people to find industrial labor appealing. Gardens, fields and orchards would be contiguous, and refreshment pavilions would be convenient to contribute to the pleasure of work, and for their potential to organize interactions between people. Charles Fourier believed that all labor such as construction and domestic work gave expression to human passions and led to communal harmony. Dolores Hayden states (The Grand Domestic Revolution:p.6) that communitarian socialism to some extent generated both of the two greatest social movements of the late nineteenth century, socialism and feminism.

Various nineteenth century intentional communities utilized Fourier's theories in their use of spatial design to bring members of the community together in varied social encounters. Circulation and threshold spaces, common activities designed for particular rooms, private spaces varied in kind and quantity, and large social halls for dining, meetings and cultural activities all contributed to the experience of "passional attraction." The North American Phalanx (1843) and Oneida (1847) communities both expressed the value of participatory process in building and in environmental design by the residents of the community. This process led to both individual pride in the group's collective accomplishment and lifestyle, and to increased community cohesiveness. As the members stated in the Oneida Circular of 1862 (Hayden, Seven American Utopias:p.198), a fine estate is not a capitalist treasure but a natural commodity within the reach of a community of modest means.

In Brook Farm (1841) we find an example of the mixing of two primary social theories; that of the external influence of the environment upon the individual's char-

acter and behavior, as expressed by Associationism, and that of the inner source of grace guiding the individual as expressed by New England Transcendentalism. With the rise of the science of psychology in the 20th Century we begin to better understand these concepts, and to develop new applications for them. Behavioral psychology emphasizes the role of external forces in shaping the individual, while the human potential movement stresses an internal source of motivation. Integrating these two factors in the social, political and economic aspects of culture remains the challenge of civilization.

We are seeing this issue of the necessity of finding a balance between individuality and collectivity, or between internal and external sources of truth or motivation, as being central to the transformations occurring in Eastern communism and in Western capitalism. In the later case, employee involvement and employee stock ownership support the practice of participatory management and economic democracy. Hierarchical and adversarial work-place structures are changing toward more cooperative, consensus-based, decentralized authority models. Robert Owen advocated this concept in the mid 1800s, and is considered a primary inspiration of the consumer, producer and worker cooperative movements. It is this effort to find a better balance between authority and autonomy in social structures that suggests one value of the cultural experimentation carried on in intentional community.

### **COMPETITION and POSSESSIVENESS versus COOPERATION and SHARING**

The term "community" is used to suggest an awareness that the individual is part of a cultural unit. The term itself, however, does not distinguish between cultures which nurture and those which obstruct the individual's survival or the development of their human potential. Yet when we use the term "community," we assume a reciprocal relationship in which the individual and the society work for mutual benefit. Understanding the nature of this positive relationship requires an understanding of the importance of sharing in human society, some of the basic aspects of the cooperative lifestyle, and how the concept of communitarianism is creating change in our contemporary culture.

A communitarian awareness is a question of consciousness. If we see ourselves primarily as totally free agents with no ultimate responsibility to others or for the care of the Earth, then we are living in what Alan Watts termed

a “skin encapsulated ego,” and society is nothing more than a coercive, external force, forever in conflict with the individual. If our civilization were based upon alienation, competition and oppression, then how could we have progressed as far as we have? There must be something stronger in our character than our propensity for competition and violence that has enabled human society to advance over time. Love is the answer most often given to this riddle, and the evolution of love in human culture -- of the practice of caring, of sharing and of cooperation -- may be thought of as a spiritual evolution. Our consciousness is gradually rising to the point where we place the highest value upon communication processes which support sharing, cooperation and other communitarian values.

If we choose to look only for the negative, then competition and violence is all that we will see. If we choose to look for the positive, then we may be surprised to find that even those people who are remembered for their explanation of the mechanisms of competition, themselves knew that there was a deeper, positive aspect to our nature.

In her quest to discover the root causes of hunger, Francis Moore Lappe has approached the issue of the power of ideas. She found that Adam Smith, whom we remember best for his description of the market system as being driven by an “invisible hand” (leading to the concept of laissez-faire capitalism), and Charles Darwin, who suggested that evolution was driven by “survival of the fittest,” both also recognized that humans are basically social creatures, and that society is predicated upon mutual aid.

How selfish so ever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it. (Adam Smith, The Theory of Moral Sentiments, 1790.)

As man advances in civilization and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instinct and sympathies to all members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. (Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex, 1904.) (Lappe 1988, 15)

Beneath our superficial concentration upon competition, there is a deep respect for community. The anthropologist Richard Leakey said it most succinctly when he wrote that, “Sharing, not hunting or gathering as such, is what made us human.” (Leakey 1978, 120)

People help each other all the time, and they are motivated to, not by repeated calculations of the ultimate benefit to themselves through returned favors, but because they are psychologically motivated to do so. This is precisely what one would expect; over countless generations natural selection favored the emergence of emotions that made reciprocal altruism work, emotions such as sympathy, gratitude, guilt and moral indignation. (sic.) (Leakey 1978, 137)

If we can see the importance of sharing and of cooperation to the development of civilization, then we may hope to transcend the debate on the relative primacy of cooperation versus competition, of sharing versus possessiveness, and of love for all versus a self-centered love. We may recognize what the anthropologist Paul Radin observed that in societies which displayed the greatest capacity for survival and endurance,

... the individual and the group are interlocking at certain points ... yet sufficiently autonomous units to resist submergence of one by the other. (Morgan 1988, 21)

The dynamic balance to be sought in human society is not between opposing competitive forces, but between the complementary aspects of our individual characters; self-awareness and social awareness. In our laws, our customs and traditions, and even in our language, we would do well to focus upon the balance of responsibilities we have to society and to all of life on Earth, not just to our own personal needs and rights. If we do not yet have a language this inclusive, we might recognize that certain more “primitive” societies were more advanced in this respect.

In his book titled, Toward An Ecological Society, Murray Bookchin refers to the observations of Dorothy Lee on the “primitive” mind.

Terms commonly expressive of coercion in modern languages, she notes, are so arranged by the Wintu (Indians of California) that they denote cooperative behavior. A Wintu mother,

for example, does not “take” her baby into the shade; she “goes” with it into the shade. A chief does not “rule” his people; he “stands” with them. ... **To live with** (sic.) is the usual way in which they express what we call possession, ... so that a man will be said to live with his bow and arrows. (Bookchin 1980, 60-61)

Non-possessive forms of speech indicate an egalitarian social structure, and such alternative societies exist today in the U.S. and elsewhere. The communities comprising the Federation of Egalitarian Communities, for example, encourage their members to refer to not “my room,” but “the room I’m living in,” and not “my tool,” but “the tool I’m using.” This non-possessive focus indicates an awareness that we individuals are attuned with the world, not controlling it as owners, but acting as responsible stewards integrated with the Earth’s natural systems, and responsible primarily to the society of which we are a part.

## COMMUNITARIAN SOCIOLOGY

In egalitarian societies there is a greater emphasis upon social and environmental responsibility than what exists in hierarchical societies. Hierarchies engender conflict and result in an emphasis upon individualism; the self against society. As a result of this, we have today a growing concern that American society over-emphasizes selfishness. The “me-ism” ideal growing since the 1960s, has led to the kind of cultural analysis which John Leo presented in U.S. News & World Report. “The problem is this: America is more and more coming to look like a random collection of atomized individuals, bristling with rights and choices but with no connectedness or responsibility for one another.” (Leo 1991, 17)

In response to this culture of selfishness, we may see developing a new intellectual movement. Its strongest advocate is currently Dr. Amitai Etzioni, sociology professor at George Washington University, who co-founded a magazine called Responsive Community, and wrote in its statement of purpose that, “the rights of individuals must be balanced with responsibilities to the community.” (Shapiro 1991, 71) This movement has been named “communitarianism,” and it supports a number of public policy proposals such as those for national service for youth, and divorce laws emphasizing the needs of children over the financial and emotional demands of their parents. Communitarians also suggest a focus upon programs to aid the family such as day-

care, and as John Leo wrote, “... on pushing schools to teach nonsectarian communal values such as honesty, self-discipline, responsibility for others.” (Leo 1991, 17)

In a Time magazine article Walter Shapiro defined communitarianism as an, “effort to temper the excess of American individualism with a strong assertion of the rights of the larger society.” (Shapiro 1991, 71) In response to this developing ideology, the “radical individualists,” as Dr. Etzioni refers to them, are taking up the debate. Roland Pennock wrote in a newsletter called The Political Science Teacher that,

Liberals fear that communitarianism all too easily leads to a neglect of individual liberty. Most communitarians have little if anything to say about institutional means for protecting the liberties essential for the accomodation of individual differences with respect to desires and values. (Pennock 1990, 9-10)

Currently, as Walter Shapiro states, communitarianism is “... less than a coherent philosophy.” (Shapiro 1991, 71) It has managed to carry on the debate about the relative primacy of the individual versus society, but it cannot become a truly transformational movement until it transcends the debate altogether with a concept which will, to recall Paul Radin’s words, “resist submergence of one by the other.”

## SHARED LEADERSHIP

In order to see how a balance may be achieved between individual and community rights, we need to consider the experiences of egalitarian cultures, both the primitive and the contemporary alternative societies. The key point upon which this balance rests is the question of the appropriate degree of individual participation in the process of decision-making.

One of the keenest lessons distilled from the communitarian experience is the importance of maintaining individual access to the community’s decision-making functions. Smoothly functioning communities, or those which have a high degree of individual commitment to the group, are generally those which maintain a participatory decision-making process that routinely asks for the views, ideas, needs and desires of the membership. The best response to this communication need is the community’s focus upon the empowerment of the individual through what is often called shared leadership.

Shared leadership is encouraged by group processes and activities which maintain a sense of involvement and a high morale. These include systems to aid clarity and accuracy of communication, encourage participation, facilitate constructive conflict resolution, relieve tension, and maintain trust and goal awareness. Sharing these functions is a means of keeping the members in charge of their association or community. Since everyone performs some leadership functions at some time, shared leadership builds appreciation for the work of leadership -- an appreciation rooted in our personal experience of power and responsibility. Shared leadership lends to the community that practices egalitarian processes a capacity for endurance and progress. (Kokopeli, Lakey 1978)

Shared leadership and participatory governance provide the process by which caring, sharing and cooperation are nurtured in society. Designing social and cultural systems centered upon these processes provides the balance between individual and community rights. The term "communitarianism" itself, however, does not mandate, but merely suggests this value of participation. Participation is a quality which must be intentionally designed into community institutions, for the default process is authoritarianism, which results in patterns of conflict. The point is that the rights of the community may be imposed upon the individual, or they may be asserted by the individuals themselves only after their participation in the writing of laws and regulations, or in the popular review and reaffirmation of those laws and community institutions. The greater the level of participation in decision-making, the less amount of conflict there will be in a society due to the fact that real solutions to problems will eventually be found as more issues and opinions are considered. This general principle may hold true for small scale societies and on the local level, but for the city, state, national and global levels the question becomes the appropriate degree of participation, in relation to the skills and technology levels available to manage that participation. Majority-rule and representative government constitute the simplest form of participation. Greater levels of participation require more time and energy to build a true consensus decision-making process.

Given that we are far from instituting a truly participatory decision-making process on the global or national level, much less a non-possessive language, we might look for ways in which the theory at least seems to be operative on these levels. There are a number of such examples to point out, which can only be briefly presented here.

An excellent example of the need to reevaluate how we think about our economic and political processes is discussed in the book Redefining Wealth and Progress, produced by The Other Economic Summit (TOES). The need is to identify "alternative development indicators" in order to more accurately measure progress.

It has now become clear that today's ... money-denominated statistics (GNP, GDP, inflation, etc.) ... serve best the world's currency arbitrageurs and stock market speculators. Recently, Euromoney magazine('s) ... new Country Risk Ratings treat whole countries as "statistical black boxes" reduced to one "key" indicator: Ability to Service External Debt! No further case need be made for responsible politicians within these countries to redefine their own internal goals, values and priorities ... since it is now clear that economics is merely politics in disguise. (Henderson 1989, 32)

The present development crisis ... is rooted in a development paradigm that assumes human welfare to be merely the sum of gross economic values. ... This demands a new development paradigm to bring about a development process which is:

- a) People-centered, that is able to truly meet basic human needs, including ensuring the exercise of people's primary role in the formulation and execution of development programs.
- b) Sustainable, meaning socially just and equitable as well as ecologically sound.
- c) Self-reliant, meaning the use to the maximum extent possible of the countries' own capabilities. (Caracas 1989, 141)

Notice in these three basic criteria for cultural progress that three focuses are emphasized; a responsibility to the individual, social responsibility and environmental responsibility. The three must be considered together, and of these, we have tended to afford the latter the least attention. That, however, is changing.

In the book Climate in Crisis, Albert Bates suggests that national leaders are beginning to awaken to the concept of global communitarianism, at least as respects the environment.

Sometime in the next 40 or 50 years, the Earth's population will double, from 5 to 10 billion people. ... What will happen when the four-fifths of the world's population, many of them

growing up on a visual diet of television shows like Dallas and Wheel of Fortune, ask, respectfully, to have the same standard of living as the other fifth?

The remedy for our mounting crisis is simple. **We have to live within the means that the planetary life-support system provides.** (sic.) (Bates 1990, 141)

In March, 1989, leaders of 17 countries and high-ranking representatives of 7 others convened in The Hague to address the global warming crisis. For the first time, world leaders met and reached agreement that some degree of national sovereignty would have to be sacrificed if the planet were to be saved from environmental devastation. (Bates 1990, 145)

With a decrease in national sovereignty, something else must grow. In order for a participatory world order to develop the assumption is that this would need to be the United Nations. From the perspective of the "New World Order," however, its likely to be a form of corporate globalism.

## COMMUNITY VALUES

A truly participatory decision-making process ought best originate with the people rather than be imposed upon them by their government. In reality, such a process could only come into being from the grass-roots, as ends are best served if justified by their means. This is precisely the value and the potential of the newly arising environmentally responsible ideologies such as social ecology, eco-feminism, deep ecology, bio-regionalism, geonomics, the land trust movements, TOES, the Fourth World, the Green Party, and others. None of these, however, are strong enough by themselves to cause significant change in the economic and political processes of the dominate culture. Rather, it may be more instructive to consider these to be the expressions of and initial responses to an inevitable shift in human consciousness.

The shift toward a recognition of the value of greater degrees of participation in our decision-making processes can be seen to be happening in a number of different segments of our culture. One important area is in business management. Employee empowerment through self-management teams is quickly becoming a

more accepted management process. The National Public Radio reported on a "Morning Edition" segment in March 1991 that 7% of all Fortune 500 corporations encourage self-managed teams of employees. They estimated that the number will increase to 40 to 50% by 1995. There are also growing worker-cooperative and worker-ownership movements, including employee buy-outs of existing businesses. The combined incentive of personal investment and self-management usually results in high productivity.

Perhaps the most important indication of the increase in the understanding of the importance of participation and of communitarian values is the increasing number of programs in the public schools which teach cooperation to children. There is an International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education and a number of state and regional associations, including those in Michigan and California, the Great Lakes and the Mid-Atlantic. There are also a number of books on the topic, including; No Contest: The Case Against Competition, Alfred Kohn, Using Student Team Learning, Robert Slavin, Cooperative Learning Resources for Teachers, Spencer Kagan, and This Is School Sit Down and Listen!, David Aspy. (Butcher 1990, 45)

If there is a cultural shift toward greater degrees of participation by individuals in the institutions which affect their lives, and if there is a new paradigm developing characterized by a more stable balance between individual and community rights, then we may expect to see these qualities merging in a new lifestyle. This is essentially the significance of a form of communitarianism called intentional community.

Communitarianism has been defined as a balance between the rights of the individual and of the community, and intentional community may be defined as the manifestation of the spiritual values of love and caring in the process of the sharing of material resources. Intentional community, therefore, is a more deliberate expression of individual participation in community affairs than exists in the larger culture. This participation results in the group's sharing of material wealth and property in some degree of common ownership and control, and in their collective decision to refer to themselves as an intentional community.

There is a wide range of ownership designs in various intentional communities, from the sharing of private property to the sharing of commonly owned property, and mixtures of these. There is also a wide range of

control processes over these shared resources, from authoritarian to participatory.

In the larger, dominant culture, some aspects of the intentional community ideal can be recognized in certain developments. These adapt the concept of participatory democracy to aspects of community control. They involve local or neighborhood associations which essentially work with the lowest common denominator of sharing, beginning with the assumption of privacy and requiring only a minimal degree of sharing. Some of these are relatively widespread and thus represent some progress toward communitarian values in the larger society. These include the community development corporation, the homeowners association, and planned villages.

The community development corporation (CDC) is generally used to encourage greater participation by residents in neighborhood governance than is normally found in conventional community organizations.

Where a community development corporation is successful in creating jobs, ... day care centers, health clinics, (and) schools, and also succeeds in making itself a vehicle for community participation, a neighborhood can develop into a true community. It can do so because what is created is more than a set of discrete services .... The community development corporation can be the basic neighborhood institution -- social, political and economic -- thus integrating services, governance, and work. (Benello 1971, 55)

The CDC structure is used by at least one intentional community (Stelle), and by some community land trusts, but more intentional communities utilize the homeowners association. There are at least two different legal forms for homeowners associations (IRC 501 (c) (4) and IRC 528), and many different designs, including the condominium. The minimum requirement for such an association to be termed an intentional community is that the residents must collectively decide to so refer to themselves.

Another example of the communitarian ideal in land use and architectural design is the kind of planned community pioneered by the federal government's 1930s New Deal, called at that time Greenbelt Towns or New Towns. Today we have developments such as Seaside and Wellington, Florida in which zoning and other local

ordinances are used to build and maintain a traditional, pedestrian oriented village atmosphere. (Dunlop 1990) There is also today a movement which utilizes the homeowners association or other form of incorporation (non-profit, cooperative, etc.) in what is called cohousing. (McCamant, Durrett 1988) Cohousing communities are a type of intentional community since they involve individuals in many community activities, including a community food service facility, and especially a planning process involving the future residents in the design effort prior to construction. In contrast, new towns and condominiums are generally built by developers who then market the housing units and other amenities to a public having no participation in the design.

These are some of the many examples that can be cited to indicate an increase in the concern for and interest in communitarian ideals in our culture. Others would include President Bush's concepts of "a thousand points of light," and of a "kinder gentler America." There are also many religious and spiritual trends in this direction, and others such as what John Naisbitt refers to in the book Megatrends as "high tech/high touch," suggesting that as we become more of a technological culture, there is a corresponding rise in our need to affirm our humanity. (Naisbitt 1982, 36) This is the concept of balance once again.

In considering how we live, we may become aware that human society is forever changing. As we continue to gain experience as a culture, we may expect that our social situation will improve much the same way as our technology is continually advancing. It is the diversity of communitarian designs which provides for the communities movement an ability to creatively adapt to changing conditions and opportunities. Much as we value a great biological diversity on our planet, so we may also recognize the importance of a great variety of social models and designs within the larger, very homogenous contemporary culture.

Through building a tradition of sharing, people are able to intentionally design the lifestyle of their choice. When this freely chosen or assumed cultural identity results in processes maintaining the sharing of material wealth, an intentional community is founded. Such an experience enjoyed among friends is the most important aspect of intentional community!

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