

*Politics
and
Passion*

Toward a More
Egalitarian Liberalism

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THREE

Cultural Rights

CULTURAL COMMUNITIES ARE INVOLUNTARY associations in exactly the sense that I suggested in the first chapter. Individuals are enrolled by their parents, and although there is considerable coming and going in subsequent years, most people hover around the groups in which they have been enrolled, sometimes drifting away from their practices and beliefs, sometimes drifting back. I want to consider one of the claims that some groups of this sort make on the larger society—a claim not (or not primarily) for material support but for “cultural rights.” The negotiation of such claims often figures in the politics of recognition and empowerment. But the actual negotiations make everyone uneasy; long-standing fears and resentments, bred by isolation and inequality, come into play.

The groups that make the strongest claims are minorities whose members are committed to a traditionalist or fundamentalist ver-

sion of religion and culture and are marginal, vulnerable, poor, and stigmatized, in part at least, because of that commitment. In the United States, these members make up a relatively small proportion of the victims of durable inequality; in other countries they figure more significantly. In any case, the groups they form pose especially difficult problems for the liberal state. And liberal theorists, who are unhappy with all forms of culturalist politics, worry particularly about these groups. As I suggested in the last chapter, they prefer to address inequalities in the language of class rather than community. But some inequalities really are rooted in culture and community. Class turns out to be a utopian concept.

So let's ask, What is the point of the cultural rights demanded by many minority religious and ethnic communities in the modern world? And how far should liberal democracies (or social democracies) go in accommodating communities of this kind? I mean these to be practical questions. I am not interested here in the philosophical debate about whether these rights exist and, if they do, whether groups or only individuals can be said to have them. The claims are important whether or not the rights are real. Rights talk, however, is our natural language; I will not be able to avoid it even when I insist that the way we respond to culturalist demands depends more on sociology than on philosophy. When arguing about multiculturalism and democratic citizenship, we have to pay attention, as I have only begun to do, to the specific features of group life and the specific demands of different groups.

Liberal democracies should have no difficulty acknowledging rights to communal self-organization, to religious worship and the celebration of the life cycle, to the free and open use of a traditional or national language within a community in ritual or domestic settings and possibly in some political settings, and to the public recognition of the community and its culture in museums and monuments and perhaps also in the state calendar.¹ These points are relatively easy to accept. Although some people might argue for the

necessary neutrality of the state calendar, neutrality would seem to be consistent with a broad and equal fullness; a calendar that marked all the important ethnic and religious holidays would favor no particular ethnicity or religion.

However easy it is to acknowledge community self-organization and culture, the central meaning of the demand for cultural rights is not at all easy to accept. It has to do with social reproduction, which necessarily involves the coercion of children and thus encroaches on the power of the state. It forces us to confront in the strongest way the involuntariness of involuntary associations. The claim is that every racial, ethnic, religious (or, for that matter, political or ideological) community has a right to try to reproduce itself—which means the right to raise and educate its own children. The claim is made most passionately by members of weak, vulnerable, and stigmatized groups who believe that their very survival, their collective future, is in jeopardy.

"A right to try . . .": that sounds like a right that should be readily acknowledged and should pass uncontested. But it is contested, most importantly because in so much of the modern world people belong to more than one community, and so social reproduction requires that their children be taught more than one history and culture. The teachings may be inconsistent, even contradictory; and there are sure to be conflicts over which teaching takes precedence and over who, finally, is in control of the educational process. These conflicts are often wrenching for individuals, and when they are acted out politically, they often divide the community and the country in which it dwells. In certain sorts of communities—I will call them liberal communities—the conflicts can be, and indeed have been, successfully managed. But this experience may be misleading.

Imagine a case from our own country: a set of parents who are U.S. citizens, Catholics, and Italian-Americans. At every level of the educational system, these parents will have to make difficult or potentially difficult choices between public/secular and parochial/

religious schools. These are parental choices, but they are shaped, and their financial consequences are determined, by budgetary decisions made within the church and by the government of the state and town (schooling is the most decentralized governmental function in the United States). Whether the social reproduction of Catholic Italian-Americans should be funded with public money, wholly or partly or not at all, is an important and disputed political question. If public funding is provided, as it is in many European countries (though only for religious groups), the body of citizens will presumably want some say in how it is spent. The citizens will be concerned about their own reproduction. The standard democratic practice is to require that certain courses having to do with the state and its legitimacy be taught in the parochial schools that the state is paying for. In the United States, state governments impose such requirements even though they don't pay for but only license and certify the parochial schools: they commonly require courses on American history and literature and on democratic politics. And isn't it a justifiable practice for democratic citizens, exactly as it is for strongly identified Italian-Americans or faithful Catholics, to try to reproduce their values and commitments in the next generation?

Yes, it is justifiable, and it is also possible, most of the time, to arrange for the (more or less) simultaneous enactment of these different reproductive/educational activities, because each of the three communities I am now considering is a liberal community, which is to say, it is prepared to accept the divided loyalties of its members. The United States has long acknowledged the pluralism of American society and the resulting hyphenated identities of its citizens (it even permits dual citizenship and the twofold allegiance that entails). So *Italian-American* is fine with other Americans—as it is with Italians in America, whose community is very loosely structured, ready to accommodate the participation of its members in American politics and society and to accept, however unhappily, the

consequences of this participation: namely, members who move away from Italianness and then sometimes return with non-Italian spouses in tow. In similar fashion, American Catholicism has gradually accommodated itself to the practices and even to the values of democratic debate and decision (despite its own hierarchical character)—so that faithful Catholics can also be Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, socialists and defenders of *laissez-faire*; they can even be members of ginger groups dedicated to reforming the church. These three communities—Americans, Italian-Americans, and Catholics—have been pluralized from within, and as a result, the claims they make to reproduce themselves are already qualified by a recognition of similar (but different) claims made on behalf of some or even all of their own members.²

The different claims have to be negotiated—and commonly they can be; they are mostly meat-and-potatoes claims. It isn't difficult to imagine the negotiations temporarily deadlocked or suspended in anger, as negotiations over the funding and regulation of parochial schools have frequently been in the United States, ever since Catholic immigrants began arriving in large numbers in the 1840s. But once Catholics recognize that their children are also future citizens of a democratic secular state, and once all the other Americans recognize that some of their fellow citizens are faithful Catholics, and once Italian-Americans recognize that their children may marry non-Italian-Americans, the hardest questions have been settled. The key to the settlement is that these communities have effectively given up any claim to the total loyalty of their members. No doubt, they still hope to capture a substantial part of the time, energy, and available wealth of their members, but they don't demand everything.

This is exactly the situation that the political theorist David Miller describes with a different example, arguing that there is no conflict between an Arab ethnic identity and a French national/republican identity.³ That is true as long as the two make room for

each other. Some militant Muslims and some modern-day Jacobins, however, are not willing to do that.

As long as groups don't make radical or total demands, the resulting negotiations, deadlocks and all, represent a possible liberal politics. Divided loyalties open the way for individual choice, and although liberal philosophers may worry about the extent to which these choices are determined by ethnic or religious commitments that are inherited rather than deliberated, they can make their peace with the kind of pluralism I have been describing. It also turns out to be relatively easy to move resources across the boundaries of these pluralized and divided communities. The redistributive project of contemporary liberalism is at least consistent with the ongoing collective life of Catholics and Italian-Americans.

Consider now a radically different kind of collective life, largely undreamt of in liberal philosophy. Some years ago, the sociologist Lewis Coser published a book called *Greedy Institutions*, in which he examined groups and organizations that did in fact demand everything (or almost everything—*everything* is a relative term) that their members could give.⁴ Most of the groups discussed in Coser's book recruited their members as adults; the Communist Party as it once was, is an obvious example. But people are also born and bred in greedy or totalizing communities. The members of such communities or, better, their children, inherit (rather than choose) a social system that is complete in every detail and that includes, in all the important cases, a place for each of them in a fully developed hierarchy: men and women, old and young, learned and ignorant.

The key purpose of education in such a community is to teach future members the duties of their place. And it is this narrow and exclusive focus that makes the right of social reproduction so problematic—problematic, I mean, for a liberal and democratic society, but only in liberal, democratic societies are claims made in the language of rights. Here is my practical question, then: Should we

54 liberals and democrats) recognize the right of totalizing communities, like fundamentalist or ultraorthodox religious groups (the *haredim* in Israel; Pentecostal sects in the United States) or like traditionalist ethnic groups (the Aboriginal tribes of Canada and New Zealand), to reproduce themselves—that is, to do whatever they think necessary to pass on their way of life to their children, who are also future citizens of a democratic state? And should the state in any way support the exercise of this right?

The right is problematic for three reasons:

1. because these groups generally don't recognize the individual rights attributed equally to all their members, men and women alike, by the democratic state, so they won't be inclined to teach their members about such rights. Above all, they won't want their children to understand the full extent of their liberal right of exit—the right to leave, resign, walk away, become an apostate—which holds for any and all groups, including religious communities (and, in principle at least, the state too).
2. because these groups often don't equip their children with the economic skills they would need to make their way in the world if they did decide to leave; nor have the group's adult members developed within the community the resources that make for a prosperous material existence. The education they provide condemns most of their children to some version of traditionalist poverty or spartan discipline—on the assumption, of course, that this is the good life.

3. because these groups are unlikely to teach their children the values that underlie democratic politics: the equality of citizens, the need for free and open debate, the right of opposition, and, above all, the commitment to a commonweal, or general good, that includes people outside the parochial community—heretics, apostates, infidels, foreigners, and so on.⁵

altern:

education is for personal fulfillment,
democracy is one way to maximize this?

Assume now that the descriptive statements I have just made are accurate, that totalizing groups behave in these ways. This means that their schools won't, as a matter of principle, produce individuals who are capable of acting autonomously in the world (choosing a career, say, or responding to a calling not ratified by their religion) or capable of reaching for material success; and they won't produce citizens who are ready to take responsibility for the general well-being of a political community that includes "the others." I would even suggest that the reproductive project of totalizing groups depends on these results: the project won't succeed, won't prosper over time, unless new members are taught not to seek autonomy, not to pursue happiness in the form of material welfare, and not to aim at the general, extra-community good. Should the democratic state support, should it even allow, that success?

The first issue raised by this question is the extent of parental rights over children when they are contested not by the children themselves but by other people who claim to have an interest in the future values and behavior of the children. In this case it is the state, or, better, the body of citizens, that claims this interest. I suppose that the usual claim is limited: the citizens have an interest that exists alongside the parental interest and modifies it to such and such a degree. Only if the state were itself a totalizing community, only if it were a totalitarian rather than a liberal state, would it claim a superseding interest.

Let us try to imagine a group of citizens explaining their interest to skeptical or hostile parents. What would they say? They might elaborate on the first and second problematic features of totalizing groups, and urge the right of the children to act autonomously in the world and to pursue (if they so choose) material happiness. Indeed, autonomy is the value liberals most often invoke when they criticize the educational practices of, say, fundamentalist religious communities. But this involves the claim to know what is best for other people's children—a hard claim to defend when what is at

social reproduction is an odd way to think of people's right to educate their kids religiously.

issue is the use of state power, and one that I am inclined to bracket and approach only indirectly. An argument focused on the third problematic feature of totalizing communities seems more promising, since now the parents speak for themselves and their own children as citizens and future citizens. But there are still many difficulties, as we will see; the argument that begins here has no end.

The citizens say to the parents, "You may raise your children to be whatever you want them to be, with this qualification: if they are to be citizens, if they are to participate along with our children in the public life of the wider community, to join in debates about domestic and foreign policy, to vote in our elections, then they must be taught something about the history of the country, the meaning of citizenship, and the values of democratic politics. As citizens, they are not simply your children; they are the children of the republic, which means that they are going to make decisions that will determine the shape of our common life, perhaps even the survival of the political community. And they have to be taught their responsibility as citizens so that we can be reasonably confident that they will attend to it. The stakes are high; the decisions they will join in making are of critical importance to all of us."

That is, I think, the minimalist position of the citizens; note that it doesn't specify the extent of the educational role they are claiming. Even if the extent is modest, they will probably have more to say than I have just imagined them saying. The rights of democratic citizenship—free debate, political opposition—overlap with the autonomy rights that I bracketed just a moment ago. Thus, if some of the children of the parochial group claim the right to escape from the discipline of a religious court, say, or from the patriarchal control of group elders, this right (and others, too) will certainly be defended by the officials of the democratic state. "Among us," the officials will say, "all men and women are equal before the law, and this equality must be upheld by the state and enforced by the magistrates, whatever the consequences for particular parochial groups.

Individuals can leave these groups, or become dissidents within them, without any civil penalty—indeed, without costs of any sort so far as the state is concerned."

But this response brings us immediately to the second issue that groups of this sort pose: the extent to which we are prepared to tolerate differences. Liberal advocates of toleration sometimes assume that they are being as tolerant as they can possibly be, as tolerant as anyone could possibly want them to be, when they recognize a very wide range of individual choices. Virtually any imaginable life plan, short of a plan to rob or murder one's fellows, is legitimate, and people can associate freely in support of any plan that requires their cooperation. Many plans, many associations: What more could anyone ask?

In truth, however, the life plans that people form under these conditions of individual freedom turn out (as I suggested in the first chapter) to be remarkably similar to one another. At least, they are similar relative to the range of differences revealed in the historical and anthropological record. People who plan their lives, who make their lives into personal projects, who are entrepreneurs of the self, are one sort among many possible sorts. I know such people intimately, and probably so do most readers of this book. Nonetheless, they have made a rather late appearance in human history; it is only in the past couple of centuries that they have come to dominate Western societies. Today, they are us (or most of us), so we have to ask ourselves: Are we prepared to tolerate men and women for whom autonomy, free choice, and the pursuit of individual happiness are not central values? Are we prepared to tolerate men and women who are differently connected to their own lives—who have inherited rather than chosen their lives, for example, or who bear the yoke of divine command?

Only if we are prepared to tolerate people with lives of that kind can we call ourselves tolerant of *difference*. So, here we are: liberal, democratic citizens. Here they are: members of a total community

that isn't a voluntary association either in fact or in their understanding. What would they say to us when we claim an interest in their children? "But if you mean to tolerate us," they would say, "if you mean to recognize our right to live in our own way and to raise our children to value and sustain that way, then you must allow us full control over their education. Our way is an integral whole, complete in itself, leaving no aspect of personal or social life without guidance and constraint. It can't be compromised; it can't be combined with a little bit of this and a little bit of that. Perhaps in the course of their working lives, many of our sons and daughters will be forced to move into the larger world and adapt to its manners and mores. But that makes it all the more important that we control their education for as long as we can—and it is especially important, critical to our survival, that we control as completely as we can the education and upbringing of our daughters, because it is the daughters who bear the burdens of continuity. They guard the home when our sons wander; they give to our infant grandchildren their first words and earliest inclinations."

"In any case, we can't compete for the allegiance of our own children, for until we have taught them the value of our ways, the outside world is sure to look more exciting; its materialism is more enticing than our spartan existence; its gratifications come more quickly; its responsibilities, for all your talk of citizenship, are much less onerous than the responsibilities we impose, to God and one another. We simply can't survive as a voluntary association of autonomous individuals, each one planning his or her own life."

Groups of this sort may or may not be internally democratic (they are usually dominated by male elders), but they are obviously hostile to the values of the democratic state whose toleration they are seeking. Nor is it likely that such a state, or its regime of toleration, would survive if a single totalizing group became demographically dominant. Nonetheless, there is a strong argument in favor of tolerating such groups, even in favor of empowering them and pro-

viding some (qualified and conditional) support for their cultural reproduction. This is the argument for multiculturalism, and what it holds is, first, that human beings need the support and nurturing of a cultural community if they are to live decent lives; second, that cultural communities are highly complex entities, created over many generations, with the effort and devotion of many people; third, that men and women don't choose their communities but nonetheless are strongly attached to them, morally and emotionally; and fourth, that the different communities embody values that can't be rank-ordered on a single scale (which doesn't mean that their practices and policies can't be criticized). I shall offer no explicit defense of these four claims, although I was implicitly defending them in my opening discussion of involuntary association . . . and I am doing so here again.

I want to address another dimension of contemporary multiculturalism. The thrust of both recognition and empowerment politics is, in part at least, egalitarian. It should be contrasted with the more standard liberal effort at emancipation: to create autonomous individuals and set them loose and running from their greedy communities. Autonomous individuals are socially mobile; they range up and down the economic ranks, pursuing their opportunities, succeeding or failing in the marketplace. It is important that they be allowed to do that, although we needn't always regard their entrepreneurial activities as liberating or heroic. The communities they leave behind, weak to start with, will only be further weakened by their departure. But some members, many, in fact, won't depart—even when they could "do better" in the larger world. Loyalty to the old ways, as I have already argued, or to specific people and places, will hold them fast. And mutual aid within the community often enables the members to do well enough, reducing the incentive to leave. What would an egalitarian project require then? Should democratic citizens, using the state as their instrument, attempt to lift the group

as a whole out of its impoverished or pariah existence—not only by recognizing and respecting its way of life but, if necessary, by subsidizing it?

These questions invite another: Should any group, any way of life, be respected and subsidized without regard to its substantive qualities? Critics of multicultural politics raise the specter of relativism. How can we respect or subsidize totalizing and hierarchical, illiberal and inequalitarian communities? In practice, however, relativism is only a specter; respect and subsidy always have a price, as traditionalist groups discover as soon as they claim their "rights." Rights are liberal constructions; they come with conditions, and so they should. But one of the conditions can't be that the totalizing community transform itself into a standard liberal voluntary association.

It follows that even if the values of the democratic state take precedence over those of the parochial communities *for certain purposes*, those values don't come first in every case. But it isn't easy, even for citizens, to determine the precise extent of legitimate state purposes and of the demands that they can make on community members. The number of purposes is potentially large, but it is disputed at every point: Does the state have an interest in the economic competence of its future citizens? In their understanding of modern science? In their military training? In their acceptance of public health measures? In equal opportunity for their boys and girls? As a political theorist committed to democracy and citizenship, I have a strong inclination to say yes to all those questions. But that can't be the right answer, for it would turn the body of democratic citizens into something much too close to a totalizing community.

Consider for a moment the last of these possible state interests. Should the liberal democratic state require that the children of the parochial community receive an education that provides (or tries to provide) equal autonomy and equal opportunity for boys and girls?⁶ Perhaps the question is better put another way: Should the state, for

the sake of equal autonomy and opportunity, take over the education of the community's children? There can't be any doubt that gender equality as it is understood in contemporary liberal democracies would require a radical takeover. But what happens then to toleration? And what should we think about the inevitable resistance of the community, its likely withdrawal into deeper poverty and marginality, and the development among its members of a politics of resentment and paranoia? It may be necessary to choose between dealing with the group's unequal standing in society and dealing with the unequal standing of its individual members. Liberal political theorists prefer to address the second issue, and that is an understandable liberal preference. But perhaps the first issue needs to be addressed . . . first.

That priority would mean looking for ways to move resources into the community, to help its members generate and collect resources on their own, and to strengthen its welfare and educational institutions and its life-cycle services—even while it remains a hierarchical community. The anomaly here is that this kind of resource transfer can only be accomplished politically. It requires that group members participate in the democratic process, defending their own interests. Consequently, the argument that they have to be taught the responsibilities that go with participation seems very strong. Indeed, democratic education should be the crucial condition of any resource transfer—most obviously because a substantial part of the transferred resources are likely to be spent on schooling. So the internal hierarchies of group life are tolerated by this version of egalitarianism but also simultaneously subverted.

Even minimalist state intervention, for the sake of citizenship rather than autonomy, would challenge the hierarchies of gender and age. But the challenge would be, as it should be, less than total. Let's look more closely at the moral and political consequences of calling group members citizens and encouraging them to participate in the political process.

The democratic state recognizes the legal equality of all its citizens, men and women alike, and grants them the same rights to vote, hold office, join in campaigns and policy debates, and so on. The different parochial communities cannot then deny these rights, as many of them would be inclined to do, to their women members. Nor are the male elders inclined that way for long; they understand the value of the vote, and so they want "their" women to go to the polls. No doubt, they teach the women to defer to their fathers and husbands in such matters and to vote only as they are told. In fact, however, the fathers and husbands are taught something very similar: to defer to their elders and vote only for approved candidates. So the most immediate outcome that totalizing groups produce is not disenfranchised women but bloc voting of a sort that is alien to a democratic society.

In well-functioning and well-integrated democracies, group members routinely disagree, and ought to be able to disagree, about how to vote. Even in a highly polarized community like contemporary Quebec, the Liberal Party manages to challenge the Nationalists for the support of francophone voters. There is a general truth here: given a politics of argument and opposition, any claim to know the one and only right way for members of a community to respond to its difficulties is sure to be disputed within the community itself. In the United States, for example, if 65 percent of unionized workers vote Democratic, that is considered a remarkable instance of class discipline. When 85 percent of blacks vote Democratic, that is taken as a sign of their alienation from the political mainstream. But totalizing groups, when they are politically mobilized, are likely to deliver even higher percentages of their votes to a single party or candidate—a sign of more radical alienation. The give-and-take of democratic politics isn't part of the experience of these voters.

Should it be? Bloc voting is very useful in the politics of resource transfer and therefore in the politics of equality. Still, citi-

zens should know enough about the country in which they live to join the whole range of policy debates—if, when, and as they choose. What can their fellow citizens do to make this possible? Let us imagine citizens collectively claiming a say in the education of all future citizens. This educational project could be accomplished in a variety of ways while leaving the totalizing group in control (but no longer in total control) of its own schools.⁷ The state could require that certain secular courses (history, literature, civics) be taught; it could send teachers into the private, parochial, or tribal schools to teach them; it could set examinations that students must pass before being certified as high school graduates; it could take students out of the parochial schools for fixed periods of time, to enroll in national service, perhaps, or simply to show them something of the world outside their own community. Of course, Department of Education officials might do these sorts of things with a heavy hand and with perverse effects. But given some sensitivity and a readiness to negotiate the arrangements in detail, it's not impossible to imagine the officials doing their job well or reasonably well.

Whatever the state did, it would have to do in the same way for boys and girls, and so it would at least open a vista of gender equality. Political participation would do the same with regard to both gender and age, eroding the authority of the male elders. People voting secretly will eventually think about voting differently from the way they are told, and people voting differently, even in secret, will find ways to talk to one another about what they are doing. Still, civic education would not directly challenge the community's way of life. Teachers would focus on the members as citizens, not as autonomous individuals who have to choose beliefs and practices for themselves. Later on, in the course of their political lives, some of these citizens might claim their autonomy rights—more of them, perhaps, the safer their communities are in the larger society. And the state would have to recognize the claims. But it need not anticipate them.

These associations are not voluntary; they are not constituted by the free choices of their individual members. They may or may not move closer to voluntariness; the very existence of a democratic state probably pushes them that way, but every push arouses resistance. In any case, traditionalist and fundamentalist communities are the sites of an intense common life that is, apparently, valued by most of its participants, even if they haven't chosen it. Toleration in a democracy involves acknowledging that evaluation; egalitarianism is well served, I believe, by the same acknowledgment, which its political defenders express by focusing on the group, as well as on the individual members. Again, neither the acknowledgment nor the focus need to be unconditional, but conditions should be coercive only with regard to citizenship, not with regard to individualism. We don't have to, we shouldn't, and we probably can't, force individuals to be free.

Coercion itself cannot be avoided; civic education does have to be legally mandated and compulsory. And since it challenges the totalizing claims of the religious or ethnic community, it is sure to encounter opposition. Its aim is to allow or encourage the community's children, as many of them as possible, to accept another identity, that is, to think of themselves as responsible and respected participants in democratic decisionmaking. Citizens of the state can honestly say that they want these children to *add* citizenship to their existing religious or ethnic self-understanding, not replace the latter with the former. But there is in fact a replacement here: a singular and undivided traditionalism is being replaced by the characteristic and undividedness of modern life. If I advocate and pursue that replacement, am I abandoning toleration?

Maybe, but I am not advocating the total replacement of traditional ways. I don't want to insist that members of the parochial or tribal group be taught to draw up their own life plans without copying from their parents. I mean to be more tolerant than contemporary activist versions of liberalism would allow—without, however,

endorsing the illiberal way of life of greedy communities. My argument in this chapter moves around and around a dilemma that I can't cut my way through.⁸

It is helpful, however, to think of the dilemma in terms of involuntary association. The groups that I am considering here represent uncommonly strong versions of involuntariness, but involuntariness is not, after all, itself uncommon. It would be an insane political project to try to make it uncommon. Even the liberal state is, for most of its members, an involuntary association. When we set it against the various totalizing communities, that is, set citizens against members, we should be able to recognize the value of compromises worked out between them. But I am still arguing from the side of the citizens. Do the totalizing groups recognize the value of compromise? They don't, of course, and perhaps with good reason, as the parents in my imaginary dialogue explained. Historically, totalizing groups have made their peace with necessary compromises, that is, with arrangements coercively imposed by the state. But they avoid such arrangements whenever they can. And what then? Is it right to compromise with the uncompromising, to tolerate the intolerant?

Here are two legitimate educational projects: in everyday liberal practice, parents have a right to try to sustain a traditional, total way of life, and citizens have a right to educate the young men and women who will soon be responsible for the well-being of the political community. It is the coexistence, the simultaneous legitimacy, of the two rights that makes the difficulty. In other words, democracy makes the difficulty.

Democratic citizenship is an inclusive status (in a way that autonomous individuality isn't), and it is also an official status, a kind of political office that carries with it significant responsibilities. If the members of the total community were not citizens, if their children were not future citizens, there would be no problem. In a

multinational or multireligious empire, where all the members of the different nations or religions are imperial subjects whose only responsibility is obedience, the emperor has little reason to interfere in the projects for social reproduction carried on in communal schools. There is no common life for which imperial subjects need to be trained; it is probably in the emperor's interest that no common life emerge. But democracy requires the common life of the public square and the assembly, and certain understandings must be shared among citizens if what goes on in those places is to issue in legitimate laws and policies. Citizens, as Rousseau said, give the law to themselves.⁹ But they can't do that if different groups among them are already bound to other, wholly encompassing laws that demand total commitment.

Perhaps these groups, like the Amish in the United States, will agree to live entirely on the margins of the political community, claiming none of the benefits, exercising none of the rights, of citizenship—living as internal exiles within the state.¹⁰ Marginalization is one way of dealing with totalizing groups; if it is successful, they won't be required to give the law to themselves (a good thing, since they believe they already have it), and what is more important, they won't be allowed to give it to citizens outside the group. They will live in a corner of the democratic state as if they were living in a vast empire.

But marginality doesn't solve or even address the inequality problem. And most totalizing groups are inescapably engaged with the larger political community; some, like the ultraorthodox in Israel, are economically dependent on it. They have found a variety of ways to make room for economic dealing, political maneuvering, and prudential decisionmaking, without always acknowledging what they are doing. Hence some sort of negotiation is in fact possible between members and citizens, between parochial groups and the democratic state, even if it is officially disallowed by group elders.

Still, I can't see a principled resolution of the conflict between them—a resolution that each of them *ought* to accept. David Miller, who has written insightfully on these issues, argues that democracy can resolve the conflict, in principle if not always in practice. Imagine a country, he suggests, where all formal education is secular in character. Then “the claim that Islamic schools [are] essential to Muslim identity would have to be assessed on its own merits, and might well be rejected in a democratic forum.” To call the rejection illegitimate, Miller argues, is to deny the very essence of citizenship and democracy.¹¹ Well, maybe. But would the citizens be deciding that Islamic schools were not essential to Muslim survival or that Muslim survival itself was not essential, and how would Muslim parents know which decision their fellow citizens had made? I doubt that the question of Islamic schools can be decided democratically; I am sure that the question of Muslim survival shouldn't be. What the citizens can and must decide is what sort of education, what course of study, is necessary for citizenship. If they are wise, they will set a fairly minimalist standard, even if they hope for more. But whatever they do, they are posing a problem for the members of parochial communities, not resolving a problem.

There just isn't a knockdown answer to the arguments of either citizens or parents: both their projects are justified; neither allows enough room for the other. The liberal democratic state and the greedy community can coexist only in antagonism, for the state demands some significant part of the attention and commitment of the group's members—and the group feels, probably rightly, that any concessions on this point are the beginning of the end. I mean the end of the wholly encompassing way of life, for alternative, more modest or more liberal versions can probably be saved.

There are two other possibilities that I have not yet considered. The first is the collapse of the greedy community, through state-sponsored assimilation, or social pressure from the majority, or the

cumulative effects of economic incentives. It has long been thought that the whole tendency of modern social development is in this direction and that coercion would be needed only at the margins. This now looks wrong. In many parts of the world, the conflict between states and totalizing groups is stark, and the use of state power is massive. Some sort of accommodation seems preferable, even if it can't be fully justified to either side.

The other possibility is the collapse of democracy, the takeover of the state or of major state institutions by the totalizing group—empowerment with a vengeance. Again, I am talking here only about the collapse of *liberal* democracy, for some modified version of democratic politics can probably be sustained, as it is in Iran today. Imagine the conflict as a power struggle in which this second possibility is always present. Perfect equilibrium is unlikely; the balance will tilt one way or the other. So the questions that I have been asking can be given a new form: Which way would we tilt the balance if we could?

Now it seems to me that there is a principled position: If political power is at stake, we should tilt decisively against the totalizing groups. Not for the sake of a full-scale liberalism, but for the sake of a minimalist decency. The group's view of others is commonly much harsher than the democratic state's view of group members. The conflict between the two produces ugliness on both sides, but liberal democratic toleration, even if it is finally intolerant of totalizing religions and ethnicities, is gentler, less humiliating, less frightening, than the alternative is likely to be. Liberal democracy has managed to include fundamentalist religions and chauvinist nationalities, as I have been arguing it should, even if it has also modified them in the process, as it also should. Fundamentalism in power and chauvinism with an army are far more likely to exclude than to bring in, and if this is more respectful of difference in that it acknowledges the depth of differences, it has often been far less respectful both of human dignity and of life and limb.

This liberal tilt is simply a guideline for decisionmaking in a political crisis. It doesn't solve the problem of day-to-day coexistence. For that there is no theoretical solution, no deduction from a set of principles, only a long and unstable series of compromises. On the citizens' side, the compromises derive from an acknowledgment of the realities of involuntary association and the values it can produce, and they are driven by hopes for greater equality and easier coexistence. Of course, compromise will make community members unhappy; it will also make citizens unhappy. But universal happiness is not a plausible political project; nor is the pursuit of happiness the necessary subject of political theory.

In the first three chapters I have defended a sociologically sophisticated account of group life, suggested a materialist version of multiculturalism, and argued for a politically complicated response to the claims of illiberal cultures—all these in opposition to the exaggerated individualism of liberal political theory. In the next chapter, I want to reexamine the idea of civil society in the light of these arguments, repeating some things I said in my critique of the bad utopia of free association. But civil society figures so largely in political literature these days that the repetition is excusable. And even if the standard liberal account of civil society is utopian in the way I have criticized, it is also descriptive: it claims to be a picture of the world we live in, which opens it to sociological correction. We need to engage with the realities of our own civil society—not only with the freedom it sometimes embodies but also with the hierarchies it sustains. And then we need to revise the liberal account.