

**The Old Friends of Pluralism and
When They Stray from the Underlying Consensus of Pluralists**

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Abstract: As Bernard Crick suggested over 40 years ago, sometimes pluralist politics needs to be defended from its old friends: conservatives, liberals, and socialists. To establish criteria for determining the excesses of pluralism's old friends, an underlying consensus of abstract ideals that are held by all pluralists is suggested. While inspired by Rawls' idea of an overlapping consensus, such a consensus addresses a wider variety of political principles and philosophical assumptions than provided by Rawls. The beliefs of conservatives, liberals, and socialists regarding seven fundamental values – security, freedom, morality, social solidarity, economic prosperity, equality, and democracy are then described. Various strands within pluralist ideologies – neoconservatism, communitarianism, egalitarian liberalism, libertarianism, left-wing socialists, cosmopolitan socialists, among others – express ideals that stray from the underlying consensus. Much of the discord and incivility that presently characterizes pluralist politics may be traced to the excesses of such outlooks.

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Political pluralism is the most broad and widely supported public philosophy of our times, having extensive allegiance among academics, governmental leaders, political participants, and ordinary citizens – especially in America and other communities within Western Civilization, and increasingly among non-westerner elites as well. Its breadth is such that it incorporates a variety of more particular ideologies, taming their more undesirable qualities, and containing principles for resolving their differences in a civil, constructive, and peaceful manner. During most of the 20th century, pluralist politics was organized by ideologies that Bernard Crick called “the friends of politics”: conservatism, liberalism, and socialism.¹ While other ideologies have emerged, these old friends of pluralism continue to play prominent roles today.

Conservatism, liberalism, and socialism have provided comprehensive and reasonably distinct beliefs, values, and principles for governing pluralist communities. Because they provide competing ideas, they remain rivals within pluralism. But by professing allegiance to pluralism, they remain its friends. Too often, analysis of these outlooks has focused on the differences that make them increasingly bitter rivals. To cool the intensity of these rivalries, it may be useful to recall the ideas they share and to remind their proponents of the ideas they sometimes proclaim that frighten their friendly rivals, because these ideas suggest an inadequate and limited allegiance to pluralism. As Crick argued over 40 years ago, sometimes pluralism needs to be defended from its friends.

This paper seeks to provide a framework for facilitating analysis of how conservatives, liberals, and socialists can work collegially within pluralism and for identifying some of the excesses that must be restrained if pluralism is to flourish. This framework maintains that the ideas and ideals of the friends of pluralism fall within three general areas on a continuum of consensus and conflict. First are the general and abstract ideas that are central to pluralism and accepted by all friends of pluralism. Second are the more specific priorities and principles of pluralism’s friends that are in competition with each other but are acceptable to pluralists because they do not violate the more abstract consensus among pluralists. Third are those contentious priorities and principles that are sometimes expressed by some conservatives, liberals, and socialists that violate the core, abstract consensus among pluralists. In the next section, I attempt to define the ideas that fall within the first of these areas: the underlying consensus of pluralism. In the following section, I analyze seven political values that are pursued by the friends of pluralism. Here I argue that the different priorities and meanings given to these values by conservatives, liberals, and socialists lead to inevitable competition within pluralism. Pluralist processes are able to provide tentative but workable agreements when the ideals of friends of pluralism do not stray from the underlying consensus of pluralism. But strands of conservatism, liberalism, and socialism - such as communitarianism, libertarianism, and cosmopolitanism – sometimes go too far, pursuing priorities and

principles that are not compatible with pluralism's underlying consensus. Such ideas endanger civility among the friends of pluralism and undermine effective pluralist politics. In most circumstances, rigidity among pluralist ideologies leads to stalemate, deadlock, and a general inability to resolve issues and deal with problems. In other circumstances, rigidity leads proponents of the dominant ideology to impose its dogmas and absolutes on those who are deeply skeptical of them and who thus begin to withdraw their support from what they regard as a decaying pluralist system. In such situations, the friends of pluralism must be able to articulate clearly how their rivals have slipped into the errors of dogmatism, absolutism, and rigidity. And they must be able to recognize when their own ideas and ideals need rescuing from these errors.

The underlying consensus of pluralism

Conservatives, liberals, socialists and other pluralist ideologies are not so incompatible that they lack any areas of agreement. Rather, there exists an underlying consensus among all people committed to pluralism. This idea is inspired by and related to that of an "overlapping consensus" developed by John Rawls (1987, 1993: 133-172). Rawls argued that people in pluralist societies hold many "comprehensive moral doctrines" (or conceptions of human and social goodness), but that these doctrines have certain principles in common, which comprise pluralism's overlapping consensus. Rawls' discussion of an overlapping consensus is directed towards establishing the importance of such a consensus for political stability and to demonstrating that it is more than a "modus vivendi." Precisely because people hold competing moral doctrines, no single doctrine can be used to attain widespread allegiance to the principles and institutions of pluralism, yet such allegiance is necessary for the persistence of pluralism. Such allegiance is not a mere strategic compromise - a calculation that it is best to tolerate other moral doctrines politically, because mutual tolerance helps ensure no group will impose their doctrine on those holding different ones. Instead, despite their many differences, all doctrines affirm the moral goodness of the ideas in the overlapping consensus on the bases of their own reasoning. For example, all pluralists are committed to the equal dignity of all people, but they recognize that there is no need for consensus about the underlying basis of that equality. The ideas that "we are all children of God" or "we are all connected to a collective unconscious" may generate necessary belief in basic human equality. But secularists may reject such religious and spiritual foundations and instead base human equality on such beliefs as "we are all equally material beings whose suffering of pain and capacity for pleasure deserve equal consideration" or "we are all equal in our being members of this society."

Given such concerns, Rawls gives only a minimal specification of the content of pluralism's overlapping consensus: only the equal liberties identified in his monumental *Theory of Justice* (1999a: 53) are stressed. The underlying consensus specified below is much more expansive, seeking to provide a more comprehensive set of basic common principles that pluralists having different outlooks might arrive at if they deliberated on the great issues of politics. Of course, in the absence of such deliberation, I am far from certain that all pluralists would accept the principles proposed here. They are offered in

the spirit of tentativeness that I believe is itself central to pluralism's underlying consensus.

An underlying consensus provides very general guidance on the perennial issues of politics: it contains basic principles regarding the communities to which people owe their greatest allegiance, the institutions that should structure these communities, the requirements, rights and responsibilities of citizenship and leadership, the legitimate authority of governments, the requirements of justice, and the means of acceptable change. This consensus also includes agreement on basic philosophical assumptions that are the bases of pluralist political principles.²

The pluralist consensus on such questions is so general that it is difficult to discern significant changes in its contents except over different historical stages or epochs. Some analysts doubt that there will ever be significant changes in this consensus and thus proclaim that debate about the big issues of politics is over, that we are at "the end of ideology," or "the end of history."³ Pluralism, however, does not insist on an enduring underlying consensus. Pluralism only requires that *most* people in existing pluralist communities have allegiance to some core ideas.⁴ Modifications and improvements in the underlying consensus by future pluralist communities are possible and indeed likely. The following depiction of this consensus is thus intended as a description of current core ideals of pluralism, not as enduring ideals for politics. While these ideals are imperfectly realized in actual political communities, they are not utopian and beyond the grasp of people committed to pluralism. To convey that these ideals are realizable "here and now,"⁵ I employ the declarative voice rather than the prescriptive voice in specifying these ideals

Communities. People committed to pluralism identify with, participate in, and have obligations to many communities. Such people see themselves within nested boxes ranging from smaller to larger communities. In America, allegiance to federal principles gives an initial expression of this idea. I simultaneously identify with the neighborhood, city, state, and nation in which I live. In a more cosmopolitan manner, I also identify as being part of the Americas, Western Civilization, and the global community. To complicate matters, people have identities beyond these territorially defined communities. For example, people identify themselves as members of groups of people with whom they have face-to-face interactions, like families, workplaces, and educational institutions. People identify with communities where other members are amorphous strangers except for the fact that they have, at least temporarily, some interests in common: "We are Bush (or Kerry) supporters" or "we are part of a chat group on the web" having such common interests as supporting the White Nationalist movement in America, pursuing gay rights, or playing fantasy football.

Pluralists of all ideological stripes believe it important for people to have and appreciate having many community identities. Pluralists believe that identifying solely with one community, or even a few similar communities, is unhealthy for the individual and for politics. Singular community identities encourage narrow, parochial, and inflexible thinking. If a person is totally enmeshed in one community, he will think that

the beliefs, values, and principles that govern that community are right and valid, and the views of other communities are intolerable.⁶ He will be given little opportunity to evaluate the adequacy of these ideas in relation to those of other communities (of which he is ignorant).⁷ Having multiple community identities heightens our sense of connection to others while dampening our zeal for the narrow interests and understandings of any one community with which we might identify.⁸ Having multiple memberships enables us to appreciate those communities in which we as members have participation rights, and those communities in which we are not members and which have a right of self-governance independent of our participation and influence.

Accepting the idea of multiple-community identities leaves unresolved many very important issues about community, and thus pluralist societies (including a pluralist global order) will experience conflicts between those who would give greater or less priority to global interconnections, national sovereignty, states rights, and local control.⁹ But the friends of pluralism do not deny any of these identities or seek to dissolve any of these communities; instead they seek marginal adjustments strengthening and weakening our identities with these communities and their influence over our lives.

Citizens. Pluralists agree on three basic ideas about citizenship (or membership) within political communities. First, and perhaps most basically, they insist that people have the right to renounce their citizenship and leave a community. Coercion cannot be used to force people to remain in communities against their will and without their (at least tacit) consent. Second, pluralists do not endorse a parallel right of outsiders to become citizens of a community simply on the basis of their own free choice. In contrast, existing communities, in order to have control over their own character and destiny, have the right to determine whether or not someone who wants to be a citizen will be extended that opportunity. Pluralist public philosophy recognizes that communities have the right to determine the admission of outsiders on the basis of just admission standards, criteria, and processes. Third, pluralists recognize that people who have long resided within the community are entitled to equal citizenship and the rights and obligations that citizenship entails. Perhaps recent immigrants and the young must undergo naturalization or maturation processes, but these exist only to prepare such people for full citizenship, to familiarize them with their fundamental rights and commensurate obligations, and not to create a permanent group of second-class citizens or alien residents with lesser or no rights.¹⁰

Such ideas are widely accepted within pluralist societies, as formerly second-class citizens have increasingly been granted equal rights.¹¹ Moreover, citizen rights – especially political and legal rights – are fairly extensive. Of course, within this consensus, there is considerable conflict over the precise delineation of citizen rights and obligations and over exceptions to equal provision of rights and imposition of equal duties on all subgroups.¹² But the conflicting ideas brought to bear on these issues do not endanger pluralism.

Structures. According to the pluralist underlying consensus, each of our communities requires a variety of social, economic, and political structures to provide

order and rules of conduct over our lives. Governments (and their military forces), business organizations, labor unions, churches, schools, and families are among the most important such institutions.

Central to pluralist societies is the notion that these structures are countervailing powers to one another, ensuring that no one institution dominates people's lives.¹³ Pluralists believe in civilian control over the armed forces, to prevent militarism. They seek mixed political economies where governments check the power of corporations and unions, which in turn check each other's power. They preach separation of church and state, not simply to prevent church domination of government, but so that governments do not dominate the religious sphere. Still, pluralist public philosophy insists that democratic governments remain strong and authoritative relative to other institutions. Such governments must be able to regulate interactions among other institutions and be able to defend their communities from such outside threats and regulate such matters as crime, drugs, weapons, and money.¹⁴

However, this broad philosophical consensus on the idea of countervailing structures does not curtail conflict within pluralist societies about the precise balance of power among institutions. For example, governments may place more or less regulations over corporate and union activities, and these business organizations may have greater or less influence on government. Governments can try to place greater or lesser controls over religious expression, and religious organizations can seek various levels of penetration of pluralist governments. But these conflicts – when properly bounded – are all part of “politics as usual” within pluralism.

The idea of countervailing power structures is also central to the underlying pluralist consensus internationally. To guard against the domination that pluralists abhor, to ensure that no country can force others to submit to its interests and ideals, there must be a wide distribution of power among pluralist countries. Of course, this consensus does not include any precise agreement about acceptable amounts of power that various countries might wield, and thus international pluralism involves continuous struggles to adjust the imbalances in power that inevitably arise.

Rulers. Pluralists agree that the usual issues of politics should be resolved democratically. In smaller communities, democracy may involve the direct participation and equal voting power of all members, but in larger communities, political rulers must be selected and resolve issues using the institutions and processes of polyarchy.¹⁵ In a polyarchy, the most powerful rulers within communities are representatives of the public; such rulers are accountable to citizens through regular elections; all citizens have extensive political rights that enable them to oppose and replace rulers; and the power of rulers between democratic elections is limited by constitutional provisions.

Within larger pluralist communities, there is often conflict about whether the best system of ruling is aristocratic republicanism or democratic republicanism.¹⁶ Aristocratic republicanism, which traces its roots to Edmund Burke and Alexander Hamilton, stresses the importance of strong but democratically-accountable leadership. Aristocratic

republicans believe that democratic elections can select and legitimate the authority of those with the most wisdom, knowledge, and virtue. And they insist that such persons exercise independent judgment when governing rather than pandering to ill informed public prejudices. Democratic republicanism, which traces its roots to Thomas Jefferson and early British liberals like James Mill, stresses the importance of responding to the preferences of citizens. As democratic norms have spread and deepened, democratic republicanism has also incorporated demands that marginalized groups be more fully included in the political process and that the political agenda be expanded to address their concerns.¹⁷ Debate often rages within pluralist societies over issues regarding such matters as the frequency and form of elections, but when the debate occurs within the range between aristocratic republicanism and democratic republicanism, pluralism itself is unchallenged.

Authority. Within pluralist societies, there is consensus that the authority of government must be significant but limited. Pluralists accept the need for effective authority to cope with a wide array of social, economic, and security problems.¹⁸ Although the authority of the state in pluralist societies is limited, to ensure sufficient freedom for citizens to pursue their happiness and life plans, it is understood that government authority needs to be exercised in ways that constrain freedom in order to pursue public concerns, such as securing pluralist society from its enemies.

Influenced by liberal philosophy, pluralists of all stripes accept that governmental authority must restrict individual freedom at that point where it infringes on others' freedoms and rights.¹⁹ But influenced by the deeper moral systems central to conservative and socialist thought, pluralist public philosophy recognizes that it is sometimes desirable to restrict human freedom for the betterment of the individual, to enhance social justice, and to fulfill responsibilities to various communities, humanity, and nature.²⁰ In order to promote human wellness, to enhance individual development, and to prevent individuals from harming themselves, pluralistic governmental authority is used to enact and enforce some paternalistic laws and policies. In order to promote social justice, pluralistic governmental authorities impose some limitations on economic freedoms and property rights.²¹ In order to protect society and the environment, pluralist societies can restrict many other individual freedoms. Within pluralism there is extensive conflict over the extensiveness of governmental authority and individual freedom, and ideas calling for greater uses of governmental authority or greater freedoms for the individual are simply part of pluralist politics.

Justice. Pluralists accept that justice is a complex concept involving a variety of tradeoffs. They uphold the importance of legal justice – of providing formal and regularized procedures of resolving conflict and equal treatment under the law.²² They also uphold market justice, the idea that unequal incomes, wealth and property are legitimate if they have been achieved by processes of production and exchange that reflect the free choices of individuals and are free of coercion and exploitation.²³ But fair legal procedures and market exchanges must be complemented with other principles of justice involving equality, need, and desert.²⁴ In pluralist societies, some policies provide certain social goods (like basic education) equally to everyone, other social goods (like

welfare) to those in greatest need, and still other social goods (like administrative offices) to those who deserve them given their qualifications. Pluralists insist that no single conception of justice is universally valid. Pluralist politics involves continuous conflict over the emphasis given to various justice principles. But pluralist politics is not just power politics, where political outcomes simply reflect successful applications of political resources to achieve personal and group preferences. Pluralist politics involves appeals to justice in its myriad forms.

Change. Pluralists recognize that economic, social, and political changes are sometimes beneficial, and that adequate and legitimate processes must be in place to bring about desirable change through peaceful means.²⁵ Central to such change, for pluralists, are the related ideas of opposition, dissent, and protest. People have the right to oppose existing authorities and question the effectiveness and justice of their policies. People have the right to engage in peaceful protest like signing petitions and voicing their concerns at public hearings to publicize social and economic conditions that they think should be changed.²⁶ While pluralists accept the central role of protest as a vehicle for change, they also understand that protesters can go too far – when disruption turns coercive and violent.²⁷

Ideas about how much reform and what kind of reform is needed (on issues regarding community, structure, rulers, citizens, authority, and justice) are, of course, the ordinary stuff of pluralist politics. As discussed above, the many conflicts and disagreements over these matters ensure there will be “no end of history” but perennial ideological battles within pluralist societies.

In addition to these political principles, the underlying consensus of pluralism also includes certain weak or minimal philosophical assumptions.²⁸

Human Nature. The principles proclaimed by pluralists are based on the assumption that humans are equal in some basic ways. The life of each human is equally valuable and the interests of each human should be given equal consideration in governing a pluralist society. Each person should be morally free, meaning each person should be able to choose her own conception of the good life and have equal opportunity to pursue that conception, constrained by their acting within the pluralist consensus and the laws created and enforced by pluralist governments. But pluralists recognize that people have very different motivations in life, ranging from getting rich to seeking unity with God, and thus no fundamental purpose or motivation can be attributed to humans to serve as a basis for pluralist public philosophy. Pluralists also recognize that people have unequal natural talents and unequal access to those social resources that help achieve their diverse goals, though they differ on the moral significance of these inequalities.

Nature of Society. Pluralists believe that societies are normally continuous associations (that survive the entrance and exit of particular individuals into them), but all societies can be created or disbanded by acts of human will. Pluralists see most political societies as heterogeneous or diverse, being composed of people having different primary identities, interests, and (comprehensive) moral doctrines. They insist that pluralist

societies and governing institutions be neutral among the various ways of life pursued by its citizens, as long as citizens choose responsible ways of life that operate within the pluralist consensus.²⁹ Pluralists assume that differences in citizens' ways of life are loosely organized around a variety of social cleavages (such as class, race, gender, age, ideology, etc.) and that the saliency of such cleavages varies depending on differences among societies and on the different issues confronting societies. No cleavage is fundamental.³⁰ Pluralists also assume that political societies contains many voluntary organizations and groups – which together constitute civil society – and that these groups are very important because they provide the basis of individual identities and purposes, a sense of belonging, and settings for pursuing common interests.

Ontology. Pluralism thrives when people have thin ontological ideas, when they understand that their assumptions of ultimate reality (being) and the ultimate causes of the future of the world (becoming) are of little relevance to political life. Pluralists do not reject the existence of God or the primacy of the material world, nor do they deny that divine or natural forces can influence political events, but they insist that humans can resist these forces and attempt to make their worlds in a manner of their own choosing.³¹ Pluralists assume that human ideas are a fundamental part of the world and have an existence independent of either supernatural or material reality. They also assume that these ideas will influence the future of the world, but which ideas will prevail is undetermined. The future of the world will depend on human choices and the resources that humans bring to bear on furthering these choices.

Epistemology. Pluralists reject the idea of certainty concerning political knowledge and instead seek tentative understandings.³² They assume that moral and political knowledge arises from social agreements that find their way into constitutions, laws, and international agreements and treaties. While these agreements may be imperfect expressions of “Truth” (of what is absolutely best for political societies), they provide a tentative consensus on right and wrong conduct that can only be revised by parties to the agreements in light of new conditions and understandings. This assumption is so critical that it defines the essential common outlook of the friends of pluralism. The excesses of the old friends of pluralism often involve their forgetting the tentativeness and social construction of political “truths” and embracing an ideal with a degree of absolutism that is unbecoming, if not dangerous, to pluralism.

The excesses of the old friends of pluralism

The old friends of pluralism seem deeply concerned with seven political values: security, freedom, morality, social solidarity, economic prosperity, equality, and democracy. Security and moral virtue are the highest priorities of conservatives. Freedom and economic prosperity are the highest priorities of liberals. Social solidarity and equality are the highest priorities of socialists. But each of these values are important to all friends of pluralism. While conservatives, liberals, and socialists give different interpretations and stress different means for attaining these values, they recognize and tolerate the alternative interpretations and programs of their pluralist rivals.³³ In addition, the old friends of pluralism each understand that democratic processes are needed to

reconcile their different priorities when these values are at stake on concrete political issues. Thus, democracy itself is a value central to each of pluralism's old friends, though they again have somewhat different interpretations about democracy's precise requirements. In the following subsections, I discuss the priority and meaning that conservatives, liberals, and socialists give to these values. I also suggest where the friends of pluralism – and especially their more single-minded strands – go too far in the pursuit of these values, adopting proposals and programs that contradict, and sometimes imperil, pluralism's underlying consensus.

Security

Securing pluralist societies against its enemies is perhaps the first and most basic part of the underlying consensus of all friends of pluralism. Conservatives, liberals, and socialists all agree that governments must have the authority to use police and military power to secure citizens' lives, liberties, and properties from criminals at home and from terrorists and other hostile actors from abroad. But these ideological adversaries have emphasized different approaches to achieving security.³⁴

To reduce domestic crime, conservatives focus on deterrence, punishment, and incapacitation. They believe that increasing police capabilities and making sentences more certain and severe will reduce the belief that "crime pays" among those with propensities to commit crimes. Liberals focus on prevention and rehabilitation. While liberals recognize that criminals must indeed be captured and punished, they believe that the incidence of crime can be reduced by measures like gun control, drug treatment, and job training programs that give potential criminals prospects for a better life through avenues other than crime.³⁵ Socialists focus on the causes of crime, often seeing the criminal as a victim of poverty, social deprivation, and misguided legal priorities. Thus, socialists think that the criminal justice system has been over-focused on petty or victimless offenses (such as drug abuse) and the recklessness of youth from underprivileged backgrounds while inadequately persecuting the larger crimes that the privileged often inflict on society.

While these are obviously important differences among the friends of pluralism, the fact remains that specific programs to combat crime emphasizing any of these approaches can attract support from other pluralists. While programs to boost police capacities and to increase sentencing are normally proposed by conservatives, liberals like Bill Clinton have provided federal financial support to increase policing capabilities, and socialists like Tony Blair have sought to be as tough on crime as on the underlying causes of crime.³⁶ While those on the pluralist left have usually emphasized the insecurities arising from white-collar and corporate crime – such as those allegedly committed by Enron, Global Crossing, and WorldCom – conservatives do not deny the need to bring corporate criminals to justice.

The more compelling differences among conservatives, liberals, and socialists involve their approaches to dealing with international threats to security.

American conservatives have long emphasized the need for military superiority and a unilateral national security policy. To ensure security from threats posed by communism during the cold-war era and by terrorists today, conservatives have favored military build-ups. They have also sought to minimize the capacities of allies and international organizations to constrain applications of American military power, when such power serves American interests (and American perceptions of the needs of the broader international community). Under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, conservatives have turned to an earlier liberal or "Wilsonian" idealism, that security at home is best achieved by spreading democracy abroad, through military means if necessary.³⁷ More recently, Bush has revolutionized conservative national security policies by claiming the need for preemptive strikes. According to Bush, the rise of terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction mean that security can no longer be assured by relying on "a reactive posture as we have in the past." And Vice President Dick Cheney adds that security requires that we not only strike at immediate threats but at potential threats, as overthrowing Saddam Hussein, for example, "is less costly to do now than it will be to wait...until he's developed even more deadly weapons."³⁸

In contrast, at least in the post Viet Nam era, liberals have emphasized military sufficiency, and the more "realist" foreign policy objective of maintaining international stability rather than spreading democracy, doubting that pluralist countries have the right and unlimited capacity to intervene unilaterally in the internal affairs of other countries. Thus, American liberals have favored having sufficient military power to deter threats to the U.S. and its pluralist allies and to undertake occasional humanitarian interventions to curtail genocide and other extensive abuses of human rights. For liberals, having a military capacity strong enough to deter adversaries from encroaching on our interests and demonstrating the resolve to inflict unacceptable damages on violators of our security interests comprise the best security policy. Liberals have also emphasized the role of multinational institutions and arrangements as central to security. Harry Truman's efforts to build the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Bill Clinton's reliance on NATO during the war in Kosovo illustrate the liberal belief that multilateralism – broad coalitions of pluralist societies – is central to effective military operations designed to provide both national and global security. Liberals also seek to promote security with a broader range of political strategies, such as developing a robust multilateral nonproliferation regime that corrals the "loose nukes" sought by terrorists and reaching negotiated accommodations with countries like Iran and North Korea that recognize their security needs.³⁹

Socialists and those on the American left have also favored military sufficiency and multilateral approaches to security but have been more hesitant than liberals and especially conservatives to employ military power on behalf of national and global security. They have been more likely to view military action by pluralist countries to be desperate actions of last resort that should be used only against the most compelling threats. Among the friends of pluralism, the left has been most inclined to believe that the best security policies are those that alleviate the social conditions giving rise to angry people who become threats to our security interests. They point out that American

policies are perceived as imperialist and oppressive, not only by many Arabs involved in terrorist activities but by people in underdeveloped societies throughout the world. Only fundamental changes in these policies and extensive economic assistance can change the perception that the greatest threats to global security are the aggressive, unilateral and preemptive military actions of the United States.

These broad characterizations of conservative, liberal, and socialist international security policies reveal the great differences among these friends of pluralism, but pluralist processes may be able to handle these differences adequately. The real dangers that terrorism poses for the security of pluralist societies have prompted conservatives, liberals and socialists to support "the war on terrorism," including undertaking military actions in those countries that have harbored terrorists.⁴⁰ The new dangers that afflict global security when terrorists acquire access to weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear bombs, may convince liberals and even socialists that preemptive and unilateral strikes may sometimes be justified.⁴¹ At the same time, the costs of sustained unilateral action may well prompt conservatives to undertake more multilateral approaches, as is suggested by the efforts of the Bush Administration to involve the United Nations and other international organizations more deeply in the reconstruction of Iraq. And if conservatives are successful in their initial efforts to democratize the Middle East and other regions where authoritarian regimes prevail, liberals and socialists may well be encouraged to join in a broader pluralist effort to spread democracy throughout the world. But if conservatives are unsuccessful in these efforts, they might well retreat to the more realist perspectives that currently prevail among their liberal and socialist friends.

Nevertheless, military adventurism, unilateralism and preemption can go too far. When one country invests too heavily in its military power, it creates an imbalance of power that challenges the underlying pluralist consensus that power must be sufficiently dispersed so that no (national) interest can dominate a pluralist global community.⁴² An excessive willingness by neoconservatives to use military resources in pursuit of national interests (or of their perceptions of international interests) makes others in the world community – including our pluralist allies – deeply suspicious and fearful of us. Historically, when one country has immense military power, others are prompted to coalesce against it.⁴³ The pluralist consensus that there must be countervailing structures of power prompts pluralists who fear the rise of a dominant power to counter that threat by enhancing their own power capabilities, by allying with others who feel similarly threatened, and by undercutting and diminishing the capacities of the dominant power. Nonpluralist societies are also likely to feel less threatened by the military power of pluralist ones when that power is broadly dispersed in ways that discourage adventurism by one country. America's military preeminence incites hatred of us in many such societies and encourages terrorist assaults on us, undermining the very security that military preeminence seeks to attain.⁴⁴

Military actions cannot be justified by the mere claim by neoconservatives (or leaders of any ideology) that there exists a threat to security. There must be genuine agreement among pluralists that such threats are real and require a military response. Unilateral actions that are undertaken without the clear consent of one's pluralist friends

are deeply problematic. A neoconservative administration cannot claim that it has the support of its pluralist friends for a pre-emptive invasion of Iraq if liberals merely authorized development of a multilateral force and a possible invasion contingent on evidence that Iraq had both the intention and capabilities to violate our security. It is not enough for a pluralist country to put together a "coalition of the willing," if most of its international allies reject such military action as undermining, rather than enhancing, their security and that of the international community.

Another way in which leaders of one political outlook can go too far in their quest for security is to become overly focused on one security threat, blinding themselves to how actions to deal with that threat can increase other security risks. By committing so many resources to the problematic security threat in Iraq, conservatives may well have enhanced the recruitment base for Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations who depend on heightened perceptions that the US is a global bully. At the same time, US military resources may be spread too thin to deal with the more pressing nuclear development programs of hostile regimes in Iran and North Korea.⁴⁵ One benefit of pluralism is that leaders of competing ideologies are likely to point out such blind spots in the understanding of the ruling party. When broad social agreement among all friends of pluralism is sought, a clearer picture of the various threats to security is likely to be attained.

Of course, liberals and socialists can go too far – or, better, not far enough – when they de-emphasize and dilute their security programs. Pacifism may be a noble ideal, and pluralist societies seem able to contain pacifists who forget the necessary role of the police and military in maintaining the peace. But governing ideologies must reject pacifism, assert that pluralist governments are authorized to secure pluralist societies from their enemies, and thus must not disarm themselves in ways that increase their vulnerability to genuine threats. While "the Michael Moore Left" does not express an unequivocal pacifism, it may be naïve in discounting the threats that confront pluralism. From such a perspective, the threats emphasized by political leaders and the media are mere delusions conjured up by corporate interests and political opportunists to prompt pluralist citizens to support their narrow objectives. While business and political interests may well profit from militarism, liberals and socialists must not let their vigilance against such interests blind them to genuine threats. Terrorists having destructive intentions and outlaw nations must be kept at bay by the self-defense capabilities of effective pluralist societies.⁴⁶

Liberals and socialists must also recognize that the principles of the underlying pluralist consensus – such as everyone in the global community being entitled to equal consideration and moral autonomy – may be violated if pluralist countries fail to employ military force on behalf of such principles. Such understandings require humanitarian interventions in those countries where subpopulations are subjected to severe human rights violations, such as genocide. Yet, liberals and socialists may be unwilling to intervene to help secure the rights of the oppressed without multinational support, and attaining such support may simply be impossible given the urgency of needed intervention.⁴⁷

Freedom

Freedom is a defining ideal of pluralist societies. After all, such societies tolerate and often celebrate the fact that their citizens hold a wide variety of moral and political doctrines, can choose among a wide diversity of lifestyles, and can affiliate with various social organizations. All friends of pluralism emphasize personal, social, economic, and political freedom. All friends of pluralism believe that each individual should have significant zones of privacy where the state or larger community cannot intervene. All friends of pluralism believe people should not be confined to a particular social role based on circumstances of birth (the family or class they were born into or their gender or ethnicity), and that everyone should have opportunity for social mobility. All believe people should have economic freedoms, to work, invest, trade, and consume according to their own desires and capabilities. All believe in fundamental political freedoms, such as the right to oppose current political practices and authorities, to join with others in search of common political goals, and to participate in politics. Nevertheless, the friends of pluralism have different underlying conceptions of freedom and thus emphasize different programs for achieving it.

Contemporary conservatives (like classical liberals in the 19th century) see freedom as a condition when an individual is not constrained by the coercive power of others, particularly by governmental authority. An individual is free if she is free *from* public or governmental interference in how she thinks and acts. Of course, contemporary conservatives (like classical liberals) understand that government was formed precisely to impose limits on freedom, so that people could not use their freedom to violate the equal rights of others (to life, property, and happiness). But absent any violation of legitimate rights of others, people should be granted the most extensive freedom from social and political control as possible. It is this conception of “negative liberty” that the contemporary conservative prizes when he criticizes the economic regulations of the state or gun control laws.

Contemporary liberals see liberty as the capacity to choose one’s own path and to pursue that path with as few unwarranted hindrances as possible. Contemporary liberals think that the authority of democratic governments within pluralist societies is less of a hindrance for most people than a large variety of other obstacles to real choice. Physical handicaps, poor health, social discrimination and prejudice, poverty, schools that fail to educate, and economic environments that fail to provide job opportunities are among the barriers that prevent many people from being able to choose and pursue more fulfilling lives. It is this conception of “positive liberty” that the contemporary liberal prizes when he supports governmental programs that provide civil rights laws, antipoverty initiatives, more resources for public schools, better pre-natal care for poor pregnant women, and many other governmental programs that widen the opportunities for those constrained by natural or social limitations on their choices.

Socialists recognize the importance of both negative and positive liberty, but they insist that there is another kind of freedom that needs to be emphasized: collective choice.

Whole communities lack freedom if they are dominated by powerful economic agents like corporations and developers and by economic “imperatives” to attract mobile wealth and limit economic aid for the disadvantaged.⁴⁸ If a large employer can demand certain concessions - such as tax exemptions - as a condition for its remaining in the community, then citizens will see their political freedoms as severely constrained. For socialists, people within a community have “collective freedom” only when they can, through their political decisions, choose the direction, if not the fate, of their communities.

Despite these different interpretations and emphases regarding freedom, conservatives, liberals, and socialists do not speak such different languages that they are unable to understand and appreciate proposals that further a kind of freedom that is most dear to their pluralist friends. When American liberals sought civil rights laws to promote the positive freedoms of African Americans and other minorities, their conservative friends (after some initial foot-dragging) conceded the point. When those on the left-wing of the American pluralist continuum⁴⁹ see the character of their communities threatened by Walmart, they have little trouble enlisting some of their more liberal and conservative friends to establish policies that regulate and sometimes ban “big box” discount shopping outlets and shopping malls. The conservative downtown merchant will sometimes concede that restraints on the economic freedom of corporate giants are necessary to preserve “the heart of the community.” The liberal consumer will sometimes concede that more product choices at lower prices may be a minor positive liberty that must yield to a broader collective liberty. Thus are pluralist friends able to coalesce to accomplish some common interest in protecting or restraining certain freedoms, even though other differences leave them opponents elsewhere.

The friends of pluralism go too far in their pursuit of freedom when they forget their underlying consensus affirming the legitimacy of governmental authority to impose equal restrictions on everyone’s freedom in order to attain various benefits for the community and its citizens. As John Locke said over 300 years ago, “liberty is not license.” Following Locke, pluralists understand that whatever unlimited freedoms humans might enjoy in a hypothetical state of nature, the formation of civil society and government involves people giving up their “natural freedoms” (to do whatever they wish) for “civil freedoms” (to do what the laws allow). Many constraints – moral as well as legal – on human freedom are necessary to protect people from each other and to allow the flowering of the benefits of civilization. Sometimes civil libertarians forget the collective benefits that occur when certain individual freedoms are limited. If legislators believe most people want restrictions on violent programming and video games, especially that target children, such libertarians go too far if they seek court protection of film makers and video producers “free speech rights.” Conservatives are right to think that liberals often go too far in petitioning the courts to find dubious constitutional provisions for liberties that have been constrained by democratic processes. The most obvious case in point is the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973 establishing women’s right to abortions and striking down state statutes restricting abortions as violations of an alleged constitutional right to privacy. Although liberal legal scholars have spilled gallons of ink to support a constitutional basis for this decision, “the right to abortion remains a highly debatable proposition, both jurisprudentially and morally.”⁵⁰

Those on the pluralist left also deplore the excessive dependence of liberals on the courts as the source of individual rights and freedoms. They point out that liberal jurisprudence increases the authority of the least democratic branch of government and enables special interests (like producers of video games) to pursue narrow rights without mobilizing broad public support for their goals.⁵¹ Absent a clear constitutional provision of a right, it is doubtful that courts should deprive states from using their democratic processes to determine specific civil liberties of their citizens. The civil liberties declared by national constitutions - which are the most fundamental political agreements of a community - are indeed sacrosanct for all citizens within nation-states. Civil liberties provided by national legislatures are also available to all citizens. But where such national provisions are lacking, states can limit freedoms through constitutional and statutory means if they believe such restrictions have consequences that clearly serve the interests of the citizens of their states. Likewise, localities can limit freedoms in areas where national and state provisions are lacking, if they believe such restrictions serve the interests of citizens in their communities. The ordinances declaring "no smoking in public places" that are being adopted in many American cities illustrate how pluralist politics can legitimately limit people's freedom.

Another way in which the friends of pluralism can go too far in providing and restricting liberties is to forget that civil liberties must be equal liberties. If the political process declares the existence of a civil liberty (such as the right to run for public office or to have state-supported privileges for marriage), that liberty must ordinarily be available to all citizens. Of course, traditional societies and early liberal societies believed that differentiated rights were justified; for example, they held that only some kinds of people could vote or run for office. But the evolution of equal treatment norms has resulted in pluralist societies demanding extraordinary circumstances to justify differential rights. Most unequal liberties have been removed, but vestiges of them remain, such as the prohibition on foreign-born citizens becoming president. Perhaps only the constitutional basis for this inequality, and the question of whether this inequality is significant enough to warrant a constitutional amendment can justify its continuance. Taking away people's rights as punishments is justified, but denying voting rights to ex-felons, even when they have completed their sentences (which is the practice in about ten states), seems highly problematic. Age-based restrictions - such as those dealing with rights to vote, drink alcoholic beverages, etc. - are more easy to defend, as they apply equally to all people at various stages of their lives.

The most significant equal-rights issue today is whether gays have equal rights to marriage. As long as marriage confers specific civil rights - such as the right to designate one's married partner the beneficiary of one's social security benefits - it is difficult to see how such rights can be denied to some people on the basis of whom they choose to love. In general, such restrictions on equal liberties send powerful messages to groups within pluralist society that they are second-class citizens, and this denies a significant component of the underlying consensus within pluralism: that no group of people are to be so regarded.

Another way in which the friends of pluralism can go too far is to make extended rights claims and then deny or forget their corresponding obligations. Pluralist theorists have normally understood, for example, that the right of people to a jury trial requires that citizens accept the civic obligation to be jurors. But pluralist societies are challenged by demands, especially from liberals and socialists, for increasing welfare rights (e.g., the right to health care), while conservative citizens and politicians simultaneously disparage, deny, and avoid the commensurate obligations (e.g., to pay the necessary taxes).

Morality

It is sometimes suggested that pluralism extends liberal neutrality on religion to morality more generally. The differences among various religions during the 16th and 17th centuries were exacerbated by states embracing a particular religion and imposing its doctrines on those who held alternative views. To end religious war, John Locke urged societies to embrace the separation of church and state, which then became a central liberal principle. Contemporary pluralist societies are comprised of people holding a multitude of comprehensive moral doctrines - religious perspectives, philosophical outlooks, political ideologies, and so forth - leading to highly conflictive "culture wars." Thus, John Rawls has urged governments to embrace a pluralist neutrality so that all citizens have moral autonomy, the capacity to choose, pursue, and revise the moral outlooks that inform and guide their life plans.⁵² However, even if pluralist governments seek to be neutral among moral doctrines, liberals, conservatives, and socialists bring different moral outlooks to pluralist politics, because such politics cannot avoid making decisions about the common good and justice.

Liberalism is most committed to moral neutrality. Rawls' argues that *Political Liberalism* does not rank or prioritize various conceptions of how to live a good life - that it does not use the coercive power of government to reward or punish people based on the moral doctrines that they embrace.⁵³ Nevertheless, liberalism affirms many moral principles. It claims the equal worth of all individuals. It is committed to racial, gender and other forms of equality among diverse categories of citizens. It embraces fair equal opportunity. It declares individuals have certain rights and responsibilities, and so forth.⁵⁴ Among the moral virtues that liberals embrace are those instrumental to the functioning of pluralist societies: recognizing the political and civil rights of other citizens; tolerating the existence of alternative moral systems; participating in politics; treating others with civility and respect; questioning the effectiveness and fairness of political authorities while remaining loyal to pluralist societies and their institutions; and displaying "public reasonableness" (defending one's positions using arguments that do not depend on a particular moral doctrine but rather are accessible to people having alternative moral views).⁵⁵ But liberal morality is "thin," because it does not claim that certain conceptions of the good life are *intrinsically* better than others. Liberals only claim that some moralities are desirable for some social or public purpose that they serve. For example, liberals do not claim that the political virtues of a good citizen will lead to a good life, for only the individual can determine the role and importance of political activities in her self-chosen life plan. Liberals only claim that the political virtues of a good citizen are good for a achieving a well-functioning pluralist democracy.

Conservatives, in contrast, bring a “strict father morality” to politics.⁵⁶ Inspired by admiration for the traditional nuclear family, the conservative moral code is centered on sustaining and defending authorities – like fathers - who understand right from wrong (defined in traditional and religious terms), who set standards of behavior for others, and whose role is to promote self-disciplined citizens. Conservatives believe in a natural moral order in which God dominates humans who dominate other species. Men are considered naturally more powerful than women, and other authorities naturally dominate their subjects. But such power entails responsibility. Authorities must demonstrate moral strengths while encouraging moral virtues in others. Those authorities who show moral weakness or who fail to develop the moral capacities of their subjects are deeply resented. There are strict moral dichotomies. On the one hand are the seven deadly sins: greed, lust, gluttony, sloth, pride, envy, and anger. On the other hand are the seven virtues of charity, chastity, temperance, industry, modesty, satisfaction with one’s lot, and calmness. While moral character is thought to be fairly fixed by adulthood, young people can acquire moral virtues by various forms of competition that reward good conduct and punish bad conduct. While conservatives recognize that individuals have freedom to make many choices about their lives (where to work, where to reside, who to marry, what forms of leisure to enjoy, and so forth), such choices must take place without transgressing moral boundaries that define deviant behavior. Even slight transgressions should be decried and punished, for one’s moral foundations cannot be chipped away within fear of sliding down the long and treacherous road of becoming a sinner.

Contrasting with “the strict father morality” is a “nurturant parent morality.” Such a moral code focuses on empathy for others in a way that is consistent with socialist principles.⁵⁷ Just as nurturing parents must constantly try to understand the emotions, thoughts, and feelings of their children, citizens in the broader community must show empathy for others and make sacrifices for others. The unique abilities of each person must be recognized, their capacities nurtured, and their needs satisfied. Being happy is more important than exhibiting the moral virtues that conservatives embrace. Nurturing happiness in oneself and others is not only intrinsically good; it is also instrumental in promoting capacities for compassion, as happy people are more likely to be empathetic and helpful than unhappy people. Under this moral code, moral agents do not stress distributing rewards and punishments on the basis of morally right and wrong conduct; instead they distribute social goods on the basis of need or as equally as possible. People who make mistakes are treated humanely. In many ways, the nurturant parent model of morality resembles feminism’s “ethic of care.”⁵⁸ Especially when seen as the morality of socialists, this model would include nurturing relationships as well as the well-being of others. Central to the good life is being in relationship with others – supporting them as they support you, nurturing them as they nurture you – and attending to the maintenance and development of social bonds.

Perhaps the moral systems of liberals, conservatives, and socialists simply provide alternative emphases rather than being inherently incompatible. After all, the ancient Greeks insisted that the good citizen was a good person who was a happy person. In any event, adversaries in today’s culture wars do not ask governments to endorse such moral

systems as the conservative “strict father” or the socialist “nurturant parent” or even to declare “liberal neutrality” between them. But these different moralities seem to account well for the passion that pluralists can bring to specific social issues. For conservatives, abortion is a deadly sin; it is “killing babies.” For those on the left of the pluralist continuum, abortion is a medical procedure, and women who undergo such procedures deserve our empathy, not punishment. But as long as these moral disagreements are limited to specific social issues and do not extend to efforts to determine the superiority and inferiority of underlying moral codes, they can be dealt with through normal pluralist politics.

Of course, pluralism is endangered whenever proponents of a moral code – whether it be the conservative, liberal, or socialist moralities outlined above or some other comprehensive moral doctrine – attempt to use coercive state power to make their moral code the dominant moral code. In the area of moral indoctrination, state power must be greatly limited, perhaps to fostering the institutions of civic society – the families, churches, schools, and other social associations – that can be “the seedbeds of moral virtue.”⁵⁹ In other words, pluralist societies do have an interest in citizens exhibiting the moral virtues stressed by conservatives, liberals, socialists and others, but they should not require that all citizens adopt the same moral system. Pluralism can provide a stable political system in which citizens can pursue various conceptions of the good life, as long as it includes a vibrant civil society that encourages citizens to develop responsible moral codes. Indeed, pluralist societies cannot require all citizens to adopt the same moral code, for any success in that endeavor would transform pluralist politics into a monistic “perfectionist” politics that violates the underlying pluralist consensus affirming the moral autonomy of its citizens.⁶⁰

Liberals often go too far by claiming that “morality cannot be legislated” - that moral issues should be banished from pluralist political agendas. Such a claim violates the pluralist underlying consensus that democratic authority can resolve fundamental social issues. Matters involving sexuality, obscenity, gambling, drug and alcohol abuse, hate crimes, and decency stir great political passions and are not easily suppressed. If people cannot determine through politics whether topless dancers violate moral sensibilities in a community, their moral energies may well be diverted to whether the mayor is having a private affair with his secretary. It can be argued that this represents a diminution of politics that is decent, moral, and effective. In any event, if the democratic processes of pluralist governments cannot be used to resolve moral issues, how are they to be resolved in a civil manner? Not making a political decision on topless dancers is a nondecision that permits such activities and is as authoritative on the moral standards of a community as is a decision to ban such actions. If governments don't make such decisions, non-governmental actors will be encouraged to impose their moral standards through less democratic means.

Finally, pluralism is endangered when consensual moral concerns are simply overlooked or banished. Perhaps “being responsible” for oneself and to others is a basic moral concern that is not only embraced by all friends of pluralism but is essential to pluralism itself. Of course, those on the pluralist left believe that irresponsible behavior

is rooted in people being victims of their environments, but even such pluralists recognize that it is desirable that people learn to overcome such environments, develop skills and discipline, and take care of themselves as much as possible. If pluralist governments create policies that encourage irresponsible behavior, they undermine the basic moral consensus upon which any society rests. If pluralist governments create rights without having citizens understand their commensurate responsibilities, they create moral deficits that threaten their long-term survival.

Social solidarity

Bowling Alone, the title of Robert Putnam's influential analysis of "the Collapse and Revival of American Community," portrays a condition where individuals are insufficiently rooted in communities and evokes the image of a more prosperous human existence where humans are deeply interconnected. According to Putnam, "Without at first noticing, we have been pulled apart from one another and from our communities over the last third of the century."⁶¹ Participation in pluralist political communities, civic organizations, churches, labor unions, neighborhood groups, and informal friendship gatherings have all decreased in America during the past three or four decades. During the same period, a "syndrome of social values involving reciprocity, honesty and social trust have been in decline."⁶² Conservatives, liberals, and socialists all seek some sort of reversal of these trends, a greater social solidarity within pluralist societies, but they differ in how they conceptualize the central features of social solidarity, in reasons for wanting it, and in methods for achieving it.

Conservatives who are true friends of pluralism see social solidarity as occurring when individuals within a communitarian group or sub-community have common values, similar moral understandings, and prescribed social behaviors regarding the contents of the good life. Recognizing that pluralist political communities are composed of many sub-communities or groups that adhere to alternative sets of moral values, they focus on developing communitarian groups within civil society. Of course, not all sub-communities and groups are communitarian. Many groups attract people with a wide range of values and make no attempt to develop a common moral outlook, instead confining themselves to a special interest like sports, theater, and civic projects that – while meaningful – do not address fundamental moral questions. While conservatives understand that such groups can provide significant social connection, they do not provide the deep social solidarity that is provided by communitarian groups. Fundamentalist and evangelical church groups, ethnic and racial fraternal groups, homogeneous neighborhoods, and ideology-based political and cultural organizations can all be "bonding" social networks composed of people committed to the group's moral code.⁶³ The value of such morality-based social solidarity is that it provides individuals in the group with a clear sense of purpose and sustains commitment to such purposes. Individuals become "embedded" or situated in social roles and relationships that give meaning and direction to their lives. Such organizations, in turn, play roles in addressing the issues and problems that confront the broader communities in which they exist.

In search of social solidarity, pluralism's conservative friends do not look to the state to encourage a common culture. Perhaps fearing that such a state would use its coercive power to impose a communitarian social solidarity around outlooks other than their own, they are content if the state simply allows communitarian groups the opportunity to prosper on their own. Of course, such conservatives can at best achieve a thick social solidarity *within* smaller groups, and only a thin sense of social solidarity can be achieved *among* groups having alternative value systems. To avoid mere liberal tolerance among communitarian groups and to provide some commonalities among difference groups, conservatives attempt to develop national and community identities among citizens. Nationalism and local identities do not require co-nationals and citizens of local communities to embrace the same moral, religious, ethnic, or political values, but they do provide shared allegiance to the community itself. Conservatives understand that common languages, national symbols, national holidays, community celebrations, and rooting for "the home team" can all build a thin but helpful sense of social solidarity within larger pluralistic political communities.

Liberals see social solidarity as occurring when individuals join together to cooperate in collective endeavors. Such cooperation can occur in both political communities and in groups within civil society, and these various settings need involve no common moral understandings. Indeed, liberals' deep commitment to the moral autonomy of individuals leaves them suspicious of the communitarian groups that conservatives favor. Individuals should come together for common purposes in spite of their perhaps divergent value systems. Liberals prefer liberal churches, where individuals having different interpretations of religious doctrines come together for social fellowship and for opportunities to discuss rather than resolve religious and moral issues.⁶⁴ Liberals like public schools where kids from every class, race, ethnicity, and religion come together to acquire a basic education and learn to live together. Liberals like civic groups composed of people having different life plans and different life styles who join together on specific but limited community projects. The different values that group members bring to their common purposes mean that liberal groups will have to resolve differences in order to work together effectively, and so liberal groups will seek "procedural" rather than "constitutive" communities.⁶⁵ What binds individuals within liberal groups together is not their common moral values but their belief that the group has institutionalized and fair processes for making decisions about their projects. While social solidarity is weakened by the different moral values that different individuals bring to community groups, members of the group do experience important connections with others, because they develop common allegiance to fair and effective institutions and because their collective endeavors can achieve successful projects that were unattainable alone.

Such liberal social solidarity is approachable in larger political communities, as well as in groups within civil society. However, liberal nationalism probably involves even thinner social solidarity than conservative nationalism. Liberals are less committed than conservatives to national languages (they are sympathetic to the burdens that "English only laws" place on ethno-linguistics minorities) and to national symbols (they will burn flags). Liberals embrace a nationalism of equal rights and responsibilities.

Liberal national solidarity rests on the understanding that my fellow citizens have the same rights as I and that I have responsibilities to my fellow citizens that are greater than those to people who reside beyond our borders. Liberal national solidarity rests on citizens sharing attachments to those national institutions like the Constitution (however flawed its democratic provisions)⁶⁶ and the Office of the Presidency (however limited the incumbent president). For liberals, such institutions can bind us together and merit our common allegiance because they enable us to resolve our differences fairly and to pursue our collective endeavors effectively.

Socialists see social solidarity as arising from shared experiences. Like liberals, socialists are leery of homogeneous, bonding communitarian groups, and seek social mixing among people across class, racial, gender and other social divisions. One of the values of communal provisions like national health care, day care centers, and public transportation is that they are universally available to everyone in the community. When rich and poor, black and white, and those in other social cleavages have similar social experiences in socialized medical centers, in community nurseries, and on the subway, they have opportunities to know others having values and life styles that are different from those in their more immediate social circles. Public parks and stadiums are places where diverse kinds of people can rub shoulders with each other, experience similar enjoyments, and forge common memories. Early in the twentieth century, Milwaukee developed the nation's most dense system of public parks under one of the few socialist municipal administrations in American history. Such public spaces were created on the premise that, at the end of the day, people from all walks of life could leave their hierarchically-organized workplaces and interconnect as equal citizens. For socialists, sky-boxes symbolize a major loss of social solidarity, because they segregate people and diminish common experiences. Socialists dislike neighborhoods segregated by class, as well as race, and seek zoning regulations that will place the various classes in proximity to each other. Rather than be exclusive bonding networks, groups in civil society should "bridge" the heterogeneity of the broader community. The goal of common experiences is to learn more about each other and to expose people to different moral systems, so that people can understand the value of these different outlooks and the different capacities that people bring to social life. Common experiences help build empathy toward those differently situated than oneself.

Socialists stress "engagement" or participation as a means of attaining common experiences in political communities. While conservatives see political participation as a possible means of affirming existing democratic norms and traditional common values, socialists see political participation as a means of deepening democracy and transforming community values. Both the process of working together politically and the hope of developing a more socialist ethos are seen as contributing to a forward-looking, rather than a conservative backward-looking, social solidarity.⁶⁷

The various programs of conservatives, liberals, and socialists for building social solidarity can generally be pursued independently within pluralist society with minimal political conflict. Within voluntary civil society, conservatives can build homogeneous and communitarian groups, liberals can create organizations among people having certain

collective goals, and socialists can seek to increase the heterogeneity of such groups. Social solidarity and greater national identity can be sought through public policies ranging from proclaiming national holidays to creating public spaces. Of course, the friends of pluralism will debate whether those holidays should be named for religious or minority leaders and whether the public spaces should include segregated sky-boxes, but when the debate is limited to such specific issues, ordinary pluralist politics can resolve the matter.

Conservatives go too far in their quest for communitarian solidarity when they seek larger political communities having widespread agreement on and adherence to the traditional moral values that comprise the cultures of these societies. Cultural conservatives, like Samuel Huntington, urge restriction on immigration of people from other cultures who do not share the values of Western civilization that are interwoven into American society.⁶⁸ Such proposals forget both that America contains many peoples from non-European civilizations (who are demeaned by such proposals) and that cultural advance can occur when westernized pluralist communities incorporate into their cultures the strengths of non-western cultures. Conservative communitarians believe that political entities like nations and cities should have cultural traditions, shared social understandings, and proscribed social practices that must be respected, protected, and deepened. Such communitarians believe that the state should enhance social solidarity by encouraging people to adopt conceptions of the good that conform to the community's traditional way of life.⁶⁹ This goal is counter to the underlying consensus within pluralism that people have individual rights to moral autonomy, to choose and revise their own moral outlooks. When states are called upon to pursue a "perfectionist" politics centered on establishing a common conception of the good life, marginalized minorities "must adjust their personalities and practices so as to be inoffensive to the dominant values of the community."⁷⁰ Conservative communitarians like Alistair MacIntyre fail to see how traditional cultures have historically been defined and protected by small and often unrepresentative portions of the community.

Liberals can go too far when their language of rights diminishes deeper senses of social solidarity. As Mary Ann Glendon argues, liberal insistence on moral autonomy sometimes leads to their thinking that individual rights always trump efforts by people to define "fundamental understandings of what kind of society we are and the role of common moral intuitions in contributing to these understandings."⁷¹ When the right of freedom of expression is interpreted to mean that there can be no limits on flag-burning, child pornography, or sadomasochistic art (to use Glendon's examples), "we can barely find the words to speak of indirect harms, cumulative injury, or damages that appear only long after the acts that precipitated them." People often hope to preserve their neighborhoods and common public lands as places of shared memories, social roots, and common resources, and the pluralist consensus provides for governmental authority and democratic processes for realizing such hopes. But common values are difficult to attain and preserve when liberals emphasize individual rights to such an extent that pluralist politics is seen as a forbidden vehicle for achieving common goals.

Socialists can stray from the pluralist consensus if they are too vigorous in their efforts to build bridging communities. Some communal groups exist for the very purpose of sustaining a particular way of life and moral outlook, and efforts to require that such communities open their doors to those who would question these values challenge the very reasons for their existence. Bonding community groups as well as bridging community groups are essential parts of the rich diversity of pluralist civil societies. Such groups are likely to disappear as a basis of social solidarity among those with common moral values if they cannot determine their own membership and exclude those who would undermine their commonalities.⁷²

Economic Prosperity

Increasing economic prosperity has played a significant role in the development of modern pluralist communities, and it is not clear how well such communities can survive economic decline. The friends of pluralism are committed to economic prosperity because it enhances the social goods available to people in pursuit of their various life plans and because economic growth reduces conflict over constant or declining resources among the competing groups in a pluralist society.

Contemporary conservatives emphasize increases in *private* wealth and capital accumulation as indicators and facilitators of increasing economic prosperity. Private wealth provides economic resources that individuals can control and for which they can be responsible. Because individuals can control private wealth, they have incentives to ensure that it is used wisely and utilized in ways that make it grow. In contrast, conservatives are leery of public property, believing that it is susceptible to the “tragedy of the commons.” In many medieval communities, shared fields were overgrazed by the herds of farmers who had inadequate incentives to preserve the commons – because they feared that their neighbors would not reduce their herds to sizes that the commons could sustain, even if they did. Today, conservatives remind us of this tragedy to defend their claim that public resources will not be managed as productively and efficiently as private property. Private wealth is often translated into capital – into investments that facilitate future economic growth – and large capital accumulations are necessary for the extensive investments that can produce large gains in productivity and technological innovations. Conservatives thus believe that reducing public appropriations of private wealth (taxes) and public controls on how capital is employed (state regulations) are the best methods of enhancing economic prosperity.

Socialists emphasize increases in *public* wealth and enlarging the public resources that are available to all members of political communities. They believe that societies are, in part, cooperative economic ventures where citizens engage in social production. In advanced pluralist societies, individuals seldom bring about major economic gains through their individual labor or their singular investments. It takes many people – often society as a whole operating through their governments – to bring together the resources for major economic investments, and it takes many people working together to create the products that are sought and needed in advanced societies. When such investments and labor are forthcoming, the social product and thus the economic prosperity of a

community are enhanced. The first claim on this social product are communal provisions – the various goods and services that governments make available to all citizens, such as public schools, public transportation, and universal health care.⁷³ Socialists believe more and better public facilities and services contribute enormously to the economic prosperity of a community. But contemporary socialists understand that, in a pluralist society, individual citizens also have unique needs and wants that can be satisfied by increasing their personal incomes. Thus, socialists want the second claim on the social product to be distributed in a manner that reflects the just deserts of individuals – such as their contributions to the social product. In sum, socialists believe that economic prosperity is best enhanced by directing economic and human resources towards those productive activities where needs are greatest. They believe that many of these needs will first be met by communal provisions and then be satisfied through commodities purchased by justly earned private incomes. The last claim on the social product should be for luxuries sought by those whose wealth has been achieved by mere luck or through exploitation.

Liberal views of economic prosperity are intermediate to those of their conservative and socialist friends. They believe a more optimal mix of private and public wealth can occur than in the highly capitalist economy preferred by conservatives or in the highly state-controlled economy preferred by socialists. They believe that increasing private wealth and capital accumulation is important for bringing about economic prosperity, but they move toward more socialist policies in at least three fundamental ways. First, in contrast to conservative tax cuts, liberals usually seek tax reforms and restructuring. They believe that targeted tax cuts that increase the incomes of middle and lower-income citizens will create demands for commodities that such people need and want, and that these demands will stimulate new investments to satisfy such demands and thus economic growth. They believe that changes in tax policy can redirect economic activity in ways that lead to increases in overall economic prosperity. For example, increased taxes on gasoline may provide funds for highway improvements while encouraging citizens to seek more energy-efficient cars and stimulating the automotive industry to produce such cars. Second, in contrast to conservative deregulation of the uses of private capital, liberals believe that some regulations are beneficial to overall economic prosperity by ensuring that some economic investments and activities do not have detrimental effects on the environment and broader community. Third, their support for growth of private wealth is often based on the belief that it provides the economic resources to increase communal provisions. When private wealth increases, progressive taxes provide communities with more funds to increase the quantity and quality of public schools, health, transportation and other aspects of the economic infrastructure of communities.

Pluralist politics seem particularly suited for reconciling the economic development programs of conservatives, liberals, and socialists. Communal provisions can be increased or decreased to various degrees. Taxes can be increased or decreased and made more or less progressive to various degrees. Governmental regulations can be strengthened or weakened to various degrees. The resolution of particular economic issues usually involves compromise among the friends of pluralism. In historical perspective, pluralist politics involves ebbs and flows in support for and in the

implementation of conservative, liberal, and conservative economic development programs.

Conservatives stray from the pluralist consensus on the legitimate role of governmental authority when their tax cuts starve governments of their ability to provide desired communal provisions, prevent democratic determination of possible increases in public facilities and services, and impose public debts on future generations. They go too far when their efforts to deregulate the economy remove legitimate restrictions on economic activity in ways that harm public health and safety and erode the environment. Conservatives sometimes forget that market activity must be governed by governmental regulations. As Elliot Spritzer, the crusading Attorney General from New York says, "If you have a marketplace unbridled by rules that mandate integrity and transparency, then the marketplace will not work."⁷⁴

Socialists can stray from the pluralist consensus when they fail to appreciate the role of private enterprises in a mixed political economy and when their policies fail to take advantage of the efficiencies and intelligence of the marketplace. Markets direct labor and capital toward places where economic growth is wanted and needed. Citizens of pluralist societies want a large marketplace of commodities and services to satisfy their personal conceptions of the good life, and market competition increases the quality and quantity of such goods while providing incentives for entrepreneurs to invent new products that improve the lives of many citizens. Left-wing socialists who insist that nationalized industries produce private goods (as well as communal ones) threaten economic prosperity. Socialists also go too far when their communal provisions encourage irresponsible behavior. Socialized medicine may be desirable when it helps prevent illnesses and when it provides necessary and effective treatments for those who have serious health problems. But citizens may make unreasonable demands on public resources if they are given the opportunity to seek at no or little personal cost more optional procedures (like breast implants) and medications (like viagra) and more expensive and/or experimental procedures that are unlikely to restore people to a healthy condition. More generally, extensive welfare provisions giving citizens incentives to withdraw from work or to pursue life styles that strain public resources decrease the economic prosperity of a community.

While the middle path that liberals have steered between conservatives and socialists may relieve them of such charges of "going too far," liberals may share with their pluralist friends a general overemphasis on economic prosperity, understood in strictly material terms. Perhaps the affluence all pluralists seek is, as William Ophuls alleges, fallacious and fraudulent. Perhaps "it does not foster human happiness, it does not satisfy, it frustrates, and it addicts."⁷⁵ More economic production increases but may never satisfy human wants for more material goods, as humans get addicted to acquiring new luxuries and come to see old luxuries as necessities. More economic production increases the goods available to us, but many such goods are sought merely to show our superiority over others rather than for their use value. Much economic prosperity comes at the cost of depleting the environment of resources needed for the prosperity of future generations. Much economic abundance comes at the cost of other human goods.

Individuals and families must work longer hours to create and consume material goods, and even much of our "leisure time" is devoted to maintaining our increasing material possessions. When pluralist politics functions well, it develops means by which individuals can pursue their own conceptions of the good life. But pluralist politics can degenerate into endless arguments about the best policies to maximize the gross national product, with nary a thought given to the costs that are incurred by the single-minded pursuit of such prosperity. Such politics effectively makes economic prosperity an absolute value, undermining the pluralist consensus that a multitude of moral values should be negotiated and reconciled politically.

Equality

The underlying consensus of pluralism includes developing and sustaining a society where everyone is given equal respect and equal concern. Equal respect means recognizing the moral autonomy of all citizens (except for those who are immature or incapacitated and thus unable to be fully responsible for themselves). It means understanding that all such citizens have the right to choose and pursue their own conception of the good life, so long as these choices are responsible and do not undermine a person's own long-term well-being or the well-being of others. Equal concern means that everyone's interests are to be given equal consideration in resolving community issues. Conservatives, liberals, and socialists often disagree, however, on the proper way to distribute social goods in ways that show equal respect and equal concern for citizens.

Conservatives believe that the way to show equal respect for people is to distribute social goods in ways that are sensitive to people's choices and the efforts they expend in realizing those choices. They assume that everyone in a pluralist society knows roughly what kind of rewards will be reaped by their various choices. If I choose to be a college professor or an artist, I do so knowing that I regard these occupations as giving me a good life even if they pay less than being a business executive or corporate lawyer. If I choose to put minimal effort into my job as a professor in order to reserve time for more leisurely pursuits, I do so knowing that I should reap smaller pay increases than my harder working colleagues. Giving equal rewards to a slovenly professor and a hard-working lawyer is to disregard the choices made. Conservatives also believe that the way to show equal concern for people is to encourage everyone to become disciplined and responsible for themselves, by rewarding those who act responsibly and punishing those who do not. Conservatives believe that people are treated equally by governments and by others in the economy and in society when they are given unequal social goods that reflect their inequalities in ambitions and responsible behavior. Conservative conceptions of equality thus center on the notion of "just deserts," that the superior qualities and greater contributions of some people justify providing them more income and other social goods. In general, the "differentiating" justice principles stressed by conservatives maintain that greater talent, skill, knowledge, energy, and other human virtues lead to greater social contributions that deserve greater rewards for those possessing such virtues.⁷⁶

Liberals and socialists recognize that human inequalities sometimes justify unequal rewards, but see less room for the application of differentiating principles than their conservative friends. For example, liberals oppose the unlimited application of just desert principles in such public spheres as public education and other public facilities; they maintain that all students are entitled to an equal basic education, regardless of their talents or their parents' incomes or tax payments. Socialists agree, but go further than liberals in questioning the application of just desert principles, even in the private sphere. Socialists are doubtful that the increasing income differentials between corporate officers and workers are justified by differences in contributions to productivity. They believe corporate products are communally produced in ways that make difficult - indeed impossible - accurate assessments of relative contributions. For socialists, the huge salaries often provided to CEOs are due to their illegitimate unequal power, not to vastly superior talents or contributions.

For socialists, the results of social distributions should be sensitive to people's needs, and people often have relatively equal needs. For example, children from rich and poor homes have equal needs for education, and the need of the elderly for medical care is little related to their ability to pay for it. Conservatives and especially liberals recognize the force of this argument, though to a lesser extent. Certainly, George W. Bush's "compassionate conservatism" provides at least rhetorical commitment to more equal education for children and more equal access to prescription drugs for the elderly.

Equal opportunity remains the most important liberal conception of equality,⁷⁷ but as liberalism has evolved, so has its conception of equal opportunity. Initially, equal opportunity was seen as involving a fair process for ensuring people equal treatment so that unequal talents and ambitions would be duly rewarded. If distributive processes involved no bias against people due to such extraneous factors as their race, gender, religion, sexual orientation and so forth, then rewards would be based solely on contributions. But contributions are greatly influenced by talents, energy, and other such individual resources, and many of these resources arise from genetic endowments and social environments that are undeserved. Some people are merely lucky or unlucky in the genetic lottery or in the social environments where they are born and raised. Thus, liberals began to realize that their initial formulation of equal opportunity had the effect of being unfair to those disadvantaged due to natural and social handicaps. To attain "fair equal opportunity" for such disadvantaged people, liberals thought political communities, through their governments, had obligations to create compensatory programs helping the disadvantaged. To provide equal respect to everyone, liberals came to believe governments should structure distribution systems in ways that reward and punish differences in ambition without rewarding and punishing differences in endowments.⁷⁸

Socialists believe that this new liberal conception of equal opportunity, while laudable, is insufficient and must be complemented with stronger egalitarian justice principles that reduce differences in wealth, power, and other social goods. But all friends of pluralism see equal opportunity as an indispensable part of a just pluralist society.

When the friends of pluralism understand and embrace the complexity of justice as part of the underlying consensus of pluralist societies, they are best able to reconcile their different programs for giving all individuals equal respect. They then realize that market distributions are just, so long as they are constrained by governmental rules that provide fair treatment. They then realize that governmental distributions are just, so long as they are the result of an adequate democratic process. They then realize that adequate democratic processes require participants to bring a variety of relevant justice principles, and not just the power of various interests, to bear on political decisions. To the extent that such "complex justice" is realized in practice, citizens will be given as much equal respect and concern as possible, given the variety of interpretations of equality that are embraced in pluralist societies.

Conservatives go too far when they adopt thicker conceptions of human nature than those consensually held by pluralists and believe that people own their unequal endowments. Conservatives stray from the underlying pluralist consensus when they fail to recognize that distributions of natural talents and social circumstances are undeserved yet lead to great differences in the real opportunities that people experience. They are blind to reality if they assert that those who have fallen behind have done so only because of their own irresponsibility and laziness. But those on the left can also go too far when they regard all people in disadvantaged circumstances as victims and call for endless compensatory and redistributive programs that sustain irresponsible choices.

Socialists go too far when they demand implementation of cosmopolitan principles of justice calling for extensive redistribution of wealth among peoples globally. To be sure, the present inequalities among nations are both obscene and unjust.⁷⁹ Global inequalities due to historical processes of exploitation should be redressed when claims of unjust acquisition and exchange of wealth can be substantiated. Global inequalities due to unfair terms of trade should be addressed by revising agreements that simply reflect the power of stronger countries. Prosperous societies probably have national interests and moral obligations that are well served by providing greater assistance to burdened societies. However, demands for redistribution based merely on claims that egalitarian principles of justice have been violated privilege a conception of justice that is not the result of any global agreement. Pluralist epistemology doubts the existence of any sort of universal principles of justice that could govern widespread redistribution. As a consequence, socialists can only articulate good reasons why more cosmopolitan principles ought to be more widespread among pluralists; they cannot claim that their principles should presently govern the global political economy.

Pluralism can also be threatened by excessive cynicism about market justice, by claims that the market rewards only deception, fraud, and exploitation, while failing to reward hard work, innovation, and producing goods and services that people want and need. Such cynicism by the left contributes to withdrawal of support for institutions of free enterprise that pluralists agree are important to the structure of a pluralist political economy.

Market justice, and the economic freedoms it allows, is threatened by the idea that justice can be reduced to simple equality – that everyone has a right to equal incomes and

wealth regardless of their contributions to the production and distribution of economic goods. Social justice – the provision of certain goods equally to everyone by virtue of their equal citizenship and the provision of other types of welfare services to people because of their extraordinary needs – is threatened by the idea that justice is nothing more than legal equal opportunity to participate in the marketplace. Monistic insistence on either market justice or social justice is anathema to pluralism because such insistence violates its underlying consensus that justice involves a myriad of justice principles that must be applied and sometimes balanced when various social goods are distributed.

Democracy

Democracy is central to pluralism and affirmed by all friends of pluralism. The different interests and ideals that various participants bring to pluralist politics means that some method must be found to resolve these differences. Pluralists believe that democracy is superior to the imposition of outcomes by those with superior economic, social, military, or coercive power. At bottom, democracy is a policymaking procedure where all citizens (or people effected by political decisions) are treated as political equals in that their judgments and concerns are granted equal respect. All have an equal right to articulate their concerns and to participate in the processes of deliberation, persuasion and bargaining that occurs during democratic processes. At some decisive stage in the political processes, everyone has a right to vote and have their votes count equally with the results being determined by some previously-agreed upon decision-rule such a “majority wins,” or “plurality wins.”⁸⁰

Despite agreements on these broad democratic principles, pluralists range from weak democrats (who have little commitment to widespread citizen participation and who have a minimal conception of political equality) to strong democrats (who have extensive commitments to citizen participation and political equality). Traditional conservatives anchor the right end of the democratic pluralist continuum with their elite conception of democracy. Following theorists ranging from Edmund Burke to Joseph Schumpeter, they see democracy as a method of holding governing leaders accountable through democratic competition.⁸¹ Political authorities are legitimately entrusted with far more power than average citizens, whose participation is best limited to obeying the authoritative commands of elites and voting in periodic elections. The decisive democratic stage in the political process occurs when citizens get to approve or disapprove of the overall results of the policies adopted and pursued by political leaders, with disapproval signified by voters electing competing parties and leaders. Traditional conservatives often applaud leaders who exercise their independent judgment and pursue policies and programs initially at odds with dominant citizen preferences, as they believe that leaders bring more knowledge and better judgments to policymaking than do citizens. Conservatives see democracy as functioning well when elite judgments are vindicated and voters reelect leaders whose earlier positions were unpopular.

Socialists anchor the left end of the democratic pluralist continuum with their populist or “strong” conception of democracy. Following theorists ranging from Jean Jacques Rousseau to Benjamin Barber, they see democracy as a method of directly

involving and empowering all citizens in political policymaking. They believe that all citizens are capable of informed and wise judgment or at least educable on important political issues. While socialists support representative democracy, competition, and accountability, they are also highly supportive of direct democracy, when citizen initiatives and referenda become the decisive stage of the political process for major issues. They also believe that all citizens should have equal (or more equal) political power in the myriad political organizations to which people belong and that influence their lives. Families, workplaces, the organizations of civil society, and international organizations – as well as national, state, and local governments – should be more thoroughly democratized.

In their conception of democracy, liberals occupy the middle ground among pluralists. Following theorists ranging from John Stuart Mill to Robert Dahl, liberals endorse representative democracy and accept direct democracy for resolving a limited number of issues, but they are mainly concerned with making democracy more representative. Representatives in the democratic system should be more involved and powerful than ordinary citizens, but they should also be more responsive to the interests and ideas of their various constituents. Liberals have thus supported a long variety of democratic reforms, ranging from support for universal suffrage and equal voting rights to more equal involvement of previously-marginalized minority groups in deliberative democratic processes and as representatives in political office. By encouraging responsiveness and better representation, rather than mere accountability, liberals demonstrate a greater confidence than conservatives in citizen participation and judgment, and they are more wary of the capacity of elites to manufacture support for policies that may not well reflect the genuine interests and ideals of citizens. But liberals are also wary of too much direct democracy, both because they believe that citizen judgments can be flawed and because the processes of direct democracy can be dominated by special interests and thus yield results that may not respond to the concerns of most citizens.

While conservatives, liberals, and socialists thus differ in their democratic conceptions, they are each committed to resolving political differences democratically. Moreover, they respect the democratic conceptions of their rivals, at least in the senses that they recognize that there are legitimate justifications for the democratic views of their rivals and that the differences about optimal democratic structures and processes should themselves be resolved democratically. For example, proposals to extend voting rights or to increase the use of referenda are to be resolved by existing and previously-agreed upon democratic processes – often using appeals to justice.

There are many ways to undermine the sorts of democracy that pluralism requires. Conservatives can carry their concerns about the need for strong leadership and expertise beyond the pluralist consensus. They can, for example, call for an unrestrained president – one capable of pushing aside legislative and judicial restraints or one who is able to turn elections into a plebiscite endorsing his emergency powers (rather than a genuine contested election in which citizens can dismiss an imperial president). Conservatives sometimes support international organizations that exhibit undemocratic elitism, insulate the governing

technocrats from citizen accountability, and allow deliberations that are closed to non-business interests.

Populists on the left can call for too much reliance on referenda and initiatives, thwarting the deliberation, compromise, and long-term planning that pluralism requires. And over-use of recalls (and impeachment) can result in rulers being removed from office because they make hard but unpopular decisions (rather than because of corruption or incompetence). Populists on the pluralist right have also used these instruments of direct democracy in ways that are irresponsible and imply too much impatience with well-established democratic procedures.

Another way in which conservatives can be dangerous to democracy is by declaring that most economic issues should be resolved completely within the free-market system and removed from democratic deliberation and determination. Of course, liberals can similarly endanger democracy if they declare that moral questions must be removed from the democratic agenda or that the courts should play a proactive role in preserving individual liberties.⁸² In this regard, perhaps libertarians are the greatest danger to democracy, because they want to remove both economic and moral questions from the political agenda. They endanger democracy by reducing politics to democratic elections of public officials whose sole responsibility is to ensure domestic and international security.

Conspiratorial ideas inferring that democracy is a sham are also dangerous to pluralism. Conspiratorial ideas play on fears that the government is controlled by some sort of hidden elite that make irrelevant formal institutional or electoral restraints on rulers. Widespread belief in such conspiratorial theories are dangerous because they undermine the legitimacy of the existing regime and encourage citizens to support demagogues who claim the need to work outside existing restraints to eliminate the conspiratorial threat.

Globally, democratically-elected populist regimes can become dangerous when they generate citizen support for the suppression civil liberties and to pursue aggression against other countries. Some societies where democracy values are nascent may not be threats to pluralist democracies only because they lack strong democratic institutions that would empower angry citizens with aggressive fundamentalist and nationalist goals.⁸³ In short, the underlying consensus of pluralism understands that democracy is complex. Simple-minded notions of democracy – that countries should be ruled by majorities of citizens, even if those citizens lack democratic norms of extensive equal political rights and of peaceful resolution of conflict – can be a grave danger to a well-ordered and pluralist global community.

Summary and conclusions

While the old friends of pluralism give different meanings and emphases to the core political values of security, freedom, morality, solidarity, prosperity, equality, and democracy, they sufficiently share these values that they can normally resolve concrete

policy issues where their values are at stake. However, effective resolutions of such issues require that all pluralists remember the underlying consensus that they share and employ the pluralist processes that are part of that consensus. Increasingly, advocates of certain strands of conservatism, liberalism, and socialism need to be reminded that they can go too far in pursuing particular core values, endangering the pluralist system to which they are committed.

For example, social conservatives and communitarians can be single-minded in their pursuit of traditional and often religious moral standards, in ways that are intolerant of alternative moral beliefs of other pluralists. Neo-conservatives pursue a nationalist foreign policy with little concern for the views and participation of other pluralist countries. Egalitarian liberals have emphasized economic redistribution within national political communities in ways that have been strongly resisted by others. Libertarians have pursued the liberal concern with individual freedom in ways that would undermine the pursuit of public and social goals sought by other pluralists. Left-wing socialists still cling to the idea that national governments must direct economic production in ways that would undermine the workings of the economic markets that others regard as central to pluralist societies. And only the most international of socialists find plausible the cosmopolitan claim that social justice demands extensive economic redistribution globally.

This paper has pursued both academic and practical political goals. By expanding on Rawls' conception of an overlapping consensus and proposing a much more expansive underlying consensus that serves to identify threats to pluralist politics, it invites political theorists to engage in a broad discussion of the adequacy of the contents of that consensus proposed here. By claiming that conservatives, liberals, and socialists must recognize that their first political obligations are to work within the underlying consensus of pluralism, and by suggesting when these friends of pluralism stray from that consensus, I seek to encourage those who participate in pluralist politics to remain faithful to the "rules of the game" that can make pluralism a successful public philosophy.

¹ Crick, 1962: 111-139.

² These perennial issues and how conservatives, liberals, and socialists have answered these questions are discussed in Schumaker, Kiel, and Heilke (1996).

³ Daniel Bell (1960) proclaimed an end of ideology after the demise of fascism and Nazism, while Francis Fukuyama (1992) proclaimed an "end of history" during the demise of communism as eastern European countries broke free of Soviet domination and as the Soviet Union crumbled.

⁴ Consensus does not mean unanimity. Public opinion polls show some people in pluralist societies reject even the most widely accepted ideas of that society. For example, the principle that "everyone should have equal opportunity to get ahead" is opposed by two percent of Americans (McClosky and Zaller, 1984: 83). As discussed by McClosky and Zaller (232-233), American pluralism is characterized by what historian Richard Hofstadter calls a "broad underlying consensus" involving "almost universal public support for the basic values of capitalism and democracy."

⁵ Lucash, 1986.

⁶ Sullivan, Pierson and Marcus, 1982; Cigler and Joslyn, 2002.

⁷ Parekh (2000: 165-68) discusses the various intellectual justifications for people being exposed to views and values outside their own parochial communities.

⁸ Spinner-Halev and Theiss-Morse, 2003.

⁹ Pluralist societies have witnessed significant migration of political authority from the national level to local communities and to larger regional communities such as the European Union. These changes are discussed by contributors to a recent symposium on authority migration, edited by Gerber and Kollman (2004).

¹⁰ This discussion is highly influenced by Michael Walzer (1983: 31-62). Walzer's work influenced a revival of interest in these questions of citizenship during the past twenty years. Kymlicka (2002: 284-326) has discussed much of this work.

¹¹ Such changes have been accompanied by significant reductions in attitudes supporting racial and gender discrimination, as demonstrated by Niemi, Mueller, and Smith (1989: 167-186) and by Mayer (1992: 22-28 and 38-41).

¹² Whether subgroups – like Native Americans or the Amish – have group rights that exempt them from certain obligations illustrates this issue. This issue is well discussed by Kymlicka (1995).

¹³ Galbraith, 1967; Walzer, 1983. This idea is also supported by public opinion research showing most Americans have sufficient support for both capitalism and democratic government that they seek marginal adjustments when their values conflict, rather than unregulated capitalism or pure democracy (McClosky and Zaller, 1984: 184-188).

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- ¹⁴ Walzer, 1983: 281-82; Skocpol, 1994; Zakaria, 2003a.
- ¹⁵ Dahl, 1998: 100-118.
- ¹⁶ Dahl, 1989: 24-28. While citizens in pluralist societies have always expressed extensive support for the most broad and abstract democratic principles (such as those involving equal political rights), this consensus dissolves when citizens are asked whether certain kinds of people (such as “those who can’t vote intelligently”) should be deprived of democratic rights. This issue is discussed by McClosky and Zaller, 73-80).
- ¹⁷ Guidry and Sawyer, 2003.
- ¹⁸ Despite believing that they are over-taxed, most citizens continue to believe that government should be committing more resources to such problems as protecting the environment, promoting the nation’s health, solving the problems of big cities, reducing crime, improving education, and providing assistance to the poor (Niemi, Mueller, and Smith, 1989: 73-91).
- ¹⁹ John Stuart Mill, 1859.
- ²⁰ The extensiveness willingness of citizens in pluralist societies to support laws restricting freedoms and upholding dominant moral values is discussed by McClosky and Zaller (1984: 52-59). Although the World Values Survey seldom asks about support for laws regulating moral standards, Inglehart, Basanez, and Moreno (1998) report that abortion (V227-240), the use of marijuana/hashish (V301), prostitution (V309), divorce (V310), euthanasia (V312), and other such activities are seen as wrong by many, and often by most, citizens in many pluralist countries.
- ²¹ McClosky and Zaller, 1984: 146-147; Mayer, 1992: 459.
- ²² Klosko (2000) argues that the underlying consensus in a liberal pluralist society is largely built around the concept of procedural justice.
- ²³ Nozick, 1974. Widespread support for market justice is reported by Lane (1986) and McClosky and Zaller (1984: 80-94). However, the notion that markets also generate injustice is suggested by the World Values Survey showing that the most important reason why people live in need is because of “injustice in our society” (Inglehart, Basanez and Moreno, 1998: V97).
- ²⁴ Walzer, 1983; Miller and Walzer, 1995; Miller, 1999.
- ²⁵ The World Values Survey shows widespread support for reform, as opposed to revolutionary change or maintenance of the status quo (Inglehart, Basanez and Moreno: 1998: V249).
- ²⁶ Most citizens in the World Values Survey indicate that they have either engaged in peaceful protest or might do so (Inglehart, Basanez, and Moreno, 1998: V242-244). However, there is considerably less public acceptance of disruptive forms of protest among the public than there is among theorists of pluralist democracy. For many social theorists, people have the right to engage in disruptive tactics such as demonstrations, boycotts, and strikes and to engage in civil disobedience in order to apply pressure on authorities to respond to their concerns. Such ideas are often contested by more conservative pluralists and thus are not part of the underlying consensus of pluralism.

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- ²⁷ Long ago, I presented evidence suggesting that moderate protest is not only within the bounds of pluralist acceptability but also effective. But when protest becomes too militant, its effectiveness diminishes in pluralist societies. Only in non-pluralist societies does the coerciveness of violence seem to yield the changes sought by protesters (Schumaker, 1975; Kowaleski and Schumaker, 1981; O'Keefe and Schumaker, 1983).
- ²⁸ This section on philosophical orientations is inspired by the defense of "weak ontology" provided by Stephen K. White (2000).
- ²⁹ Rawls, 1993: 36-40.
- ³⁰ Schumaker, 1991: 174-202
- ³¹ Perhaps the classical articulation of this idea is by T.H. Huxley (1888) who insisted that even if evolution was influenced by the struggle for existence and the survival of the strongest, human societies could choose to follow socialist values of cooperation and helping the weak survive.
- ³² For example. Glen Tinder (1991: 225-38) endorses the concept of humane uncertainty to express liberalism's disdain for claims to ultimate truth. George Soros (1998) endorses the concepts of fallibility and an open society to capture Karl Popper's insistence on human imperfection in our search for ultimate truth.
- ³³ Perhaps environmentalism and feminism are among the newer ideologies with sufficient breadth and commitment to pluralism to be worthy of analysis of the sort provided here for pluralism's old friends.
- ³⁴ The friends of pluralism also seem to differ on the range of factors that pluralist governments should address to ensure safety and security. Those on the pluralist left are likely to think that the security policies of government include provision of clean water and air, uncontaminated food, safe products, pre-natal care, preventative health provisions, among others. See Lakoff (2003).
- ³⁵ David Anderson (1997) discusses such conservative and liberal approaches to crime.
- ³⁶ See www.socialistparty.org.uk/2004 and www.lefttalk.com
- ³⁷ In a major defense of (neo)conservative national security policies, Norman Podhoretz (2004) labels the willingness to use military force to replace authoritarian regimes that harbor terrorists with leaders having democratic aspirations as the second pillar of the Bush Doctrine.
- ³⁸ The right to preempt is the third pillar of the Bush doctrine, according to Podhoretz (2004). The Bush and Chaney quotes are provided by Daalder and Lindsay (2003: 3).
- ³⁹ Allison, 2005; Leverett, 2005.
- ⁴⁰ Peter Beinart (2004) documents the historical support among liberals for strong security measures and encourages a greater "liberal passion to win the struggle against Al Qaeda."
- ⁴¹ For example, see Starr, Tomasky, and Kuttner, 2005: 21.

⁴² The fact that the U.S. spends as much on defense as the rest of the world combined is a measure of such imbalance. Such economic burdens of military domination may ultimately be self-correcting, as they weaken the hegamon. For example, extensive military spending diverts resources from such other investments as developing alternative sources of energy that would strengthen the U.S. in the long run. Such practices increase U.S. dependence on oil from the Middle East, thus diminishing our global strength.

⁴³ Among the many analysts who have expressed such a view is Zakaria (2003b). Schwartz and Layne (2002: 38) cite Henry Kissinger as expressing similar sentiments.

⁴⁴ Schwartz and Layne, 2002: 36.

⁴⁵ James Fallows, 2004.

⁴⁶ Rawls, 1999b: 94-104.

⁴⁷ Walzer, 2002.

⁴⁸ Peterson (1981) provides the classical statement about how the freedom of communities can be limited by economic imperatives.

⁴⁹ To avoid the “socialist” stigma that is uniquely pejorative in America, such people have called themselves by many other names such as populists, radicals, and greens.

⁵⁰ Wittes (2005: 53). Like Wittes, I support policies that give women extensive rights to abortion. The problem is the problematic constitutional basis of that right. When courts cannot find in constitutions unequivocal language establishing a freedom as a universal right, then democratic processes must be trusted to determine whether or not a liberty, like reproductive freedom, should be provided. It is difficult to see how stringent abortion controls can have more positive than negative social consequences. As Lowi (1995: 254-5) says, a highly restrictive “human life protection act” could lead to “a police state for women.” If most pluralists recognized the precarious protection provided by court interpretations and acted politically to protect women’s interests, democratic political processes would likely both reject excessive abortion restrictions and extend other personal and social freedoms. Such freedoms are now curtailed and endangered by social conservatives who have acquired disproportionate political power due to their being mobilized in opposition to *Roe v. Wade*.

⁵¹ Crenson and Ginsberg, 2004: 156-181.

⁵² Rawls, 1993.

⁵³ However, liberals understand that some conceptions of a good life (such as being a hard working entrepreneur) are more likely than others (such as being a couch potato) to be rewarded monetarily through just economic and social processes.

⁵⁴ Kymlicka, 2002: 212-221.

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- ⁵⁵ Kymlicka, 2002: 299-302; Galston, 1991; Dagger, 1997.
- ⁵⁶ Lakoff, 2002: 65-107.
- ⁵⁷ Lakoff attributes the nurturant parent morality to liberals, but this attribution is based on observations of self-proclaimed liberals in American society, rather than on liberal theory or a wider consideration of pluralist societies outside the “exceptional” American experience where socialist labels are avoided. Accordingly, the nurturant parent morality perhaps best describes those socialists to the left of conservatives *and* the more neutral liberals.
- ⁵⁸ Tronto, 1993.
- ⁵⁹ Glendon, 1991: 109. See also Kymlicka (2002: 302-312) for a summary of this literature.
- ⁶⁰ See Kymlicka (2002: 212-223) for a discussion of “perfectionism” – the public philosophy that provides a public conception of the good and that prioritizes various life plans and life styles.
- ⁶¹ Putnam, 2000: 27.
- ⁶² Putnam, 2000: 31-148.
- ⁶³ Putnam (2000: 22-24) distinguishes “bonding” from “bridging” social capital. His concept of social capital, defined as “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” is perhaps synonymous with social solidarity. Bonding social capital is “inward looking” and reinforcing of individual identities. Bridging social capital involves “social networks that are outward looking, encompassing people across diverse social cleavages.”
- ⁶⁴ Unitarian Fellowships provide an ideal type of such bridging religious groups. Their very name underscores that a form of solidarity can arise among people having diverse moral codes.
- ⁶⁵ Sandel (1984) provides these terms to stress the difference between having individuals becoming deeply embedded in the moral system of a communitarian group and having individuals becoming involved in political communities simply to find procedures for resolving their differences.
- ⁶⁶ Dahl, 2003.
- ⁶⁷ Benjamin Barber (1984, 1998) is the American political theorist who perhaps best exemplifies this socialist conception of social solidarity. By stressing the importance of political and civil engagement in a transforming manner, Michael Sandel (1996) can also be seen as within this tradition, but Sandel’s emphasis on an embedded self who “discovers” one’s moral values within the existing social context also suggests a certain allegiance to a more conservative conception of social solidarity.
- ⁶⁸ Huntington, 2004.
- ⁶⁹ Kymlicka, 2002: 220.

⁷⁰ Kymlicka, 2002: 260.

⁷¹ Glendon, 1991: 120.

⁷² Kymlicka (2002:237-38) suggests that pluralism also would give communal groups certain capacities to retain potential defectors. But while pluralism might grant certain "group rights," for example, to the Amish help them retain the youth that might wish to leave, the pluralist consensus ensuring people the right to leave communities must be upheld.

⁷³ Walzer, 1983: 75-76

⁷⁴ Quoted in Pappu (2004: 114)

⁷⁵ Ophuls, 1997: 121-176.

⁷⁶ Hochschild (1981) stresses the role of differentiating justice principles in spheres of life beyond the strictly political.

⁷⁷ Since John Rawls' publication of *A Theory of Justice* in 1971, liberal academics have explored an egalitarian liberalism that has gone beyond equal opportunity, but liberal public philosophy has been more receptive to Rawls' emphasis on fair equal opportunity than to more equal distributions of social goods required by other elements of his "difference principle."

⁷⁸ Dworkin, 1977.

⁷⁹ Pogge, 2002.

⁸⁰ Dahl (1998) provides an authoritative summary of the characteristics and value of democracy.

⁸¹ See Ian Shapiro (2002) for a recent account of this democratic tradition, which has been widely influential in political science.

⁸² Of course, courts do play an important role in pluralist societies in protecting minority rights from majority rule. But as Robert Burt (1991) argues, while courts can appropriately declare some results of democratic processes to be erroneous, the courts should only require democratic bodies to redo their work. This point was clearly expressed by Supreme Court Justice Ruth Ginsberg, who criticized the "overreach" of the Supreme Court and Justice Blackmun in *Roe v. Wade*. According to Ginsberg, this decision invited no dialogue with legislators. Instead, it seemed entirely to remove the ball from the legislator's court." See Shapiro (2002: 261).

⁸³ Weisman, 2003.

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