Schools as Communities: Four Metaphors, Three Models, and a Dilemma or Two

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This paper examines two questions. The first is what it would mean for schools to be communities. This question is pursued by examining four metaphors for community: families, congregations, guilds, and democratic polities. Three models of school communities are then sketched. The second question is whether schools that are communities are inherently illiberal. The paper distinguishes between a liberal interpretation of schools as communities, where schools are viewed as limited-purpose free associations, and a communitarian interpretation where community and polity are not adequately distinguished. I argue that, within a framework of liberal pluralism, schools can be communities without being illiberal.

INTRODUCTION

One of the great needs of the modern democratic polity is to recover a sense of significant differentiation, so that its partial communities, be they geographical, or cultural, or occupational, can become again important centres of concern and activity for their members in a way which connects them to the whole. (Taylor, 1984, p. 197)

The idea that schools should be communities has become popular, if not downright faddish (see for example Bryk, Lee and Holland, 1993; Kahne, 1996; Merz and Furman, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1993). The popularity of the idea is, no doubt, a consequence of a variety of factors including the alienation and loneliness of modern life and the oft-noted disengagement of many students (Steinberg, 1996) from their schooling. Recent acts of senseless violence such as the shootings at Columbine High School have helped focus attention on the idea. The benefits that are often associated with community include a sense of membership, rootedness and belonging. Communities are also said to develop such socially beneficial characteristics as trust, loyalty and mutual attachment. As Rawls (1971) suggests, development of such
characteristics in communal associations may be prerequisite to
developing a sense of justice.

In the USA the interest in community has also been promoted because
Catholic schools appear to be more successful in educating poor and
minority youth than are their public (in the American sense) school
counterparts, for reasons claimed to be associated with their communal
character (Bryk and Driscoll, 1988). They are also claimed (Bryk, Lee
and Holland, 1993) to be better at creating citizens. Community also
offers possible educational benefits because of the potential for a higher
level of programme coherence and staff solidarity (Westheimer, 1998).

Unfortunately, it is not always clear what it means for a school to be a
community or whether the aspiration for community involves any
distinctive vision of a good education. Sometimes the desire for
community does not go very far beyond the suggestion that schools
should be more caring or intimate. In such pictures the idea of
community gets reduced largely to its affective dimensions.

As Bryk’s work on Catholic schools suggests, there are more
substantive pictures of school community available. It is, however,
these more substantive visions of community that are also the more
problematic. Because they select students who share a constitutive
doctrine, they may fail to be inclusive. They may promote such evils as
sectarianism and erode such public goods as tolerance or citizenship.
Because they are rooted in what Rawls (1993) would term a
comprehensive doctrine, they may fail to generate a robust marketplace
of ideas in which diverse visions of good lives are fairly aired, and they
may erode autonomy. If there are those present who do not share the
school’s constitutive doctrine, they may marginalise or oppress them.
Hence, there are also certain ‘bads’ that may be associated with thick
communities. Can we have the ‘goods’ of community without the ‘bads’?

FOUR METAPHORS FOR COMMUNITY AND A DILEMMA

A community is not formed every time a group of people happen to
interact with one another; true communities are bound together by the
values, norms, and experiences their members share. The deeper and more
strongly held those common values, the stronger the sense of community.
(Fukuyama, 1999, p. 59)

Two claims often made about the ‘glue’ that holds communities together
are that communities are united by shared values, and that communities
involve deep and intimate attachments among members.

The idea that communities involve shared values is too vague to be of
much use. Most people in schools value good plumbing, but few robust
school communities are likely to be formed on this basis. For different
reasons, autonomy or rugged individualism are unlikely bases for strong
educational communities. Moreover, associations held together solely by
arm’s length contracts are not communities even if their members share
certain aims. Goods and aims, the sharing of which can create community must be of a character such that people must co-operate in order to further their realisation. These goods must be public and common, not merely agreed upon. Orchestras are communities because their goods can only be realised in common. Banks are not because the goods individuals seek through them continue to be private. Moreover, communities must generate activities such that community members form attachments to other community members through participation.

These comments contain the germ of a theory about the relationship between these features of community. This theory holds that the bonds of community are formed through engaging in co-operative activities in the pursuit of common goods and shared aims. For a school to be a community in this way the following should be true. First, there must be some elements of a shared view of human flourishing, something of the nature of what Rawls (1993) calls a comprehensive doctrine or MacIntyre (1981) a tradition. Second, this view must generate a distinctive view of a good education such that people are moved to associate together in school communities in order to pursue it. Third, this view of education must generate or be embedded in co-operative activities, in order to secure its realisation. Finally, engaging in these shared activities and co-operating in the pursuit of these shared aims must generate the goods of community such as a sense of belonging, loyalty, trust, and mutual attachment and concern. I will refer to communities that have these features as ‘congregational’ in their character. I have chosen the term because religious congregations seem paradigmatic of communities of this sort. Schools that are congregational, however, need not be religious in character.

This formulation suggests a network of problems. Any community formed through allegiance to some substantive set of commitments, *ex hypothesi* will employ these commitments to determine membership or, if not, then full standing in the community. The resulting exclusion or marginalisation is not especially problematic so far as most voluntary associations are concerned. The right to include or exclude is part of the right of freedom of association. No one expects synagogues to admit Christians or Catholic churches to welcome Baptists to full membership. If we expect congregations to be inclusive, what we have a right to expect is that they not discriminate with respect to characteristics that are unrelated to their constitutive commitments. Baptists may exclude Catholics, but not blacks.

Schools, however, are expected to produce certain public goods. These public goods, arguably, may not be produced by communities dedicated to realising a distinctive conception of a good education and formed through free association. We hope that schools will produce tolerance, develop good (and autonomous) citizens, and create a marketplace of ideas. Such ideals may require diversity in the populations served by the school and in the ideas and commitments they bring to school with them. They may also require certain practices such as those associated with a marketplace of ideas. Hence, while the failure to be broadly
inclusive with respect to some constitutive values may not be a liability for many associations in liberal democratic societies, it may be a liability of school communities.

These problems (which I shall for brevity’s sake refer to as the problems of inclusion) result from viewing the ‘primary glue’ that binds people together into a school community as a set of shared substantive commitments which are key to the formation of strong attachments. Are such substantive commitments required for school communities? I want to suggest that they are. To argue this, I will look at three other metaphors of community.

Perhaps strong attachments are sufficient for community apart from shared convictions. Noddings (1992), for example, suggests that we think of schools as large, but diverse, families (see also Noddings, 1996). Here, perhaps, school communities are held together by ties of caring unmediated by shared conviction. If unmediated caring is the principal glue of community, then the problems of inclusion may not arise. People need not agree in order to belong.

Suppose, then, that we think of school communities on the analogy of families instead of congregations. Note first that it is not altogether clear that this really does solve the problem of inclusiveness. Noddings’ vision of caring is itself a substantive moral viewpoint, one which might exclude as well as include. Noddings favours not only caring, but an ethic of caring (see Strike, 1999a, 1999b). It is difficult to see why an ethic of caring is not a comprehensive doctrine. Moreover, her vision leads to a distinctive vision of schooling, one which seems a contemporary version of the romantic tradition in education and which is surely controversial. There is a vision of a good education robust enough to exclude those who do not share it. Let us suppose, however, that we can envision communities held together by the attachment members have for one another apart from any deeply held conceptions of a good education. Might this provide a useful conception of a school community?

One difficulty is that this view may have an unrealistic view of the glue that binds people together. As Hume notes in A Treatise of Human Nature (Hume, 1967), there are strong natural sentiments that bind families together. These ties, however, may not be readily extended to strangers, yet public schools typically consist of people who are (initially, at least) strangers. Moreover, if diversity is to characterise the school family, then the members of the school will be strangers not only in that they are unknown, but also in that they are culturally other. Outside our bonds to family members, however, our ties to others seem generally to be mediated by shared conviction, shared purpose, shared culture or shared identity. We are less likely to form strong attachments to others when these mediating factors are absent. A view of school community that depends on unmediated caring may place too much faith in a kind of social glue that does not bind tightly beyond the family.

A second difficulty is that if the glue that binds is genuinely unmediated caring, then the school lacks a shared vision of the nature...
of a good education and, thus, a perspective to draw on in order to resolve goal conflict. Unmediated caring does not tell us what is educationally worthwhile and how to resolve disagreement. The family metaphor assumes that caring can triumph over such disagreement.4

Consider another approach to solving the problem of inclusion. Suppose we think of schools as akin to guilds or orchestras. That is, a school might be a community whose members are dedicated to excellence in some human practice (in MacIntyre’s (1981) sense of practice) such as music. Guilds and orchestras are, in this respect, communities in similar ways. Note two things about guilds. First, what is crucial about being a member of a guild is that one regulates one’s practice according to the aims, standards, norms and shared understanding of the community. Second, the initiation of new members into the guild is a form of socialisation in which novices come to internalise these aims, standards, norms and shared understanding through participation in the practice under the guidance of an expert, and also through participating in the social and institutional activities of the guild (see Strike, 1999c). The educational practices of guilds, therefore, minimally require regular contact between a master and an apprentice and optimally require regular participation in the activities of a community of members.

The picture of schools as guilds or orchestras has much in common with schools as congregations. The glue that holds the community together is shared aims, standards and norms requiring co-operation for their realisation and which may generate bonds of friendship and mutual regard through participation and shared understanding. The difference between schools as congregations and schools as guilds is that, to use MacIntyre’s (1981) terms, the purposes of schools as congregations are rooted in a shared tradition, whereas the purposes that ground schools as guilds are those of shared practices.

One difficulty here is keeping the distinction between schools as congregations and schools as guilds sharp. Those who participate in schools with an emphasis on a particular practice are likely to share not only an interest in mastering the practice, but also a commitment to the importance of the practice to human flourishing and a view as to why it is important. The culture of such schools often seems permeated by a value orientation that might be called a partial tradition or a partially comprehensive doctrine. Another concern is that, lacking a fully articulate comprehensive doctrine, members of guilds and orchestras have no reasons to value one another that are not instrumental reasons.5 Of course, close and co-operative interaction may well lead to strong interpersonal bonds, but there is no doctrine which expresses grounds for them or articulates the form they should take.

Analogously, schools that are congregational in character are also likely to be guild-like. They will, after all, teach a range of academic subjects which (I claim below) are embedded in guild-like academic communities. Often the educational role of the comprehensive doctrine associated with a congregational school is to interpret the point or
meaning of academic knowledge. Bryk’s discussion of Catholic schools illustrates this. The humanistic Catholic tradition functions to provide a rather Aristotelian picture of the role of academic knowledge in human life.

Thus while I think the metaphor of schools as guilds or orchestras may suggest a form of social glue strong enough to form community because people can be bound together by their common desire to master a practice, I am not sure that this picture of community is adequately distinct from schools as congregations. If so, the problem of inclusion is not solved.

Consider one more possibility. Perhaps we should think of schools as democratic communities. Here community is created through shared participation in democratic practices. Membership and attachments are both created through voice, participation and shared ownership of decisions. Democratic practices such as these create the goods of community such as loyalty, belonging and trust (Crittenden, 1992). Democratic communities may come to share additional values, but these are created through democratic participation. Hence democratic schools may have a conception of the education they provide that goes beyond a commitment to democracy, but unlike schools as congregations, this conception is created by the deliberative practices of the community. It is not antecedent to it. Hence democratic communities may be fully inclusive.

The view that schools should be democratic communities presupposes a particular conception of democracy. For the sake of the argument I will ascribe the following features to the conception. First, democratic practices and institutions must be local, not remote. They must occur in the school. That schools are governed by democratically elected legislatures will not create democratic school communities. Indeed, democratic control of this sort is routinely associated with bureaucratic management (Chubb and Moe, 1990). Second, widespread participation in democratic institutions and practices is required. It is participation that is supposed to create community. Democracy must be participatory more than representative. Third, democracy must be morally substantive rather than procedural. By this I mean that democracy should be viewed as a way of life with its own distinctive values rather than merely as a fair way to make collective decisions. The substantive values of democracy might include civic friendship or the intrinsic value of participation. Finally, individuals must be open to revision of the conceptions of the good they bring to school with them. The conceptions of the good that result from and inform democratic education should be dialogically formed.

If we think of the idea that schools might be democratic communities in this way it is not clear that we have solved the inclusion problem. Democratic community appears to provide a solution to this difficulty because it suggests that participation in generating shared goods and aims is the glue that binds individuals into community and because other substantive commitments are a product of democratic deliberation rather than antecedent to them. The practices of democratic deliberation

themselves are what create community. This, however, may be illusory for two reasons. First, there are still substantive goods and aims involved in this picture of democratic community that must be affirmed antecedently to engaging in democratic deliberation. These are those goods and aims that are internal to the practice of democracy. They include such things as a commitment to the development of democratic character (Gutmann, 1987) and to such values as civic friendship and the intrinsic good of participation. These values are normative for a thick democratic community, and they are a significant part of the glue that helps create community. Acceptance of them may be the basis of distinguishing members from non-members. Second, if democratic deliberations are to enable democratic communities to generate significant additional goals and aims, individuals must be prepared to submit their individual educational aspirations to those collectively formed by democratic deliberation. Unless we believe that the processes of deliberative democracy are in all cases able to produce consensus about the additional substantive aims and goods that a democratic community will pursue, we must also recognise the possibility of durable and serious disagreement over substantive matters and that this disagreement will tend to dissolve community or generate a tyranny of the majority.

Here it may be responded that loyalty to democratic processes often permits people to have a sense of ownership of or commitment to decisions with which they disagree. This argument makes quite good sense as an argument about the legitimisation of the decisions of liberal democratic states. However, the maintenance of loyalty despite disagreement also significantly depends on restraint concerning the scope of democratic decision-making. It is this constraint that prevents legislatures from intruding into the private sphere and permits individuals significant sovereignty over their own conceptions of the good. It is, however, these restraints on democratic decision-making that weaken strong democracy and diminish the potential for democratic community ruled by democratic deliberations about the common good. Associations may require thick shared commitments in order to be communities. In free societies they are best formed through freedom of association. Participatory democracies that begin with diverse populations and that seek to create community through the democratic formation of such thick shared commitments are likely to find that they have created a tyranny of the majority instead.

This argument is not intended to show that we should not aspire to the creation of schools that are communities because they are participatory democracies, or to reject the notion that democratic participation can be a part of the story about the nature of the social glue that binds people together in community. It is rather to note that this does not solve the problem of inclusion. This conception of democracy is itself a comprehensive doctrine. Democratic schools whose conception of democracy is thick enough to create community will also have constitutive aims and goods that will not be broadly shared unless
they are created by freedom of association. In contrast schools whose conception of democracy is thin enough to be fully inclusive are not likely to become communities.

We now have four metaphors for schools as communities. We might think of schools as congregations, as families, as guilds, or as participatory democracies. However, it also appears that three of these metaphors of community share a roughly common view about the formation of community. Congregations, guilds and democracies all view community as requiring a constitutive vision of the aims of the community from which its activities and the bonds of community flow. These aims flow from a shared comprehensive or partially comprehensive doctrine. Only the image of communities as families may be a significant departure from this basic picture.

The examination of these metaphors of school community suggests a dilemma of the following form. School communities that have adequate social glue to form genuine and durable communities will have substantive commitments about the nature of a good education, rooted in at least a partial conception of what constitutes human flourishing. Such schools may produce the goods of community; however, since their conception of a good education and of human flourishing will constitute a criterion for full membership in the community, they will also fail to be inclusive, and, as a consequence, they will invite some of the ‘bads’ of community as well as the goods. On the other hand, schools which attempt to create community apart from substantive commitments about the nature of a good education are likely to have to rely on ‘unmediated caring’ as the glue for community. I suspect that, in the absence of other uniting commitments, this glue will be too weak.7 Is this dilemma perfectly general, such that we inevitably will need to balance the desire for community against the liberal democratic aspirations we have for schools?

SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITIES: LIBERAL AND COMMUNITARIAN VISIONS

In this section I discuss, in more detail, whether the ‘bads’ of community inevitably follow the goods. I begin by distinguishing two forms of the problem. The first I call the *communitarian form* of the problem. The second I call the *liberal form* of the problem.

The communitarian form of the problem can be developed from a critique of liberalism. Communitarians often claim that liberalism, by dissolving the bonds of community, produces a society of rootless, anomic, normless individuals. It claims that all norms are norms of some group, it eschews the ‘view from nowhere’ that liberal justice is supposed to express, and it argues that the laws and the view of justice that regulate a society must flow from those norms that members of the community share in common. Hence communitarianism is often cashed out as a view about the relationship between polity and community. It seeks to ground the polity in the shared (and often tacit) traditions and
understanding of the community. The state is an expression of the nation, a people, a folk (Volk), or, at least, a local culture. A virulent form of this type of communitarianism is fascism. Modern Anglo-American forms of communitarianism are generally benign and democratic, but still maintain the picture of the relationship between the community and the polity. Daniel Bell (1993), having argued that national communities are constituted by shared cultural understanding, writes:

Any effective scheme of distributive justice . . . presupposes a bounded world of people deeply committed to each other’s fate—most of us will not agree to enshrine actions in law, and to live by those laws, if we can’t identify in some way with the recipients of those generous actions—and it just so happens that the nation state has emerged . . . as the unit within which our sense of solidarity is strongest. (p. 138)

Bell’s form of communitarianism is tolerant, humane and democratic. Tolerance and democracy are part of our tradition. Nevertheless, when deontological liberals such as Rawls (1993) wish the state to be neutral, it is this form of communitarianism to which they object. That is, they argue that the state should not be grounded in any comprehensive doctrine or thick culture. Liberal are wont to argue that even the most benign version of communitarianism oppresses and marginalises those who are not members of the national community constituted by the ruling tradition.

To see the notion of schools as communities through the lens of the liberal communitarian debate is to suggest that what is wanted are schools that reflect the traditions and values that unite people in some sort of (often) national community. Generally, I do not believe that this is what people who want schools to be communities do want. Typically, they want schools that are more intimate and less bureaucratic. Nevertheless, as I shall note below, they often express this desire via conceptions that invoke the image of a nationalistic communitarianism and invite the liberal rejoinder.

There is also a liberal formulation of the problem of community. Liberals are not inevitably hostile to community. They are hostile to the marriage between community and public authority. Communities should be voluntary associations. Indeed, liberals may believe that communities are quite important to moral development and to human flourishing, and they may believe that voluntary associations are able to realise many of the goods that communitarians claim as the goods of community. Rawls’ (1971) views on the development of a sense of justice are a paradigm case. Liberals may also argue that many rights such as freedom of religion and freedom of association are intended to protect robust communities (see Arons, 1997). In associating communities with moral traditions and comprehensive doctrines, Rawls’ position in Political Liberalism also suggests that membership in a community may be an important prerequisite of having an articulate conception of
the good life. And we should note that he describes liberal society as a union of social unions, not as a union of individuals. Liberals may agree with communitarians that apart from community people become rootless and anomic. Liberals, however, see this as a reason to support a pluralism of robust private associations rather than as a reason for wedding the state to some shared moral tradition. For liberals, the question of schools as communities may turn on whether the picture of society as a union of social unions can be extended to include seeing schools as free associations of the like-minded.

Within a liberal framework, the problem of the ‘bads’ of community might be supposed to flow from some features of voluntary associations. Here again it is useful to note and distinguish two types of problems. First, there are problems which flow from illiberal associations. These are associations whose norms and practices are at odds with liberal democratic norms. Liberals thus face the problem of how much to tolerate the intolerant, an especially difficult variant of which concerns whether to interfere with the educational practices of such groups (see Strike, 1998). A second problem is that there may be voluntary associations that are problematic because they capture functions that should occur in the public sphere and can only thrive there. Schooling may be an example. Here the argument is that conducting schooling under the aegis of voluntary associations itself has undesirable educational consequences. These consequences do not flow from the substantive convictions and purposes of voluntary associations. Instead they flow from the very fact that such associations are associations of the like-minded. That schools are associations of the like-minded means that they are a threat to openness and tolerance. It is the absence of alternative views and of difference that makes them problematic. With respect to schooling, these problems may be exacerbated by the fact that the decision to associate with a particular school community is characteristically made for students by adults.

The problem I developed in the first section of this paper is the second problem of the liberal formulation. The idea that schools should be communities is developed on the assumption that there will be a plurality of schools with different visions of education rooted in different comprehensive or partially comprehensive doctrines. This is a liberal formulation. It claims that the goods of community can flow from voluntary associations. The argument that certain of the ‘bads’ of community may result from the failure of inclusiveness involved is the second problem of the liberal formulation.

Here I am not directly concerned with the problem of illiberal communities. I am concerned with the claim that some of the ‘bads’ of schools as communities flow from the fact that such schools will be free associations. I think it is not as much a problem as it is often thought to be. One important point to make at the outset is that there is no a priori reason to believe that free associations cannot serve public functions. The essential claim of the civil society literature is that robust private associations are necessary to develop the social capital on which
democracy depends (see for example Putnam, 1993). Indeed, there are cases where there are good reasons to suppose that certain public functions are best served by institutions that are not operated by government. Newspapers are a good example. To see how this works out for schools we need to look more closely at the details.

Consider a story concerning a community that is a guild—an academic community. It will serve to give us a picture of features of some kinds of communities:

Dr Carla Jones is a mathematician and a recently appointed faculty member at Carson University. She recently submitted an article to a scholarly journal. The article contains a proof, originally developed in her thesis, about which she is increasingly suspicious. She never found it fully convincing, but now she has come to see her thesis work as unconvincing and to have the beginnings of some insight into what is wrong with the proof. However, she needs a publication for tenure. Moreover, her paper has been read by some of her colleagues and the reviewers of the journal and no doubts about this proof were expressed. Nevertheless, Dr Jones feels some embarrassment about the quality of her work and some guilt about submitting the article without acknowledging these doubts. Moreover, she finds that having submitted the article she is now unable to express her doubts about it to her colleagues. In fact, she has begun to avoid discussion of any of her work with her colleagues, and she finds that rather than working on her next article her mind keeps returning to the suspect proof. She feels both that she needs to resolve the status of this proof and to submit an article clarifying its standing before she can feel comfortable in the company of other mathematicians again. She feels that, by submitting work about which she has unacknowledged reservations, she has been unfaithful to her craft and disloyal to her colleagues. Her associations with other mathematicians increasingly are the source of feelings of guilt and shame to which she responds by withdrawal.

Dr Jones believes herself to have violated norms that are important to the practice of her craft. I want to claim that these norms must be viewed as the norm of a community (see Green, 1999), the community of mathematicians or of scholars. Dr Jones feels as she does because she is a member of a guild.

This example suggests several points about communities. These are:

1. Communities are the repositories and custodians of practices, conceptions, and traditions that are critical resources for human flourishing. There is, in some sense, a community of mathematicians. The norms of mathematics, including its ethical norms, shared understanding of the goods that it can realise, and standards of competent performance, are embedded in the practices and activities of the accomplished members of this community. Hence, communities are not just associations of the like-minded. They are the precondition of complex forms of like-mindedness and of acquiring competence in a craft.
2. The norms governing practices are public in the way in which language is public. Norms are internalised through participation in a way roughly analogous to the way in which language is learned.

3. Belonging, membership in a community, is central to norm acquisition. It is true both that accepting the norms of a community is connected to membership, but also that a sense of membership mediates acquiring the community’s norms. When the goods, norms and standards of a community are complex, they will be to some degree non-cognisable to the uninitiated. Hence the initial commitment to the project of a guild cannot be fully rational. Commitment and trust are presuppositions of learning.

4. Moral sentiments are bound up with the norms of communities. We feel shame, guilt, and disloyalty when we violate the norms of the communities of which we are members. When others violate the norms of our communities, we feel anger or indignation. We may feel that our trust has been betrayed and that our shared purposes have been set aside for personal gain. Moral sentiments are not just antecedent to community, they are shaped by it.

Academic guilds must be understood as communities. They are not rooted in arm’s-length agreements. Their basis cannot be understood as contractual. The notion of belonging is central to understanding how they function, especially to how they initiate new members. It follows, I think, that an education that lacks communal features such as these is no education. The example, however, should also suggest the danger of essentialist accounts of community. Note for example, that while the relationships between members of the community of mathematicians must involve such ties as trust and may involve friendship, intimacy is not required and may even be an unnecessary complexity in the workings of such a community. It seems odd to claim that mathematicians are a community because they care for one another or even that they should. What is wanted in guilds is relationships that are collegial. Even the kind of trust assumed is bounded. One may trust a colleague to argue responsibly, but not trust him to be alone with one’s daughter.

This example suggests that we need to avoid the uncritical imposition of broad accounts of community into our account of schools as communities. Many of these accounts are intended first and foremost to draw sweeping generalisations about the differences between that which is and which is not community. They may both be too bipolar and have a conception of community that does not easily generalise to all cases. In some cases they are an instrument to account for multi-century changes in Western civilisation. They need to be applied with care to modern communities. To see this, let me turn to an account of community.

I want to use the work of Ferdinand Tönnies, not just because his account of community is a classic one, but because it is commonly appealed to in the schools as communities literature. (Paradigmatically see Sergiovanni, 1993.) In Community and Society Tönnies (1988) writes:
All intimate, private, and exclusive living together, so we discover, is understood as life in Gemeinschaft (community). Gesellschaft (society) is public life. In Gemeinschaft with one’s family, one lives from birth on, bound to it in weal and woe. One goes into Gesellschaft as one goes into a strange country. (p. 34)

And later:

. . . in Gemeinschaft [people] remain united in spite of all separating factors. Whereas in Gesellschaft they are essentially separated in spite of all unifying factors. (p. 192)

For Tönnies, Gemeinschaft is the world of the family, the village, the congregation, a world of intimate human connections, both familial and familiar. Gesellschaft is the world of the market and the state, commerce and politics. In the world of Gemeinschaft both people and practices are valued intrinsically. In Gesellschaft they are valued instrumentally. Gemeinschaft is where we belong. In Gesellschaft we are strangers. In Gemeinschaft our interactions with others are intimate, governed by love, friendship, familiarity and our mutual enjoyment of shared practices. In Gesellschaft we seek our own benefit. Our stance is rational and instrumental. Our interactions with the strangers we meet there are arms length, quid pro quo, governed by contract and law.

Tönnies views Gemeinschaft as a local manifestation of a shared and comprehensive form of life created by common understanding that are largely tacit. In his account of Gemeinschaft, Tönnies suggests that there are three forms of Gemeinschaft, communities of kinship, place and mind. This suggests that we might look for three forms of community bonded with three types of social glue, attachment to kin, attachment to a location and attachment to ideas. This, however, is misleading. In his account of Gemeinschaft, Tönnies indicates that the crucial element of community is shared understanding, and that shared understanding forms not only community of mind, but is essential to all the manifestations of community. Understanding is tacit and, like language, cannot be artificially produced. While contracts depend on mutual agreements, understanding is the very opposite of a contract. He writes:

In the same way as the general use of common language, making possible understanding through speech, brings nearer and binds human minds and hearts, so we find a common state of mind which in its higher forms—common custom and common belief—penetrates to the members of a people. (p. 49)

Such understandings form not only communities of mind, but are the precondition of all forms of community. A community, then, for Tönnies, is first and foremost a local expression of shared understanding, something which Wittgenstein might call a ‘form of life’, Hegel sittlichkeit, or, more simply, of a shared culture. These shared understandings are expressed primarily in the local village and enable
us to understand and enjoy those whom we meet on a regular basis. These shared understandings are also expressed as the culture of nation, a folk (Volk), but it is their expression in local life that is the paradigm case of Gemeinschaft. Gemeinschaft is thus one part intimacy and one part shared understanding. It is shared understandings, however, that make those who are members of our family and community intimates. Shared understandings ground our understanding of our connection to them and thus ground our attachments, and it is these shared understandings that make participation in the social practices intrinsically valuable.

Employing the Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft characterisation of what is and is not community has some significant assets, but it can also be dramatically misleading. Here are four reasons.

First, Tönnies’ picture of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft is bipolar and suggests only a single picture of what a community is. Since Gemeinschaft is an ideal type, communities may be more or less Gemeinschaft, but being Gemeinschaft-like is what makes them communities.

This two-spheres account underestimates the diversity of types of communities and the variability of the social glue that holds them together. Not all human associations easily fall into Gemeinschaft or Gesellschaft. The example of the community of mathematicians constructed above is one example. It is not possible to see an intellectual community as merely a type of Gesellschaft. Relationships are not arms-length or contractual. There are shared understandings, the standards and norms of mathematics, that make mathematicians a community. There may be elements of a thicker culture among mathematicians. Thus far Tönnies’ account gets some grip. Yet, as noted, attachments between members of the community are not intimate. They might best be described as collegial. Collegial attachments are rooted in those shared understandings that pertain to a shared practice or a shared project. They should involve mutual comprehension, respect and trust. They may involve friendship. But they do not involve shared understandings that range over wide areas of human experience or require deep and intimate connections.10

Tönnies’ account is especially problematic since his picture of community is essentially an account of the workings of a traditional premodern society. To think of trying to make schools more Gemeinschaft in character is to think of making them thick and illiberal. In effect, to invoke Gemeinschaft as a model for schools as communities is possible only by taking the communitarian side of the liberal communitarian debate.

Second, Gemeinschaft communities are plausibly viewed as autonomy-restricting. They restrain choice as well as the capacity to reflect on options. In a Gemeinschaft community, the social world has a kind of giveness or naturalness about it. That there are alternative ways for one to be or think is not apparent. However, it seems wrong to view the initiation into an intellectual community as somehow robbing one of one’s autonomy.
One common concern with schools that are communities is that because they seek to initiate students into some practice or tradition, they reduce autonomy. When we consider the example of initiation into academic practices this view seems implausible. Mathematics is a resource for reflection and seems more likely to contribute to autonomy than to erode it. This may not be true of all practices. Astrology and football are also practices. Very likely it depends on the nature of the practice, the cognitive skills and capacities developed, and the culture that has developed in association with the practice.

This point can be extended to the notion of traditions or comprehensive doctrines. If Rawls or MacIntyre are correct, some degree of initiation into a tradition is a precondition of having a reflective view about the nature of human goods or human flourishing. Hilary Putnam (1983) has commented:

There are two points that must be balanced, both points that had been made by philosophers of many different kinds: (1) talk about what is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ in any area only makes sense against the background of an inherited tradition; but (2) traditions themselves can be criticized. (p. 234)

Putnam’s view (generalised somewhat) suggests that initiation into a tradition not only is not inconsistent with the development of rationality and (pursuanty) autonomy, but is a prerequisite of it. If initiation into a tradition involves membership in a community, then membership may enhance rather than inhibit autonomy in virtue of making available the critical and intellectual resources of a tradition. This is true even if a commitment to membership is, to some degree, prior to a full comprehension of the standards and mores taken on in virtue of membership. Granted, to be initiated into some intellectual tradition or practice may be to take one path to the exclusion of others. Such is life? All options cannot be kept open. On the other hand, mastery of an intellectual tradition or practice may serve to expand awareness of other options as well as the capacity to appraise them. To put this point differently, a good education involves initiation into a variety of intellectual practices and some tradition for appraising them. It has a communal element. At the same time it may well develop the capacity for autonomy. If so, then the assumption that community and autonomy are at odds in principle must be wrong. If initiation into traditions erodes autonomy, this is likely to have more to do with the nature of the tradition or the mode of initiation (indoctrination, for example) than with the fact of initiation. Traditions vary widely. Hence, I do not claim that initiation into any and every tradition enhances autonomy. However, if reason is tradition-dependent as Putnam claims, a failure to initiate students into some tradition diminishes the capacity for autonomy.

Third, on Tönnies’ account, Gemeinschaft communities are more total and comprehensive than are most modern communities. Thinking of
communities as Gemeinschaft is misleading concerning the extent to which modern communities are partial, and focused on special functions.

A community becomes total to the degree that the various aspects of one’s life (work, recreation, family life) are conducted within the community. A community is comprehensive to the degree that its conceptions control or inform diverse aspects of life. Academic communities are neither comprehensive nor total. Members of academic communities may live in different places, have different family structures and mores, have different religious convictions or none, enjoy different hobbies. These may themselves involve membership in numerous other communities.

Even if education involves initiation into a comprehensive doctrine, in the modern world the communities generated by comprehensive doctrines are rarely total. Indeed, comprehensive doctrines in Rawls’ sense of that term are no longer very comprehensive. Religious views illustrate nicely. While they are Rawls’ paradigm case of comprehensive doctrines, they do not range deeply over other areas of life. They do not inform us in any great detail as to our occupations, hobbies, places to live, whom or whether we should marry, or about many preferences that constitute the good of our lives. They do not tell us whether we should prefer Mozart to Ellington, Scotch to saki, or kayaking to tennis. At most they provide vague and pliable criteria for judging such things and rules for conduct in rather narrow areas. Comprehensive doctrines may orient, but they do not generate thick cultures. Whole areas of thought have broken away from religion. There is no plausible way to be a Baptist mathematician or a Presbyterian chemist. Even in quasi-moral areas such as law, religion has substantially lost its grip. Lawyers and judges will find little guidance in holy writ as to the details of due process or whether inequalities in educational funding should be judged by the standard of strict scrutiny or rational relationship. Doctors find little of use concerning surgery. Yet guilds such as law or medicine are associated with practices with their own goods and generally with even thicker cultures. Members of these guilds may find that they have more by way of shared understandings as a consequence than do members of a common faith. Similarly, in most developed countries the association between ethnic culture and religion is eroded. Comprehensive doctrines are no longer woven into the fabric of everyday life. There are cases where religious communities become total and comprehensive. Hutterite and Amish communities are examples. These seem rather like Gemeinschaft communities, but these examples show how distant most religious congregations are from being life-defining and life-controlling.

Fourth, in guild-like and congregational communities, membership and exclusivity are narrowly defined. The guild of mathematicians may exclude those who are not good at or do not care about mathematics. It is, however, in principle, open to those of all religions, races and ethnic groups. This is also true of congregations. That is, an association built on a comprehensive doctrine must employ that doctrine as a basis of association. However, it may be fully inclusive with respect to other characteristics. Hence such communities may be quite diverse on many
characteristics. One should keep this in mind when making comparisons to schools whose basis of association is geography. Religious schools may exclude those of other faiths. Neighbourhood schools exclude those who live elsewhere. Given significant residential racial and socio-economic segregation, it is far from evident which kind of exclusiveness restricts diversity or the marketplace of ideas more. Here we should remember that in judging institutional arrangement, we need not only to judge proposals against ideals, but against likely alternatives else we run the risk of making the best the enemy of the good.

I have undertaken this excursion into some features of the theory of community because it helps generate perspective on the issue of whether school communities inevitably generate the ‘bads’ of community. In the previous section, I argued that viable school communities need more than strong attachments. They need a shared vision of a good education, and, in order to have it, they are likely to require at least a partially comprehensive doctrine. Since this shared vision will become a criterion of membership, schools that are communities cannot be fully inclusive. The failure to be inclusive was the main reason for concern that schools that are communities will inevitably generate some of the ‘bads’ of community. This section should suggest two additional conclusions:

1. What is wanted within the liberal formulation of the problem of community is not schools that are total communities or that are somehow like the medieval village. What is wanted is schools that achieve the goods of community because they are committed to some shared vision of a good education. The desirability of such communities is not reasonably judged through the lens of the liberal communitarian debate since these communities do not suppose themselves to be comprehensive ways of life or expressions of the life of a folk.
2. Nonetheless, such communities will fail to be fully inclusive. Is this a great vice? It cannot be denied that in schools that are communities there will be people excluded and voices not represented. This matters. Yet it also matters that in schools that are communities students may be initiated into practices and traditions that are rich and powerful ways to think about their lives. What matters most is not that there is such a tradition, but the character of the tradition. Traditions differ greatly in the cognitive resources they make available, the capacities they develop, and their openness to the life of the mind and the marketplace of ideas.

**SHARED EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS: THREE MODELS OF COMMUNITY AND ONE NOT**

. . . ‘reformed’ high schools convey a distinct vision of a society in which individuals strive for personal success while pursuing their self-interest. Institutional norms are competitive, individualistic, and materialistic . . . (Bryk, Lee and Holland, 1993, p. 319)
Here I want to compare three models of schools that are communities, which I shall sketch in a rather perfunctory way and contrast with a model of schools that are not communities. Note first that these are ideal types. No claim is intended that these are the only kinds of communities schools can be, that there are not significant variations on these themes or that these models are mutually exclusive. All three models are congregational in the sense that they all grow out of a shared conception of a good education rooted in a comprehensive or partially comprehensive doctrine. Similarly, my conception of a school that is not a community is an ideal type. My aspirations here are to use these pictures of schools that are communities to consider whether schools that are communities run the risk of generating the ‘bads’ of community and whether they generate greater such risks in comparison to other schools.

_A non-communal view: liberal instrumentalism_

Suppose that we (as good Rawlsian liberals?) agree that schools, when they are agents of government, should be neutral among reasonable comprehensive doctrines. How might we cash this out? First we should have to decide whether neutrality should be applied at the system level or at the school level. If we wish schooling to be neutral at the system level, we would encourage a diversity of schools reflecting different reasonable comprehensive doctrines. Neutrality would consist in governmental even-handedness towards these different visions. Call this _liberal pluralism_.

Suppose, however, that we believe that this solution has a significant cost with respect to the balance between the goods and the ‘bads’ of community. We might believe that it generates too much sectarianism, undermines tolerance, erodes autonomy or otherwise undermines the characteristics we want in democratic citizens. We might then argue that we should apply the notion of neutrality to schools at the level of the individual school. Each school will be expected to be neutral among reasonable comprehensive doctrines.

How might we do this? Consider two alternatives. I will call them _dialogical liberalism_ and _instrumental liberalism_. Dialogical liberalism emphasises creating a marketplace of ideas where issues about human flourishing and comprehensive doctrines can be debated. The school’s role is to provide resources and a forum for these discussions and to avoid taking sides. Students will have the opportunity to hear the argument and to decide for themselves.\(^1\) On the other hand, liberal instrumentalism views discussions about the nature of good lives and debate about comprehensive doctrines as outside of the province of the school. Such discussions are for family, church or media to pursue. The role of the school might be viewed as providing an education that is instrumental to the achievement of a student’s conception of the good whatever it is so long as it is not unjust. This might be cashed out by looking for curricula and educational practices that are the educational equivalent of Rawls’ primary goods. That is, we would seek to provide materials that serve students’ aspirations whatever they are. Consider
the infamous question ‘What do children need to know and to be able to do?’ Such questions cannot be answered apart from some view of what knowledge and competence are for. The implicit answer when this question is asked is often that these questions are to be answered in regard to participation in the economy. Income and jobs are the thing. Why? Because income is a primary good, a means to what we want whatever it is. An education that aims essentially at economic (and political) competence might be viewed as neutral in the way that instrumental liberalism demands. It seeks to promote full and fair participation in society without interfering in the private sphere. A liberal instrumentalist school does, therefore, have a picture of the kind of education it wishes to provide. It wishes to teach those things that are broadly instrumental to diverse visions of a good life. However, it does not have a shared educational project—a vision of education rooted in a shared vision of human flourishing. That it views as a private matter.

Here then is a snapshot of a liberal instrumentalist school.

**Ruling conception.** Liberal instrumentalism aims at neutrality in public-sector schools. It seeks to serve children regardless of their background or their vision of human flourishing. In order to do this it creates a curriculum that is viewed as instrumental and able to serve whatever aspirations students bring to the school. It views the ultimate purposes to which education is to be put as private matters which the school should respect more than shape. In addition to meeting these instrumental needs of students, it also seeks to meet the needs of the polity for human capital and for competent citizens. Since it is a state agency, representative democracy is viewed as the most appropriate form of governance and participation in elections as the essence of citizenship. Because the knowledge such schools seek to impart is viewed as instrumental to such goods as further education, jobs and income the value to the students depends significantly on how much they have relative to other students. Knowledge is a commodity.

**Roles.** Teachers are viewed as service providers and as public servants. Their knowledge consists in subject matter competence and technical skills for its presentation. Their primary duty is to policy generated by a legislature and to managers (administrators) who are responsible for its implementation. Hence authority is hierarchical and bureaucratic. Students are viewed as consumers of these services, as potential human capital and as citizens. Ultimately, because instrumental goods are often scarce or positional, students succeed or fail relative to one another. The overall system succeeds or fails relative to the human capital of competitor nations. Parents are viewed as the penultimate consumers of the service provided by the school and as participants in school governance in virtue of their role as voters. They may also be valued as a source of voluntary labour or as cheerleaders for the school’s programme, but the fact that the programme is legislatively determined reduces their role as participants in governance.
Motivation. Students, teachers and administrators are motivated by incentives. For students the incentives are ultimately the goods (jobs, income) to which knowledge leads and proximately high stakes examinations. Teachers and administrators may be motivated by incentives created by the legislature in the form of various accountability measurers or, when there is choice, to the market.

This view of school, one that, perhaps most closely resembles the typical state-operated school in liberal democratic societies is not a community in my sense of community because it lacks a shared educational project. This does not mean that it lacks goals and objectives. There may be a shared conception of what students are to learn and be able to do. Moreover, such schools may be successful in achieving their goals. They may, in this way, be good schools. On occasion, when they are staffed by unusually dedicated and caring people, they may take on significant aspects of community. However, as a matter of commitment, their goals and objectives cannot flow from a coherent and articulate conception of a good education and a good life. Instead, the school must be neutral about such conceptions and must respect the visions of the good that students bring with them to school. This means that the liberal instrumentalist school will have a largely instrumental view of its goals. It also means that the activities and roles of the school cannot flow from any non-instrumental conception of the role of learning in human flourishing. Learning is valued for reasons that are private. The task of the school is to envision a programme that serves the widest range of private purposes while offering offence to as few as possible. Hence, there can be no shared educational project and no robust community.

Liberal instrumentalist schools may create certain ‘bads’. If moral traditions and comprehensive doctrines are the resources for developing sophisticated views of human flourishing and if they are viewed as private, then the adequacy with which they are developed and discussed will depend on the vitality of non-governmental and extra-school resources. If these institutions are weak, students may be left to the mercy of television and the din of a commercial culture. Possessive individualism may be the default comprehensive doctrine. Moreover, in the liberal instrumentalist school those intellectual practices that may serve to develop those goods associated with the life of the mind will be valued for instrumental purposes. If students come to discover the intrinsic goods available through maths, science or literature, that will be something of an accident or more likely the result of the effort and outlook of a particular dedicated teacher.

Note also that when learning becomes an instrument to jobs and income, it also becomes a scarce and positional commodity. Its value to an individual depends on having more than one’s competitor. This has potential implications for citizenship. Justice in such a school is likely to emphasise fair competition. The conception of democracy is likely to emphasise fair procedures for voting the point of which is to fairly vector competing interests. Moreover, students are likely to be viewed as competitors in an economic marketplace rather than interlocutors in
democratic deliberations or as colleagues in the pursuit of the goods internal to practices.

Consider now three pictures of schools—communal views—where there is a shared educational project.

**Comprehensive doctrine schools**

**Ruling conception.** School communities are constituted from values interpreted within a common tradition or comprehensive doctrine. A comprehensive doctrine and the dominant goals and practices that flow from it are prior to the community. Acceptance of them is a condition of full membership. Religious schools are the most common, but not the only, examples. While one should not uncritically identify cultures with comprehensive doctrines, schools reflecting thick ethnic or national cultures may be quite similar. The idea that the state should be neutral between competing conceptions of the good is expressed through educational freedom of association and equal treatment of different traditions. The curriculum and practices of the school are organised so as to realise the distinctive goods and view of life of the tradition. ‘Elders’ (those who exemplify the goods and virtues of the moral tradition) play a key role in the work of the school and in its governance. That is, being an exemplar of the community’s values is viewed as a significant qualification for any leadership role. Governance may be hierarchical or participatory depending on the details of the tradition. Small-scale and shared values often make informal, participatory, consensual decision-making more likely even in schools whose comprehensive doctrine emphasises hierarchy. (Catholic schools are the obvious example.) The school may be connected to one or more local congregations making functional communities with generation closure (Coleman and Hoffer, 1987) more likely.

**Roles.** Teachers and administrators occupy the role of elder. That is, they are expected to be exemplars of the goods, values, and commitments of the tradition. Students are viewed as initiates into the tradition. Parents are also ‘congregational’ members. They may be involved in the school not just as parents, but as members of the larger congregation or group with which the school is associated. They may be direct participants in the school as need and tradition warrant. The school community is viewed as a part of a larger, extended community. It is part of a ‘congregation’. Motivation is intrinsic, internal to the tradition, and connected to the sense of identity of members. Students are taught to want to learn for reasons internal to the values of the community and to internalise a desire for the goods that are important to the tradition. A sense of belonging (affiliation with the tradition and attachment to its members) is part of the motivation for learning. In addition to those goods that are internal to communities of most sorts (trust, membership, belonging, and loyalty, for example) the ‘goods of community’ may include the enjoyment of the shared attainment of those goods that are distinctive to the tradition.
Deliberative democracy schools

Ruling conception. The school community is formed around values of citizenship and thick, participatory democracy. Democracy is viewed as a way of life. The school aims to create a democratic culture and to form democratic character. While democracy is viewed as prior to the establishment of the school and acceptance of a democratic view is a condition of membership, many of the goals and practices of the school are established through democratic deliberation. Governance emphasises inclusion, participation, reciprocity, dialogue and consensus among community members. The curriculum emphasises democratic and civic participation. Teaching and learning are as participatory as is consistent with competence. Small scale is important in order to permit maximum participation.

Roles. Teachers and administrators are ‘first among equals.’ That is, teachers and administrators are viewed as equal citizens in the school along with students and parents, but they also have a larger responsibility for the activities of the school and may therefore sometimes require power and voice commensurate with greater responsibility and special competence. Students are potential citizens, citizens in initiation. Their participation in school activities and governance may be viewed as a kind of apprenticeship or practicum for democratic participation. Parents may be viewed as equal citizens, but they are not first among equals. The community is the local school, not the larger polity. The aspiration is for local participatory democracy at the school level which may require some independence from the local or national polity and from the legislature (Strike, 1993). Community members are motivated by the goods of citizenship such as civic friendship. The ownership of decisions and goals brought about through participation in decision-making is also motivating. The goods of community include the intrinsic value of participation and self rule as well as civic friendship.

‘Life of the mind’ schools

Ruling conception. The school community is formed around the realisation of the goods internal to academic practices such as maths, science and the arts. The school is viewed as a union of academic and artistic guilds. Excellence and the life of the mind are highly valued and are the unifying values of the school. Knowledge is also viewed as forming such desirable character traits as reasonableness, wisdom, and good taste. ‘Those who know should rule’ is the central commitment of governance. Pre-eminence is given to those who have achieved competence in academic subject matter and who are able to exhibit its virtues and internal goods. Free and open debate is highly valued not only because open inquiry is a prerequisite of the pursuit of truth, but because engaging in inquiry is intrinsically worth while and generates bonds of friendship and collegiality.
Roles. Teachers and administrators should be exemplars of the goods, standards and virtues internal to academic practices. Their authority is the authority of the master in a master–apprentice relationship. Students are apprentices to academic practices and initiates into life of the mind. Parents are largely outsiders to the academic community, excluded by their lack of mastery. They are, in effect, expected to surrender the academic care of their children to those who are initiates into the life of the mind. The community is the academic community which includes not only members of the individual school, but also members of academic guilds. Such guilds are the extended communities into which students are initiated. The motivation for learning is (ultimately) to achieve the goods internal to practices and the values associated with the life of the mind. The goods of community are formed by participation in the characteristic activities of intellectual guilds and include shared enjoyment of the goods internal to practices, friendship and collegiality, as well as membership and belonging.

CONCLUSIONS

Will schools such as these produce the goods of community? Must they produce the ‘bads’? The argument of this paper is simply that it all depends. On what? On a lot of things no doubt, but especially on the nature of the comprehensive doctrine that is constitutive of the school’s vision of a good education and the practices and social relations it generates. Perhaps this seems a trivial conclusion, but I think that in context it is not for at least two reasons. One is that the liberal side of the liberal communitarian debate has suggested that the desire for community is inherently illiberal. But this conclusion results from the assumption that the community is also the polity—that law and justice reflect the norms of some community. Each of the three models above, however, can be viewed within the confines of a liberal pluralist project. These communities (at least for their adult members) are voluntary associations. They need not view their project as mandatory for others. The second reason why the conclusion is not trivial is that it suggests that the argument that education ought to be conducted in common schools because associations of the like-minded fail to be inclusive and, as a consequence, inevitably produce certain of the ‘bads’ of community is not compelling.

The cash value of argument is that it changes the question from ‘Should schools be communities?’ to ‘If we believe that the goods of community are worth having, how can we have schools that are communities in which the “bads” of community are minimised and the goods maximised?’ It directs our focus on the more concrete issues of policy and practice. That is a productive turn. The devil of schools as communities is in the details, not in the conception.
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NOTES
1. For simplicity I will often use the term 'comprehensive doctrine' although it is not precisely what I mean. The phrase suggests that such doctrines are likely to be explicit, elaborated and reasonably coherent. It is too creedal, since communities can be formed around values which are tacit, not elaborated, and not systematised.
2. Is autonomy a public good? It is commonly treated as an individual right to free choice and cognitive independence. Note, however that Callan's (1997) argument in Creating Citizens treated autonomy as a 'byproduct' of reasonableness, hence as a kind of public good.
3. This is not intended as a logical claim. I do not claim that any school ruled by a comprehensive doctrine will be a community regardless. Nor do I claim that there are not cases of school communities which are held together merely by strong attachments. I do, however, think that such communities are likely to be unusual and unstable.
4. I do not mean that such schools are impossible. I am aware of several successful schools for at-risk students that claim to build their communities on caring without more. I do not know whether the durability of these schools depends on a thicker tacit culture although I suspect it does. It does appear, however, that the ability to choose staff who share the commitment to caring for students is an element in the success of these schools. Apparently even here community requires some free association.
5. No pun intended.
6. All of the robustly democratic schools of which I am aware are formed through (some measure of) free association.
7. There are other alternatives. Americans seem to believe that school communities can be formed through sports. The result is more often cliques than communities. Strong sports programmes are also more likely to corrupt or compete with the school's educational programme than inform or support it.
8. Although it is worth recalling that Rawls' claims that the thought experiment undertaken in the original position is a means of constructing an explicit rendering of the moral intuition of members of liberal democratic societies.
9. Although there are exceptions. Hirsch (1987) and Bennett (1984) may be examples.
10. I have argued elsewhere that the polity cannot be viewed as either Gemeinschaft or Gesellschaft, see Strike. 2000.
11. Could schools of this sort be communities? Probably. They might be viewed as the expression of what Rawls would call comprehensive liberalism—itself a comprehensive doctrine. They have a significant affinity with what I below call life of the mind schools. I also think that apart from a significant element of free association in the formation of school communities, they are unlikely. And, if Rawls is correct in his criticism of comprehensive liberalism, apart from free association, they would also be unjust.
12. It does not follow that they must be private schools.
13. I suspect that the primary devil is illiberal or even just 'curious' educational communities. In the US the First Amendment of the US Constitution is often understood to require content neutrality among different religions or opinions. It would, therefore, be difficult for the USA to
have a voucher programme that funded Catholic schools while denying vouchers to coven schools or KKK schools. Quite likely the result of unregulated freedom of association would be the growth of schools run by the variety of fundamentalisms available to Americans. Public choice in the UK seems not to have generated this problem to excess.

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