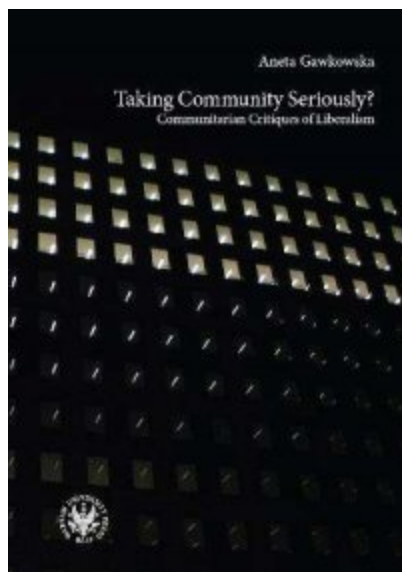


Taking Community Seriously? Communitarian Critiques of Liberalism - Aneta Gawkowska

When the debate between liberals and communitarians reached its quite impressive development more than twenty years ago, it had pretty quickly been predicted that the debate would soon end as fast as it appeared on the social-analytical scene. However, as the time was passing by, the arguments kept growing and it turned out that the topic of concern seems to be eternal. After all, liberal democracy, which in the meantime spread over new areas of the world, showed that it is never free of problems connected with the quality of the social ties, while sometimes it can even be accused of contributing to such problems.



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Foreword

When the debate between liberals and communitarians reached its quite impressive development more than twenty years ago, it had pretty quickly been predicted that the debate would soon end as fast as it appeared on the social-analytical scene. However, as the time was passing by, the arguments kept growing and it turned out that the topic of concern seems to be eternal. After all, liberal democracy, which in the meantime spread over new areas of the world, showed that it is never free of problems connected with the quality of the social ties, while sometimes it can even be accused of contributing to such problems.

Let us look at the recent analysis prepared by Marek Ziółkowski for the Civic Congress in 2010, where he claims that Poles are becoming more and more individualistic, oriented towards individual achievements and less and less caring for their social ties and communities. “The social bonds created in everyday productive activities are treated more and more instrumentally.” Later on in his analysis he claims that although the symbolic community, seen on special occasions, may be said to be still working, the civic community is very weak: “Institutionalized means of expressing common concern for public affairs, for common good, do hardly work.” This diagnosis can, therefore, hardly be optimistic. Maybe the inspiration to reflect and change this state of affairs can in contemporary Poland and in other societies with similar problems come from the debate between liberals and communitarians which was started in Western societies almost three decades ago. This was the reason why I decided to come back to my dissertation on communitarian critiques of liberalism which I prepared in 2001.

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