

Regarding The Body

REFLECTING ON VACCINE MANDATES WITH SAINT PAUL

Mary Nickel | Princeton University

- *Jacobson v. Massachusetts*, a landmark 1905 Supreme Court case, upheld the state's authority to compel citizens' vaccination.
- The relation of individuals' rights and the common good
- This paper: 1) individualism; 2) collectivism; 3) a Pauline third way

INDIVIDUALISM

- *individualism* prioritizes the value, freedom, and well-being of the individual over other political considerations.
- Locke is an early individualist.
- Nozick is a more contemporary example. For Nozick, there simply "are only individual people, different individual people, with their own individual lives. Using one of these people for the benefit of others, uses him and benefits the others ... To use a person in this way does not sufficiently respect and take account of the fact that he is a separate person, that his is the only life he has." (Nozick, 32–33.)
- Individualists also helpfully identify the invaluable worth of all humans, whether on theological or non-theological grounds.
- But individualism conceals the background conditions that make autonomy possible in the first place. Part of individuals' integrity is sustained by social bonds.

COLLECTIVISM

- *Collectivism* normatively prioritizes the collective good over individual rights.
- In 1630, Winthrop exhorted his fellow Puritans that "the care of the public must overshadow all private respects."



- Collectivists are often concerned with common goods, including a defense force, traffic laws, the education of citizens, the mitigation of climate change.
- For some communitarians, democratic society itself is one such common good.
- However, we need to be vigilant about the limits of this logic; the same reasoning was used to justify eugenics.

PAUL'S CORPORATE METAPHOR

- Much contemporary political theory has been devoted to reflections about how to integrate the virtues of both views, and to resist their dangers.
- Paul helpfully does not merely *balance* the considerations of the social and the individual, but shows how each is *enriched* by its relationship to the other.
- Paul uses a bodily metaphor, which he borrows from Menenius Agrippa, who developed such a metaphor to justify the predominance of the wealthy.
- Paul inverts the fable, to grant especial care to the least of these. He insists on both the interdependence and the indispensability of each of the members.
- The bodily metaphor stresses the importance of diversity. No bodily parts are interchangeable: they are "members" (μέλος) rather than as "parts" (μέρος) of the community.

- Along the lines of what Dale Martin calls Paul’s notion of “identity through participation,” it is only in the context of *κοινωνία* that believers can be fully themselves.
- For Paul, the individual and the community are no more mutually exclusive than the body can exist apart from, say, its heart—or than the heart can exist apart from its body.
- A Pauline social ontology would both defend Carrie Buck’s bodily integrity *and* positively identify the social resources she ought to have had access to. The insight that we *owe* one another our care could be used to justify a national vaccine mandate today.

WORKS CITED

- Bierbohm, Eric, and Ryan W. Davis. “The Common Good: A Buck-Passing Account.” *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 25, no. 4 (2017): e60–79.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *The Power of Ideas*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Best, Ernest. “The Body of Christ.” *The Ecumenical Review* 9, no. 2 (1957): 122–28.
- Daines, Brian. “Paul’s Use of the Analogy of the Body of Christ: With Special Reference to 1 Corinthians 12.” *Evangelical Quarterly* 50 (1978): 71–78.
- Dworkin, Ronald. *Life’s Dominion: An Argument about Abortion, Euthanasia, and Individual Freedom*. New York: Knopf, 1993.
- Esposito, Roberto. *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- . *Terms of the Political: Community, Immunity, Biopolitics*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013.
- Etzioni, Amitai. “Authoritarian versus Responsive Communitarian Bioethics.” *Journal of Medical Ethics* 37, no. 1 (2011): 17–23.
- . *The Common Good*. Cambridge: Polity, 2004.
- Fee, Gordon D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988.
- Horrell, David G. *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement*. Edinburgh: Clark, 1996.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*. Edited by C. B. Macpherson. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1980.
- Martin, Dale B. *The Corinthian Body*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.
- McVay, John K. “The Human Body as Social and Political Metaphor in Stoic Literature and Early Christian Writers.” *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 37, no. 1 (2000): 135.
- Mill, John Stuart. *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive*. John W. Parker, 1843.
- Miner, Paul S. *Images of the Church in the New Testament*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.
- Murphy-O’Connor, J. *Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2012.
- Rodgers, Daniel T. *As a City on a Hill: The Story of America’s Most Famous Lay Sermon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. <https://www.degruyter.com/doi/book/10.23943/9780691184371>.
- Taylor, Charles, ed. “Atomism.” In *Philosophical Papers: Volume 2: Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, 2:187–210. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- . “Irreducibly Social Goods.” In *Philosophical Arguments*, 127–45. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Twenge, Jean M. *Generation Me: Why Today’s Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before*. New York: Free Press, 2006.
- Waldron, Jeremy. “The Image of God: Rights, Reason, and Order.” In *Christianity and Human Rights: An Introduction*, edited by John Witte and Frank S. Alexander, 216–35. Cambridge University Press, 2010.