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THE LIBERTARIAN OR COMMUNITARIAN COMMUNITY? ATTEMPTING TO RESOLVE THE DEBATE USING ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY (ANT)

Abstract:

The comparison between a libertarian community and a communitarian one is presented. This comparison is different from the standard contrast between liberal and communitarian communities. This departure arises from the broad nature of liberalism, posing a challenge in providing a concise definition within this brief presentation. The perception of community may vary among liberals, with some aligning more with libertarians and others with communitarians (Szahaj 2000). Obviously, libertarianism and communitarianism, as ideologies, are not entirely homogeneous. In this context, they are treated as Weberian ideal types (Weber 2011). Essentially, a community based on voluntary relations among free individuals is advocated by libertarianism (Hayek 1958; Rothbard 1992), while communitarianism, regardless of political leaning, presupposes individuals' embeddedness in a community, a larger entity chosen not entirely voluntarily. (Sandel 1982; Taylor 1994). In this presentation, a resolution to this debate is proposed through Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which posits an ontologically flat world comprising actors and their connections. As these connections are not immediately apparent, ANT suggests exploring relationships by tracing the actions of actors (Latour 1993; 2004; 2005). Both libertarianism and communitarianism diverge from this postulate, both of them a priori define a specific worldview and human subjectivity.

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