

Contractualism and Methodological Individualism and Communitarianism; Situating Understandings of Moral Trust in the Context of Sport and Social Theory¹

MIKE McNAMEE

Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, Cheltenham, UK

ABSTRACT *In recent academic discussions about the nature of sport, education and society much has been made of the differing ways of conceiving social relations between individualists and communitarians. I explore some of the theoretical presuppositions of methodological individualism and show how it operates in game and rational choice theory. I set out, in contrast, three related versions of communitarianism. I show how these stances differently interpret the social relation/virtue that is known as 'trust' and, in so doing, highlight the inadequacy of the ontological account of the self in individualistic terms and point to the necessity of viewing close interpersonal relations as ones of partially shared identity. I develop a hypothetical example of a coach's abuse of his young swimmer to illustrate the respective richness and inadequacy of these theoretical positions while leaving open the advocacy of particular political policies designed to eradicate such practices.*

Introduction

Debates surrounding the meaning and application of such terms as 'individualism' and 'collectivism' have raged in philosophical, political and sociological discussions for as long as there has been an Academy. During the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s the debates concerning the nature and scope of social scientific explanation between philosophers and social scientists reached a new depth and clarity. The reader then would seem well justified in asking 'why even *one* more essay on this dry and dusty topic?' It strikes me as worthwhile to revisit some of these topics since the problems which they gravitate toward continually recur, albeit in slightly more fashion-conscious clothing. The present show, to continue the metaphor, has been promoted in explicitly moral and political clothing, though the trends of thought fashioning the wear have implications well beyond their houses. Less metaphorically, I explicate some of the very general features of recent liberal-communitarian debates about self and society and show how some of the philosophical malcontents therein inform and, are informed by, debates regarding methodological individualism and contractualism. I then show how reconceptualising the

self and social relations can enrich an understanding of a specific immoral practice, the abuse of trust, in the contexts of both education and sport.

Methodological Individualism

Modern debates surrounding individualism are often traced back to the early nineteenth century (Luhmann, 1986)², and are commonly placed alongside the development of nation states and commentaries thereon. Berry (1984, pp. 76–77) notes that their political philosophical precedents in Anglo-Saxon writing are in Hobbes and Locke for whom the favourite device is that of man (sic) found in the ‘state of nature’. Their accounts share the presuppositions that man (sic) is everywhere free, equal and independent. Dunn (1995) argues that while political philosophies are rendered incommensurable in the present postmodern intellectual climate, in the seventeenth century, philosophers as different as Locke and Hume still operated with the same set of concepts. Chief among these was the powerful notion of a contract which forced free, equal and independent individuals to subject themselves to the law of a legitimate government whether in the guise of contracts or of covenants, grants, oaths and promises. In the century that followed, this universal quality came apart at the seams. Berry (1984, p. 77) contrasts quotations from Hume who argued that ‘a nation is nothing but a collection of individuals’ with a more contemporary European scholar in the mid-eighteenth century (not enamoured of this Anglo-Saxon common sense): ‘a nation is not an accidental union of individual human beings who could just as well enter into an alliance with any other people but it is an organic being endowed with an animating principle (nationality)’. It is well noted then that Margaret Thatcher’s shorthand for individualism, ‘there is no such thing as society’, and the debates that surrounded it are neither new nor without weightier precedence.

But what of the species referred to as ‘methodological individualism’ (MI)? Let me first rehearse Lukes’ argument before I relate it to the theoretical presuppositions of contractualism. In the first instance a definition for the term is required: ‘Methodological individualism is a doctrine about explanation which asserts that all attempts to explain social (or individual) phenomena are to be rejected ... unless they are couched wholly in terms of facts about individuals’ (Lukes, 1973, p. 110). So, MI is a form of reductivist explanation which focuses on either one or a combination of the following types:

- (i) predicates regarding genetic constitution;
- (ii) predicates regarding attributes or needs or wants of a basic kind;
- (iii) predicates regarding human and institutional relations;
- (iv) predicates which require antecedent institutions.³

In choosing to show the variety of predicates to which methodologically individualistic explanations can be posited Lukes observes that (i) and (ii) are least problematic while (iii) can be troublesome and (iv) plain false.

He offers a continuum against which to problematise the issue surrounding the efficacy of MI from the most non-social to the most social. It is clear that explanations of the objects from (i) neither make reference to, nor presuppose, any thesis regarding sociality. Explanations within (ii) (while presupposing the intentionality of actions, the sufficiency of which is at the core of the debate between advocates of MI and methodological holism) similarly neither refer nor presuppose such sociality at an explanatorily basic level. When it comes to explanations incorporating concepts such as co-operation, power and esteem, Lukes argues that these

do have a minimal social reference: they presuppose a social context in which certain actions, social relations and/or mental states are picked out and given a particular significance. ... They still do not presuppose or entail any particular propositions about any particular form of group or institution. (1973, p. 119)

By contrast, propositions in category (iv) are what he calls 'maximally social'. They presuppose and entail propositions about this or that particular institution or group. In effect, then, MI explanations of category (iv) presuppose what they deny: the prior existence of sociality that makes sense on intentional action descriptions. No sense can be made of an act of voting without the prior notions of election, political representation, and so on, just as no-one can make sense of the notion of off-side without the notion of the game of football (soccer). The institutions here create conceptual space for new behaviours. In a later section I will claim that the example offered shows how actions regarding the trust placed in a coach (or teacher) with respect to young sports children exemplifies the inadequacy of MI explanations in (iii) as well as (iv).

Contractual Relations

Try to imagine a day without forming a contract with someone or some institution: it's difficult. Imagine going to a football (soccer) game: would you go by car and have to buy petrol or by bus and have to buy a ticket? Wouldn't you expect some standards of goods and services from the petrol station or the bus company? What about the route to your destination or the time it would take to get there? Wouldn't you pay for the coffee and sandwiches and expect them to be fresh? And if any of these expectations had been ignored by the persons and institutions with whom you had settled on these arrangements would you not expect some penalty or sanction to apply and rectification to be made to you. Such is the nature of contracts; they surround us explicitly to enforce our agreements and the performances therein.

The point is not simply that in capitalist societies there is no avoiding contracts to govern the exchange of labour and/or goods. The contractual mindset is prevalent in important social scientific theories which base their explanation of human associations and relationships along those lines. It is one of the cornerstones of market orientated societies, their underpinning social theories and philosophy. And the sporting life and literature is certainly not exempt from this thinking either (see for example, Breivik, 1992; Eassom, 1995; and Schneider and Butcher 1994). In this section I want to explore assumptions regarding the nature of the self in contractual thinking in the social sciences but particularly as used in Game Theory and Contractarian ethics. In doing so I draw heavily upon the work of the feminist philosopher Virginia Held, whose targets differ slightly from mine but whose critique is nonetheless apposite.

Without entirely eschewing the insights of Rational Choice Theory (RCT) or its close cousins Game Theory (GT) and Social Choice Theory (SCT) Held offers a critique of its attempt to use the basic picture of 'man' (sic) as rational bargainer. She wants to limit the application of this picture to specific contexts while replacing it in others with an altogether different, feminist, picture. That feminist picture has much that in common with strands of communitarianism articulated below. Commonalities between GT, RCT and SCT include the idea that rational action can be described and predicted between individuals who require some form of collective action in order to provide or produce goods or decisions. Close to this very general description is the idea that what best

captures the form of association or relation between the relevant individuals, is the idea of a contract. Held writes:

Contemporary Western Society is in the grip of contractual thinking. Realities are interpreted in contractual terms, and goals are formulated in terms of rational contracts. Leading current conceptions of rationality begin with assumptions that human beings are independent, self-interested, or mutually disinterested individuals; they often typically argue that it is often rational for human beings to enter into contractual relationships with each other.

On the side of description, assumptions characteristic of a contractual view of human relations underlie the dominant attempts to view social realities through the lenses of the social sciences. They also underlie the principles upon which most persons in contemporary Western society claim their most powerful institutions are founded. We are told that modern democratic states rest on a social contract, that their economies should be thought of as a free market where producers and consumers, employers and employees make contractual agreements. (1993, pp. 193–194)

First, one must recognise that this is not a diatribe against market orientated societies, philosophies or contracts. It seems reasonable to ask, however, whether assumptions of the self with which, for example, game theorists operate are helpful, what other pictures they draw us toward and to what extent they can be used as paradigmatic of other relations? Such pictures have been referred to by communitarian social theorists and philosophers as ‘thin’; as if individuals were ‘unencumbered’ by, or at least insufficiently implicated in, the identities of particular groups. The general picture shared by liberals and libertarians is of an atomistic self and society. The view reaches its apotheosis in Rawls’ liberal conception of justice. There individuals in the ‘original position’ self-interestedly choose social arrangements from behind a ‘veil of ignorance’, blind to their particular attributes and cultural-traditional mores, therein neutralising their natural biases.⁴

Concurrent with much economic, market-oriented, thinking is a commitment to this picture, often in accompaniment with one or more political liberal views. Given the widespread antipathy to individualistic accounts of the self, one should not underestimate this position; it is not mere back alley in social thought. Moreover, philosophers such as Gauthier (1986) have argued that morality itself is best understood in contractual terms rather than as universal moral rights and duties or absolute principles.⁵ Furthermore, RCT, supposedly applicable to a wide variety of human experiences, makes the same assumption about the nature of individuals and their contractual relations. Held (1993) notes, contractual solutions are being sought for problems that were never before thought of in that idiom. The spheres of sport and education bear testimony to this trend with regard to issues of raising children, keeping athletes to the training schedules, educating pupils with special needs, managing unruly students and so on.

Aside from her anti-individualist position and her alternative conception of rationality, Held argues that the picture of economic man (sic) is not best suited to the role of ‘primary social relation’. It is inadequate as a basic theoretical assumption for social or ethical theory. In contrast, she posits that the mother-child relation is *conceptually*, as well as *causally*, primary. It is not clear how far Held wishes to push this claim, and since I neither need nor wish to defend that aspect of her thesis, I shall merely ignore it. While her picture of the individual bargainer may be extreme, her stress on the primacy of the mother-child relationship may be at the opposite end of that spectrum.⁶

Before I argue for an understanding of trust which is nourished by communitarian, non-individualistic, moral psychology, I will illuminate how MI can operate at a presuppositional level in social scientific thinking. In Gambetta's important essay 'Can we trust 'Trust?'' he writes:

If we assume an *a priori* estimate of the *probability* that a person will perform a certain action – which is to say a given degree of trust, predicated on whatever evidence (friendship, membership of a group, style of clothing) other than the interests of that person – the question is: how high does that *probability* have to be for us to engage in an action the success of which depends on whether the other person or persons will act co-operatively? (1988, p. 222, emphasis added)

What is to be noted here is the idea that any and all interests are separable from other persons and their interests. It seems that the idea of trust is not merely 'agentially isolable' for Gambetta, but further (and I want to say 'worse'), that the 'calculation' of whether to trust or not is something volitional. There are a range of trusting behaviours which are in no way 'volitional' in the strong sense that is implied here. The mothering context is only the most obvious counter example. Is it not the case that some of the most important human relationships that we have and are held by, we merely fall into, or are socialised into, in the absence of strong 'intentionality' or what utilitarians and economists often refer to as 'rationally informed choice'. Perhaps when talking of trusting relationships we need to move always to particular contexts and frame them against, among other things, the level and significance of intentionality. Maybe this will yield further species of 'trusting relationships'. Furthermore, explaining these relationships necessarily presupposes the sociality MIs deny. My point here is two-fold; the first regards the inadequacy of MI as set out in Lukes' categories (iii) and (iv) and the second is that one should be extremely wary of adopting a paradigm which insists presuppositionally on a strong volitional element especially in contexts such as sport and education (formal and informal) where the young are concerned. This is only a very specific counter to the general position of the rational autonomous chooser; children are not alone in lacking significant degrees of autonomy. The notion of ideology in the older, Marxist, sense of false consciousness prevails directly upon the point of individuals 'trusting' systems and institutions under conditions of merely *apparent* autonomy.

In summary, I am suggesting that any or all human relations and associations in sport should be conceptualised in ways other than contractual. Those who believe that Mike Tyson's notorious manager Don King should be trusted on the strength of a handshake when he says: 'I promise I'll give you \$30 million for the Holyfield rematch' are not methodologically challenged but rather have taken leave of their senses. In the account I offer below there is indeed a place for evaluative discretion. I am simply suggesting that as philosophers and social theorists of sport we will do well to consider *when* conceiving human relations as an explicit contractual arrangement is necessary; *when* it is appropriate; *when* it is desirable or undesirable; *when* it is undermining or offensive and so forth. And it is no different in everyday life where such arrangements are made. It is clear that the language of contracts is closely tied to sporting institutions and to agents who distribute external goods such as power, wealth and prestige in and through sport. It is equally clear that only those persons who share identities in and through co-operative human enterprises like athletics, handball, or tennis, who are likely to trade in the currency of moral trust therein. Aside from the egoism that is often considered part of the necessary baggage that goes along with liberal individualism, and the weakness of conceiving certain social concepts and the arrangements they embody under contractu-

alist and MI clothing, it will be helpful to state briefly the nature and scope of communitarian critiques.

Advocacy, Ontology and the Varieties of Communitarianism

In intellectual endeavours of whatever persuasion there is a strongly felt need to reduce the many to the one. The notions of economy and elegance are as canonical in poetry as they are in physics. The impulse of rationality captured in Ockham's famous razor inspires MI. Yet, while such elegance and economy are seductive, methodologically *and* conceptually, the cleanness of cut is often more apparent than real. And so it is with what people call 'liberal' and 'communitarian'. Two related points serve as important reminders here. First, the unity is not elemental it is composite. Secondly, those who align themselves with communitarian writings may do so in one or both of two ways: in terms of ontology and/or of advocacy. I will develop these ideas briefly before setting out the case against some presuppositions of liberal individualistic and contractualist ways of conceiving trusting social relations.

Communitarianism is commonly thought to name a single entity or unified doctrine. Yet Blum (1994) persuasively argues that communitarianism covers a range of separable themes in moral and political philosophy that are completely united only in the negative. What binds them together is their opposition to an individualistic view of agency and a libertarian conception of society. They proclaim a non-atomistic view of self and society.⁷ The diversity of opinions trading under that name can be separated into three types: identity communitarianism, virtue communitarianism, and social or (political) communitarianism.

Michael Sandel's (1982) work is notable among identity communitarians. He explores the notion that our identity and self-understandings is constituted partly by other persons, practices and traditions. The self is referred to variously by communitarian writers as 'embedded', 'encumbered', 'implicated' or 'situated' self. A common theme is that the liberal conception of the self (if there is such a thing) is insufficiently implicated in the historical identities of particular groups.

Chief among the writers of virtue communitarianism is Alisdair MacIntyre. He has stressed the importance of communities, not merely in promoting shared goals, evaluations and self-understandings, but also in terms of the need to cultivate those dispositions of character required for the sustenance of those very communities in which people seek to live good lives. Virtue communitarians argue that the community, rather than the individual, is the context of virtue-development.⁸ Virtue communitarianism also places a strong emphasis on the local and particular in moral life and speculation as opposed to the exclusive emphasis on rational-universal principles and impartiality (see Blum (1994) for a general example and McNamee (1995, 1998) for sports-specific examples). We may say then, that identity and virtue communitarianism are primarily related to moral theorising. Yet they have strong connections with political theorising too.

Social or political communitarianism advocates the necessity of certain *shared* goods across the community. These goods or values are both required for and developed within communities. Common among such goods or values are solidarity, mutual commitment, family stability and civic participation. Amitai Etzioni is perhaps best known for popularising the political dimension of the moral malaise that he considers modern USA to characterise following its overemphasis on wants (dressed up as rights) to the detriment of civic commitments, obligations and responsibilities. Social or political communitarianism stresses the authoritative weight of tradition.⁹ To some extent, recent liberal theory

has fought back on the first and second grounds, yet their focus on justice conceived of as individual rights has meant there can be no rapprochement in the third realm (see Kymlicka, 1989, pp. 47–134 and 1990, pp. 199–237).

The picture of 'trust' espoused later within this work is to be situated within identity and virtue communitarian arguments about a richer understandings of that concept. The principle reason why I will remain here agnostic about social or political communitarianism is related to the second distinction between advocacy and ontology that I take from Charles Taylor's recent work (1997, pp. 181–203).¹⁰

The point can be put this way. One may agree that the 'situated,' 'thin' or 'unencumbered' self characterised in MI and liberal individualism is humanly impossible and that the atomistic model is simply chimerical or one could hold the opposite viewpoint that holism is overdeterminative and equally restrictive and unrealistic. Alternatively, one could also argue that an extreme version of social and political communitarianism is logically incompatible with a collectivist form of life and that it would be nigh impossible to develop persons and communities of shared evaluations and identities within liberal states that are agnostic to different life plans and *weltanschauung*. Where does this get us? Taylor concludes:

Taken in either direction, the tenor of these theses about identity would still be purely ontological. They don't amount to an advocacy of anything. What they purport to do, like any good ontological thesis, is to structure the field of possibilities in a more perspicuous way. But this does leave us with choices, which need some normative, deliberative arguments to resolve. Even taken in the first direction, which purports to show the impossibility of the atomist society, it leaves us with important choices between more or less liberal societies; the second is concerned precisely to define options of this kind (1997, pp. 182–183)

I am now able to illustrate the importance of the ontology/advocacy distinction in the light of the present discussion. While I have argued, however briefly, against the ontology of the self in MI, I do not want to fall into the trap of advocating one particular characterisation of human relations as paradigmatic. To do so might lay one open to the charge that one bad picture was merely being exchanged for another. Social theorists need to conceptualise differently according to the domain under consideration, whether it be cultural production, economic activity, education, family life or the law. Though it is *possible* to conceive of persons, nations or even families as individual entities it is misleading so to do. Imagine the wide variety of human relationships, and roles for that matter. How many are best characterised by a contractual mindset; mother-child?, brother-sister?; kindergarten teacher-pupil?; lecturer-researcher?; grandfather-grandson?; coach-young sportswomen?; even members of the same professional sports team? Now, of course, the *kinds* of relations here differ. For some the roles and their attendant expectations are clear and well-defined. Some are contractual, some are partially contractual and some are not at all contractual in any formal sense. Yet is it not the case that the persons in these types of relationships are such that *who they are* is in part defined by that relation? It is helpful, therefore, to avoid the presupposition that the respective persons or parties are to be separated methodologically and to recognise the identity bonds that they share. In terms of advocacy one could ask whether, in any kind of nurturing environment or caring profession, of which teaching is properly central, this identification is either (a) likely to be, or even necessarily, the case or (b) a situation desirable to seek? Should we even aim to describe, understand or evaluate these relations

from within a contractual paradigm? What can be done as a first step, perhaps, is to ask what kind of social relations should hold in children's sport, disabled sport, adolescent or youth sport, elite sport, women's sport and so on. This forces us to look much more closely at local arrangements and relations in particular communities and their sporting practices and not, for example, simply to chant "equality" where this is to be understood as mere parity or sameness.

From the foregoing discussion then, it will be clear that identification with identity communitarianism entails the ontological disavowal of MI. Attachment to virtue communitarianism entails the inadequacy, though not necessarily the denial, of alternative individualistic moral or political theories. What remains open, and what I hope to tease out later is how, even a developed analysis of a key concept in social life, still leaves open the advocacy of alternative social and political options. Whether one seeks to prevent the kind of moral abuse of trust the example illuminates by the rights inspired action of liberals or the immanent criticisms supported by communitarians is left undetermined.

An Economistic and a Moral Conception of Trust

When trust has been discussed under the rubric of moral philosophy it has been of a rather different temper than when analysed by economists, game theorists or sociobiologists. The language is of a different order. Other social scientists have talked about the place of trust in relation to decisions regarding cooperation and/or competition with respect to either mutual advantage or optimising outcomes. I take Gambetta's essay as representative of this way of talking and thinking about trust in order to contrast it later with a moral conception inspired by the feminist ethicist Baier. Gambetta writes:

The problem, stated in very general terms, seems to be the one of finding the optimal mixture of cooperation and competition rather than deciding at which extreme to converge....

The most basic form of human cooperation, abstention from mutual injury, is undoubtedly a precondition of potentially beneficial competition.¹¹ ... there is a difference between outdoing rivals and doing them in, and within species, competing animals are considerably more inclined to the former than the latter. Even to compete, in a mutually non-destructive way, one needs at some level to *trust* one's competitors to comply with certain rules....

Game theory has provided us with a better understanding of why cooperation may not be forthcoming even when it would benefit most of those involved....

In this respect, one of the most interesting as well as threatening lessons of game theory is that even if people's motives are not unquestionably egoistic, cooperation may still encounter many obstacles. This is a much more striking result than that which shows that rationality in the pursuit of self-interest may not suffice. Consider, for instance, the well-known case of the Prisoner's Dilemma and related games: the mere expectation that the second player might choose to defect can lead the first player to do so, if only in self-defence. The first player's anticipation of the second's defection must be based simply on the belief that the second player is unconditionally uncooperative. But, more tragically, it may also be based on the fear that the second player will not trust *him* to cooperate, and will defect as a direct result of this lack of trust.

Thus the outcome converges on sub-optimal equilibrium, *even* if both players might have been *conditionally* predisposed to cooperate. *The problem, therefore, is essentially one of communication*; even if people have perfectly adequate motives for cooperation they still need to know about each other's motives and to trust each other, or at least the effectiveness of their motives. It is also necessary not only to trust others before acting co-operatively, but also to believe that one is trusted *by* others (1988, p. 215).

I have quoted at length to avoid any charges of misrepresentation later. It strikes me there are two important mischaracterisations here. First, there is the fundamental assumption of the 'separateness of persons' characteristic of individualism against which communitarians of all colours rail. I have discussed this above and want merely to situate Gambetta within that characterisation. Secondly, Gambetta (inadequately in my view) offers a technical solution to what is an explicitly normative problem. He says that the lack of trust is 'essentially one of communication'. It seems that he has failed to comprehend (a) the nature of virtues; and (b) the nature of trust as a specific virtue.

Regarding the first of these points, Rorty (1988) has argued that the virtues hunt in packs; this was her metaphorical attempt to capture an important Aristotelian point about virtue being a unity. The classic thesis held that one could not attain any singular virtue without acquiring them all and further that they were coherent or non-conflictual in nature. It is in some respects a naïve hope that if our moral perception is accurate and we have integrity, then the right course of action will flow from a well-developed character. Criticisms of this position are legion. Life in complex societies is not as straightforward as in the Athenian Greece of Aristotle's time, and the contexts of complex institutions in sport and education demand conflicting loyalties and obligations where it is impossible to act without moral remainder (see Stocker, 1992). Yet there is an underlying point that withstands these criticisms. Rarely does a felicitous perception of a situation unambiguously activate a singular virtue. Very often the different ways of thinking, feeling and judging action is a complex balancing act between different demands in tension with competing possibilities. For example, the referee in a football match person sees a player realitating to an earlier foul with subtle deception; does the situation require tolerance or courage (how much is the referee scared of the consequences from the manager in 'professional' scenarios or plain scared of the player in amateur games?). Or take another common scenario where the basketball coach under huge pressure to deliver a win, vents his anger physically upon a player who stupidly fouls him/herself out early in the game and thereby offers the opposition the victory on a plate. As team-mates should we be compassionate or loyal (and to whom)? In any complex situation, of which genuine dilemmas are the most extreme, this is never the perception and judgement of possibilities in not unidimensional *per* definition. As Rorty puts it, the virtues:

ramify to develop and exercise associated supportive traits ... individual virtues underdetermine appropriate actions. They only function within a supportive, directing, and sometimes oppositional network. (1988, pp. 316-317)

In contrast, notice how Gambetta's account of trust appears to be dislocated from the agent's other dispositions. Gambetta seems to say that the 'problem' with trust is that X has insufficient information about Y. This insufficiency is reinforced by his earlier remark regarding the problem of trust being essentially one of communication. What account of persons and the kinds of knowledge we can have of them is being presupposed here? The picture of the self, self-knowledge, and the relationships between agents is somewhat

etiolated. Contrast this with Baier, whose remarks serve to underscore the relatively unified picture of the self, its constitutive relations to others and the relationship of agency to action over time:

Promises do nevertheless, involve some real trust in the other party's good will and proper use of discretionary powers. ... But performing promises is not the only performance requisite for that. Shylock did not welsh (sic) on an agreement. For to insist on the letter of an agreement, ignoring the vague but generally understood written conventions and exceptions, is to fail to show that discretion and goodwill which a trustworthy person has. To be someone to be trusted with a promise, one must be able to use discretion not as to when the promise has been kept but rather, as to when to insist that the promise be kept, or instigate a penalty for breach of promise. To be trusted as a promisor one must use discretion as to when to keep and when not to keep one. (Baier, 1994, p. 118)

In situations where intentional or volitional aspects are more prominent, the enacting of trusting relationships may elicit a range of dispositions from courage to wickedness, spite, generosity, foolhardiness, benevolence and beyond. To dislocate trusting from these dispositions and the contexts in which they arise is to focus on only one aspect of the picture and thus to distort the grasp had of it. Specifically it is his account of 'trust' which is unsatisfactory. I am not clear whether it is the case that Gambetta (1988) and the authors in his volume 'Trust' are simply talking about a use of that word that is not co-extensive with the 'trust' that has been the subject of enquiry in moral philosophy. If this is the case, then those philosophers who have utilised the economic conception may well have failed to comprehend the difference in meaning in the moral sense. To establish the clarity of the distinction requires that I again quote Gambetta at some length:¹²

trust (or, symmetrically, distrust) is a particular level of the subjective probability with which an agent assesses that an agent or group of agents will perform a particular action, both before he can monitor such action (or independently of his capacity ever to be able to monitor it) *and* in a context in which it affects *his own* action. When we trust someone or say that he someone is trustworthy, we implicitly mean that the probability that he will perform an action that is beneficial or at least not detrimental is high enough for us to consider engaging in some cooperation with him. Correspondingly, when we say that someone is untrustworthy, we imply that that probability is low enough for us to refrain from doing so. (1988, p. 217)

I am uneasy about the idea of replacing the moral concept with a computational-legalistic mode of reasoning. This thin, detached, instrumental and self-referring action is precisely the object of complaint from philosophers such as Taylor (1985, 1989) against utilitarians who characteristically reason only upon means to ends (weak evaluation) and never qualitatively upon the ends themselves (strong evaluation).¹³ Furthermore, the idea that the 'problem of trust' would be rendered otiose by a more capable brain and an enforceable contract is one that is to be eschewed. Of course, trusting relations allow the trusted degrees of freedom to opt out. Moreover, the more prominent is that option, the less likely the notion of trust will be prominent. This is certainly to capture the meaning of trust whereby the coach says to his or her athlete 'I am trusting you not to cheat on your training schedule'. What is really being said here is 'I don't trust you especially, but

I can't check up on you so I am reminding you of your responsibilities'. This is essentially trust conceived of as mere reliability.

In contrast, the account of trust I think central to relations that hold between, for example, between a young elite performer and a coach differs critically in respect of the moral notions of care, vulnerability and harm as well as upon ideas such as promise, responsibility and well-founded confidence. These concepts, *pace* Gambetta, would not disappear from social life with better computational and contractual capabilities. Even though Gambetta later makes some concessions to the anti-individualists, he does not go far enough because, willingly or otherwise, he will not forego the idea of separateness. He recognises that in some relationships trust will be present not as matter of volition but of 'volitional necessity' (to use Frankfurt's language); one could think nor act any other way. Yet Gambetta fails to explore the metaphysical presuppositions of shared identity in agency as developed by Taylor, MacIntyre and Sandel. What instead encourages trust is a by-product knowledge of each other and respect for each other's individuated welfare: trust becomes a mere consequent of action in mutually beneficial contexts (albeit over time). Gambetta's use of the idea of a calculus supports this. Gambetta argues that one trusts one's friends *more* because that is partly definitive of friendship. This seems to me to be a case of wrenching the right cause the wrong way; I trust my coach not merely because are our lives inextricably intertwined such that my good is at least strongly constitutive of hers and vice versa, but because our identities are not separable without remainder *and* that she is a trustworthy person. I focus not simply on the act but on our shared identity and the qualities of character she displays. Our mutual trust has been forged in the kinds of adversity that come in long term relationships. The very same close relationship are properly fostered in the many kinds and levels of coach performer or teacher-student relations at younger and older ages respectively.

Gambetta states that, despite trust's close association with familiarity, friendship and moral values, it must not be confused with them since it has different properties. Because of this, it has been suggested by Luhmann (1979) that trust should be treated both as by-product and as a scarce resource. Gambetta is more circumspect; he argues that the limitations of this approach are more interesting than its application. He makes the interesting move (as may be the case with other pairs of concepts like health and illness or negative and positive freedom) that trust is of interest when and where it is misplaced. In moving from *homo economicus* to *homo ethicus*, he notes that although the furthering of one's interests may generate honesty, one's reputation and commitment are the means by which others are assured of one's performances; i.e. they generate the effectiveness of that pressure. In an unsuccessful attempt to reconcile the two he writes:

Conditions favourable to honesty and co-operation—that is, a healthy economy—*and* the reputation for trustworthiness must reinforce each other for a 'concert of interests' to be played. It may be hard to bank on altruism, but it is much harder to avoid banking on a reputation for trustworthiness: as all bankers (and car dealers) know, a good reputation is their best asset. (1988, p. 233)

We might call this characterisation of the place of trust as 'the problem of evidence'. The Prisoner's Dilemma (considered paradigmatic of the general problem of what do under conditions of scarcity of knowledge or evidence and paradigmatic of human relations in Game Theory) gives rise to theoretical commitments against which I have attempted warn. I am unconvinced that this is either the right or the only way forward.

Predictability in human beings being what it is, the avenue is probably a tortuous one. This aside, however, I am most unhappy about a technical solution (i.e. more evidence) to solve a moral problem – perhaps most commonly seen in dilemma situations. In any case, whether one trusts or not can itself set up a disposition to see or not see the evidence at hand. As Gambetta (1988, p. 234) puts it with delightful economy ‘distrust may become the source of its own evidence’. In the end Gambetta avers on the side of trusting trust and distrusting distrust; but his argument is tentatively negative;

But the point is that if we are not prepared to bank on trust, then the alternatives in many cases will be so drastic, painful, and possibly immoral that they can never be lightly entertained. Being wrong is an inevitable part of the wager, of the learning process strung between success and disappointment, where only if we are prepared to endure the latter can we hope to enjoy the former. Asking too little of trust is just as ill advised as asking too much. (1988, p. 235)

The picture of trust offered here is much closer to the notion of simple reliance upon the performances of another party with whom we share a mutual, though distinguishable, perhaps egoistic, interest. Contractualism and MI lurk close at hand. I am genuinely ambivalent as to whether the kind of thing I want to analyse, relying heavily on the work of Baier, is an account of the same thing. To be sure trust is necessarily implicated in the idea of competition and co-operation but it lacks certain key components to do with vulnerability that are central to the everyday understanding of trust as a moral concept.

In her essay ‘Trust and Antitrust’, Baier (1994) begins by quoting Sissela Bok (1978, p. 31n) ‘*Whatever* matters to human beings, trust is the atmosphere in which it thrives’. While there are obvious exceptions and since trust is also the atmosphere in which many vicious acts and practices thrive also (trust-busting may be a morally proper goal she reminds us), there is something important in this remark. Much moral philosophy, and almost all ethics in sport literature, neglected to consider this important notion and has instead been charmed by more familiar considerations such as rules, universality, contracts, impartiality, utility, to name but a few.

Baier notes that we need to ask the questions ‘whom should I trust in what way, and why?’ Similarly, we need to enquire what forms of trust are required so that the form of morality we endorse may thrive. She writes: ‘We inhabit a climate of trust as we inhabit an atmosphere and notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes polluted’. (1994, p. 98) As we have seen, a very close relation to the concept of trust is that of ‘reliance’. In order to distinguish them, Baier asks:

What is the difference between trusting others and merely relying on them? It seems to be reliance on their good will toward one, as distinct from their dependable habits, or only on their dependably exhibited fear, anger, or other motives compatible with ill will toward one, or on motives not directed on one at all. ... Trust is often mixed with other species of reliance on persons. Trust which is reliance on another’s good will, perhaps minimal good will, contrasts with the forms of reliance on others’ reactions and attitudes which are shown by the comedian, the advertiser, the blackmailer, the kidnapper–extortioner, and the terrorist, who all depend on particular attitudes and reactions of others for the success of their actions. We all depend on one another’s psychology in countless ways, but this is not yet to trust them. ... When I trust another, I depend on her good will to me. I need not either acknowledge this reliance nor believe that she has either invited or acknowledged such trust since there is no

such thing as unconscious trust, as unwanted trust, as forced receipt of trust, an as trust which the trusted is unaware of. (1994, p. 99)

Baier's emphasis on the psychological character of trust is important. She does not want to consider trust merely as an example of strong intentionality, where one announces by plan or design 'here, I trust you' (be it by contract, fiat or other explicit means). Instead she holds to the idea that the agent must be aware of the implications of the convention. Trusting must survive consciousness by both parties, she writes, whereby opportunity has passed to signify acceptance or otherwise.

One of the most interesting dimensions of trust that Baier brings to light is the notion of trust's relation to vulnerability, and the acts and evaluations that arise from the expectation of the trusted not to exploit it. Of her method of attacking this problem she asserts:

One way to do the former ... is to look at the variety of sorts of goods or things one values or cares about, which can be left or put within the striking powers of others, and the variety of ways we can let or leave other 'close' enough to what we value to be able to harm it. Then we can look at various reasons we might have for wanting or accepting such closeness of those with power to harm us, and for confidence that they will not use this power. (1994, p. 100)

What Baier does not explore, but may have been close to the surface, is the very idea of trust's relation to 'confidence' in the older sense of that word whereby one might say 'I'll bring you into my confidence'; what may be said or done, for example, may be privileged or secretive, and to hold that status one places one's trust in another to retain its status. And what is closely related to the idea of confidence is the evaluation of the other in terms of appropriate competencies relating to the task and the valued person or thing at hand. When the headteacher entrusts to this or that teacher a delicate task, they are necessarily making character evaluations about such matters as confidence, competence, sensitivity and so on in the light of the particular problem. Likewise, when the parent entrusts their child to the swimming coach they assume that institutional checks have taken place to affirm their confidence in his or her ability to teach competently and safely.

Both points in the above quotation can be combined by way of the common distinction between private and shared goods. Most of the things we care about and value are shared or social goods such that we cannot but help to leave others in striking distance of them.

Since the things we typically do value include such things as we cannot singlehandedly either create or sustain (our own life, health, reputation, our offspring and their well-being, as well as intrinsically shared goods such as conversation, its written equivalent, theater and other forms of play, chamber music, market exchange, political life and so on) we must allow many other people to get into positions where they can, if they choose, injure what we care about, since those are the same positions that they must be in order to help us take care of what we care about. (1994, pp. 100-110)

Two other points should be added. First, viewing trust this way helps bring up the notion of norms and expectations and their limits in a language that cannot merely be technical. To ignore this dimension and to talk of communication and reliability is unhelpfully reductivist. It ignores the rich context-specific data that makes much of social scientific research in sub-cultures so interesting. Secondly, by so doing, Baier raises to the surface

of our attention the notion of implicitness and the failure of contractual devices, lest they be several miles long, to address every eventuality. The importance of this dimension is raised to our awareness when we consider sporting and educational contexts when coaches and teachers alike act *in loco parentis*. The discretionary power afforded could not be greater. Persons falling under this description have as great a set of moral powers as can be had over another. The paternalism implicit in such situations generates the very climate which can allow for its abuse. And yet it is that very risk which, paradoxically, the economic conception wants to diminish while the moral conception holds ineradicable. As far as the moral conception of trust is concerned, risk is of the essence. Whenever we impart to the trusted a valued thing within limits of discretionary power we risk abuse. Worse, we often open the entrusted to as yet unnoticed harm of disguised ill will:

To understand the moral risks of trust, it is important to see the special sort of vulnerability it introduces. Yet the discretionary element which introduces this special danger is essential to that which trust at its best makes possible. To elaborate Hume: 'Tis impossible to separate the chance of good from the risk of ill'. (1994, p. 104)

Trust, then, on Baier's analysis is characterised as letting persons take care of something that is cared for or valued, where such caring involves the use of discretionary powers about the reliance and competence of the trusted. In so doing, she builds in a normative dimension that inescapably requires good judgement. To leave your young child with someone you do not know in any meaningful sense may not be trusting but *ceteris paribus* foolishness. Is this not what we do every time we bring our children to the playgroup, the sports centre or the school? Again the point is reinforced that we must view trust trust, as any other disposition, in the context of the person as a whole and the community in which they reside. I want finally, to contextualise these rather abstract points within the context of sports coaching and to show how our reconceptualisation affects our perception of the situation away from a methodologically individualistic and contractualist mindset.

Trust and the Abuse of Power

At some level of performance, it seems clear that a contractual mindset is unquestionably right. One could not reasonably expect to go in to multi-million dollar sporting agreements on a handshake. In older honour-based societies this may have been more feasible but times have moved on. Examining the nature of relationships between young sportsmen and women, boys and girls, begs questions as to the appropriateness of a contractual mindset in practice and in theory.

Swimming and gymnastics are interesting sports to consider in terms of relationships between coach and young (in some cases, *very* young) performers. In swimming circles it is sometimes said that performer are over the hill by twenty or twenty-five in men's and women's events, respectively. Many coaches attribute this to the dedication required and to the sheer boredom of in-water training. With gymnastics, however, the combinations of suppleness and power weight ratios gear the sport 'naturally' toward a younger population. Despite their differences, both sports share a common affinity in the difficult decisions to be made paternalistically on behalf of the performer. A coach of, for example, 6-14 year old children is required to fulfil a variety of roles. Many elite performers spend considerably more time with their coach than with their parents. There

are, however, crucial differences. Central among these is the 'quasi-friend' that the coach often becomes or as special confidant, neither of which is characteristic of most mothering and fathering relationships. A level of intimacy almost unavoidably develops. Who the coach is, and who the child is (and is to become) are partially merged. Coaches came to be known by their star athletes who reciprocally come to be known by their association to a coach's name and a club's reputation. The successful child now begins to identify him or herself as 'swimmer' or 'gymnast' and also as part of a closed clique whose access is open to a privileged few. Thus the communitarians who insist on relatively shared identities and the prominence of role-descriptions find a clear counter-example to liberals who implicate contextual factors insufficiently in an individual's identity and self-understanding. Who athletes *are* and how they conceive of themselves is in no small part defined by their sport, their club, their coaches and their respective histories.

The coach-performer relationship, then, emerges as one of partially shared identity. It becomes invested in the other and in the practice. Describing these two persons and the group to which they affiliate as individualistic voluntary associations as liberal and methodological individualists do, is way off the mark. They are not mere social atoms bumping into one another. In this sense, the contractual mindset misses much that is crucial to a full description of their relationship.

There is a further point too that I shall bring out by hypothetical example (though the scenario is familiar enough to anyone who has read the British press lately). In this example, the explanatory power of the moral conception of trust captures our proper moral revulsion at the sexual exploitation of a vulnerable child.

Before exploring this scenario, however, I want to post two notes of warning. In the first instance, it is not my purpose to label in anyway the coaching 'profession' any more than any other social group wherein paedophilial practices occur. It is no part of the logic of sporting practices that they have engendered such vile persons. It is merely that the structural characteristics of sport (time spent in isolation, training or in travelling to events; the level of intimacy forged over time without external checks and so on) conduce to their utilisation of sports children as easy prey. Secondly, there is an element of non-universalizability here. In the Netherlands, consensual relations between adults and minors are not automatically considered ethically to be problematic. Moreover, by law it must be the child in some instances who bring the case against the adult.¹⁴ This point cautions against the naiveté of certain kinds of moral universalism based upon supposedly unproblematic rights. This of course throws up desperately difficult conceptual and empirical problems regarding what constitutes 'consensus' and whether the child will always be in a vulnerable, disempowered and potentially exploitative relation to the adult, that I cannot address here.

Imagine then, a competitive swimming club where your child has grown up within a community in which she is esteemed as the best athlete. She has always held this status since her introduction to the sport at the age of five years. She has always been the best in her age group. She is now fourteen and has just passed through puberty. Biologically and socially (though not legally, *ceteris paribus*) she is a not-so-young woman. Her coach is an esteemed figure. He is a professional man with a fine reputation in the wider community but, more particularly, in the world of swimming everyone knows him. Swimmers gravitate to 'his' pool in the hope of developing their potential with his elite clique. A social world has developed with this group, many of whom have been brought through their swimming education with him catering for every detail, every training schedule, every competition, every nutritional aspect: even every detail in the social

calendar (when they may go out, with whom, to what times and so on). To recognise the identity vested in the children *qua* elite swimmers is to begin to understand their relation to the coach who has brought them thus far and also to understand the power he exercises over them.¹⁵

The coach, as every parent assumes, is always acting with the best interests of their children at heart, not merely as swimmers but as persons outside that sphere. His commitment to them is exemplary. Indeed they spend more time in his company than they ever do in the company of their parents. He has the swimmers over at his house for meals and pre-competition evenings to get them to focus. This is a practice that he has successfully cultivated over a number of years. The coaching environment thus becomes one of a surrogate family. I think it is precisely the tightness of the social interdependencies and the mutual implication of coach and swimmer in each other's identities that triggers our revulsion at their sexual exploitation. The situation is emotively but accurately described as 'virtual incest' (Brackenridge, 1997). Over time the coach has used his station to manufacture a higher level of trust. This is not some stranger with whom the parents leave the child (though in sporting situations it very often is the case; how much do you know about your child's soccer, netball, gymnastics coach?). This is someone who has become an additional member of your family. You have spoken to him thousands of times. It is no simple lack of knowledge or evidence that has led you to entrust your child to him. Although your child is now biologically and culturally sexually aware, you could never have imagined how he has used his status as the gatekeeper of their swimming career to that effect. Thus the sexual acts of coach and swimmer are 'virtually' incestuous. It is precisely the fact that you left, with apparent discretion, the once vulnerable child within harm's distance of a respected professional that you are left utterly distraught at the systematic long-term abuse of trust, privilege and power. Whether your child intentionally, 'consensually', engaged in sexual relations with the coach seems now not of particular importance. They may claim to be 'in-love' just as the child may be in such fear as to accept such exploitation. It still remains the case that he has utilised his station to exploit a level of intimate trust over a valued and vulnerable person that make us revile him.

While, therefore, it is the case that those who trust often know little or nothing of the practice or person into which and to whom they entrust their children, it is not their ignorance we deplore. And, of course, there may be no good reason not to trust. Moreover, think of the technical knowledge, language and paraphernalia that coaches can have in their armoury and environment that gives the powerful impression of expertise, paternalism and professionalism. Who would suspect the worst of coaches *ab initio*? How would one live such a life? One mistrusts, I suspect only after coming into contact with an untrustworthy coach or after hearing of cases such as the recent Hickson affair.¹⁶ The answer lies not to attempt to envisage trusting relations as contracts or simply seeking to enforce contracts or codes of conduct. For while it remains the case that most coaches operate on a voluntary basis this would amount to little more than institutional posturing.¹⁷ In any case how could one codify in a contract all possible eventualities?

Under a contractual mindset there is nominally the notion of equality between contractors. Again, in a coaching relationship, especially where we have a distinguished elite coach and zealously eager parents, we have potential for difficulties. The power relationships are so heavily loaded in coaches' favour that the idea of a contract enforceable by both sides (the child and the coach) may be a misguided picture. I am not convinced that traditional moral philosophy can give us any clues as to how to probe this

conundrum. At a policy level, in Britain there are extremely few institutional checks and balances on a system that is predicated on voluntary help. Here we have a potential ethical lacuna. This is precisely the kind of problem that begs the kind of moral enquiry that the virtue-based communitarian scholar may be disposed to investigate, since his or her *modus operandi* is open to the problematic. And this is what I have tried to do in the example above; to resurrect a phenomenologically felicitous contextualised account of the moral conception of trust.

Conclusion

The educationally literature that has discussed aspects of the liberal-communitarian debate, has focused almost exclusively on the concept of 'citizenship' and how it is variously conceptualised under these two families of theories. By contrast, I have focused on a more basic social relation, trust, and more specifically its abuse by an imaginary sports coach. It should be noted, however, that one of the key points in any analysis of, for example, coaches abuse of their position, must involve an understanding both of trust and its implication in the power relationship between the truster and the trusted. This moves us necessarily away from 'thin', individualistic, accounts of reliability into 'thicker', particular, accounts of the social practices such as education and sport, their communities and traditions. The contractual model fails to embrace notions such as power, inequality, dependency and the implicit identity relations entailed in analyses of trust. What I have not done is to say that there is no place for contractual relations in sport so conceived (nor conceptualising such relations as contractual) nor that they should in any way be seen as mutually trusting ones. Nor have I suggested that, by having contractual relations, those engaged necessarily mistrust each other. Instead, I have tried to articulate a more perspicuous characterisation of close personal relations that are often characteristic of teacher and pupil, coach and young athlete; one that foregrounds notions of shared identities, the appreciation of vulnerability, and the appropriate virtues that accompany them. This merely, enables a richer description of such abuse while leaving open the full range of policy decisions that are advocated by communitarians and liberals.

Correspondence: Dr M.J. McNamee, Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, Department of Leisure Management, Francis Close Hall, Swindon Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 4AZ, UK.

Notes

- [1] This paper began life as 'Trust, contract and community: an essay in feminist ethics and communitarian politics' delivered at the Sport, Philosophy and Olympics Conference, Maryland College, Woburn, 15-17 March 1996. I have amended the scope of the essay and dropped certain claims regarding the uniqueness of the feminist dimension of the ethical discussion. I am very grateful Graham McFee, Gordon Reddiford, Paul Standish, Patricia White and to the anonymous reviewer of this journal, for their generous criticisms.
- [2] Luhmann cites Swart (1962) and the modern classic Lukes (1973) as sources.
- [3] I have constructed the categories from an interpretation of Lukes' examples (1973, pp. 181-121). His examples include (i) brain-states, (ii) aggression, (iii) co-operation and (iv) cashing a cheque.
- [4] The *locus classicus* is Rawls (1972). More recently in response to communitarian criticisms (which will be alluded to below) Rawls (1985) has withdrawn the epithet metaphysical from

- his picture of the self and admitted its normative allegiances while maintaining that his conception is still the best picture of relations in a liberal-democratic society. For an even-handed introduction to the general liberal communitarian debate see Mullhall & Swift (1992).
- [5] Pateman goes even further in attributing the utilitarian mind-set to the guilty party of social scientists and rational choice theorists:
- One of the most striking features of the past two decades is the extent to which the assumptions of liberal individualism have permeated the whole of social life ... hark(jing) back to classical liberal contract doctrines, and claims that social order is founded on the interactions of self-interested, utility-maximising individuals, protecting and enlarging their property in a capitalist market. (1985, p. 252).
- [6] On the other hand, one of the interesting questions that this line of argument raises in the context of primary education might be the respective ethos/ethoses generated in primary schools (ages 7-11) and secondary schools (ages 11-16), given the massive differential of women to men in the former in the UK at least.
- [7] Perhaps it should be noted, as is sometimes overlooked, that the extreme positions of communitarianism and liberalism do not entail the wholesale rejection of the other. As Flanagan (1991) notes, they share the view that the aim of ethical reflection is the flourishing of persons in present and future generations and, further, that particular historical communities are the prime source of value transmission.
- [8] I have attempted such an account in the contexts of sports elsewhere.
- [9] See Etzioni (1993). See, however, the trenchant critique of the lack of depth and originality in Etzioni's analysis and his rather limited prognoses to drive back the ravages of individualism in Demaine (1996, pp. 6-29).
- [10] An alternative account of the same distinction, though with different conclusions, is set out by Watt (1989) in his sections on ontological and normative individualism, in the light of educational theory. He maintains that one can deny MI yet retain a picture of moral individualism that affirms social ties yet his picture of MI is somewhat weaker than Lukes'. Watt in particular scrutinises the work of the Piaget, Rogers and Illich for MI bias.
- [11] This does not entail a causal relationship whereby cooperation generates beneficial competition. It is more likely to be the reverse, i.e. harmful competition may be a motive for seeking cooperation.
- [12] It is worth remarking that in the section quoted Gambetta (1988) is offering a summary of the authors in his edited collection *Trust* on a point of particular convergence among them.
- [13] This much celebrated distinction is to be found in Taylor (1985, 1989). I have attempted to elucidate this distinction in the context of education, physical education and educational policy in McNamee (1992).
- [14] I owe this counter example to Paul Sineyers.
- [15] I am grateful to my colleague Celia Brackenridge (1996, 1997) with whom I have discussed many of these types of scenarios in her work on sexual abuse in the context of sport.
- [16] Hickson was an international swimming coach who systematically used his position and persona to abuse and harass women over a considerable period of time. His high profile court case in 1997 ended in 17 years imprisonment; the longest custodial sentence of its kind.
- [17] A point I owe to John Lyle.

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