

Michael Sandel's Communitarian Republicanism

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This paper examines Michael Sandel's communitarian republicanism by reviewing his two books *Democracy's Discontent* (1996) and *Public Philosophy* (2005), both of which were recently translated into Japanese. Thus, it is intended to (possibly belatedly) contribute to the so-called "Liberal-Communitarian Debate".

While Sandel's critique of Rawls is insightful in finding the Kantian idea of the "unencumbered self" in Rawls' contractualist theory of justice, Sandel's own communitarian political philosophy has a number of serious defects: it overestimates the self's inseparable belonging to a particular community at the cost of personal values and characteristics; it underestimates the value of voluntary human relationships and associations; it leaves little room for negative freedom; and it confuses morality and religion. But some of his critics should be more careful in their arguments. They often mistakenly treat a person's values and beliefs as the products of his or her choice. Rather, these values and beliefs are usually already integrated with the individual personality; his choices among alternative acts are grounded on such given facts.