

Free enterprise is an economic system based on individualism. The Scottish economist Adam Smith argues in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) that the pursuit of self-interest would lead to socially beneficial results. Smith argued that the unseen hand of the free marketplace will flawlessly determine prices and desirable levels of production. Ayn Rand also saw self-interest as the surest guide to societal well-being. In her 1966 book *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, Rand writes the following: “America’s abundance was created not by public sacrifices to the common good, but by the productive genius of free men who pursued their own personal interests and the making of their own private fortunes. They did not starve the people to pay for America’s industrialization. They gave the people better jobs, higher wages, and cheaper goods with every new machine they invented, with every scientific discovery or technological advance—and thus the whole country was moving forward and profiting, not suffering, every step of the way.”

*Community:* The polar opposite of individualism is communitarianism. Communitarians believe that human beings are social animals and that the value of community is unduly eroded by an exclusive focus on the individual. Most prominent among contemporary communitarians is Amitai Etzioni, professor of sociology at George Mason University. Etzioni, author of 32 books, writes a 1997 book titled *The New Golden Rule* in which he suggested the following: “Respect and uphold society’s moral order as you would have society respect and uphold your autonomy.”

Another prominent communitarian is Mary Ann Glendon, the Learned Hand Professor of Law at Harvard University Law School. In her 1993 book *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse*, Glendon argues that the strident defense of individual rights is destroying the possibility of community:

*Our rights talk, in its absoluteness, promotes unrealistic expectations, heightens social conflict, and inhibits dialogue that might lead toward consensus, accommodation, or at least the discovery of common ground. In its silence concerning responsibilities, it seems to condone acceptance of the benefits of living in a democratic social welfare state, without accepting the corresponding personal and civic obligations. In its relentless individualism, it fosters a climate that is inhospitable to society’s losers, and that systematically disadvantages care-takers and dependents, young and old. In its neglect of civil society, it undermines the principal seedbeds of civic and personal virtue. In its insularity, it shuts out potentially important aids to the process of self-correcting learning. (p. 14)*

*Knowledge:* Free inquiry, pursuit of the scientific method, and academic freedom are all important values in Western civilization. At earlier times in our civilization, people were imprisoned or killed for their commitment to the advancement of knowledge. Socrates was forced to drink poison because he caused the youth of Athens to ask too