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Social and Political Philosophy

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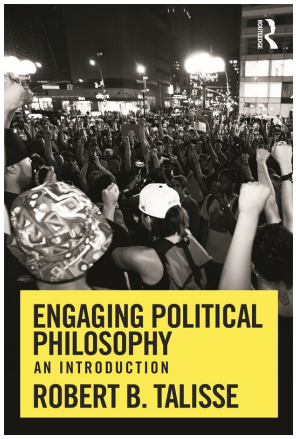

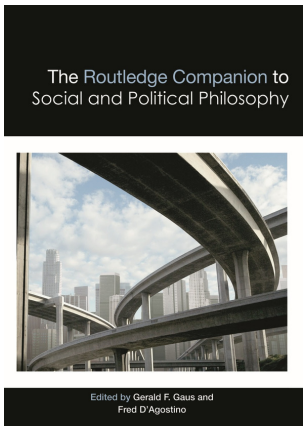

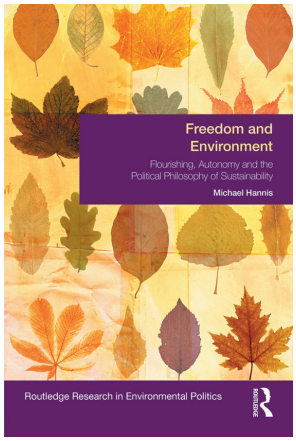

Contents

1 Some Preliminary Considerations

- The Social World
- What Is Political Philosophy?
- How We Will Proceed
- A Final Preliminary about Philosophy
- For Further Reading

1.1 The Social World

It may sound overly dramatic to say so, but each of us is born into a world that is not of our own making. This is obviously true of our physical environs. Upon arriving on the scene, we quickly confront several brute facts, such as that fire burns, unsupported objects fall, ice melts, and glass shatters. We simply find ourselves within a world of objects and forces, and there is not much we can do about it but learn how to work with what we have. According to a common view of these matters, the natural sciences are devoted to the task of learning how to work with our physical surroundings. There is no denying that these sciences have been quite successful; for instance, science produces various forms of technology, and we now are able to control, harness, and direct many of the features of our world.

Yet our world is not exclusively physical in this sense. We are each born into a *social* world as well. This is a world populated by other people, and here too we must learn how to work with our surroundings. But the social world into which we are born is not simply a world of other humans; it is also a world that features institutions that produce rules and practices that structure, and sometimes define, our interactions with others. Consider that each of us comes into the world already standing in relation to certain other people, and these relations are defined by social institutions. To point to a few obvious examples, each of us is somebody's biological child, some of us are born into siblinghood, and some are born into more complex familial relationships. The family is a social institution—perhaps the most basic social institution—and it is by reference to the family that we can identify certain others as our parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings, and so on.

Although the family is perhaps the most obvious example of a social institution into whose structures we are born, it is not the only one. We are often also born as members of communal entities beyond the family, such as neighborhoods, villages, towns, cities, and geographical regions. Hence in the United States some people identify themselves as New Yorkers, others as Southerners, still others as Midwesterners, and so on; these designations are often taken to have significance beyond the merely autobiographical information that they impart. That is, New Yorkers tend to have views about what people from the South are like, just as Southerners tend to have views about New Yorkers. And even within these broad categories, there are further classifications of the same kind. For example, I know firsthand that many Nashvillians tend to consider themselves to be living in the "New South"; they hence regard other cities in Tennessee as belonging to the "Old South," and see inhabitants of these cities as importantly different from themselves. There's a similar phenomenon among people who live in New York City; those living on the Upper West Side regard those who live in lower Manhattan as significantly dissimilar from themselves, and those living in Manhattan typically turn up their noses at those who live in the City's other boroughs. Of course, this is to say nothing about the view commonly held by those who live anywhere in New York City of those who live in New York State (that is, the parts of New York that are not New York City). Further, some Manhattanites view those who live in neighboring New Jersey as utterly alien and sometimes contemptible, too.

These phenomena are highly complex, often confusing, frequently just silly, and sometimes instances of plain bigotry. My point in mentioning them is neither to condemn nor condone. Instead, I note that although the facts of where and when one is born are matters of chance, we, for better or worse, often take them to be relevant in deciding who we (and others) are. This is because the circumstances of one's birth are typically closely tied to facts about how one was raised, what customs one has adopted, how one was educated, what religion one practices, what values one holds, and much else. And these facts tell us something important about a person. It is crucial to see that these facts are all products of social institutions.

Things get more complex, and decidedly less silly, when we consider that individuals are often born into membership in various religious communities, economic and occupational classes, as well as ethnic, gender, and racial groups. Consider first membership in a religious community. Religious communities set an expansive range of life-affecting rules and expectations for their members. These involve matters ranging from what foods one eats and what clothes one wears to more intimate matters, including who one can marry. For those who are members of a religious community, membership (at least initially) is often non-voluntary. Individuals are typically born into a religious community; they are "raised" in a given religion, and the religious community often serves as the social center of individuals' lives, especially during their more formative years.

Consider next membership in economic classes, and the frequently intertwined matters of ethnicity, race, and gender. It is far less common these days, but it used to be the case that trades were passed down from parents to their children. For example, the son of a farmer would be a farmer himself, and the daughter of a seamstress would learn the craft of sewing from her mother. Consequently, the family into which one was born would fix much of the course of one's subsequent life by determining one's occupation and thus one's economic class. Note that we still see informal remnants of this kind of phenomenon in certain professions, including among lawyers, physicians, musicians, and police officers. Furthermore, although great progress has been made in the last century, there are still significant respects in which various occupational, economic, and social roles are fixed by ethnicity, race, and gender. I am not (yet) an elderly man, but I can still remember a time when non-male non-white physicians, female accountants, and African American lawyers were markedly rare, if not totally unheard of. I am also old enough to recall a time when my mother was deemed ineligible for a credit card because of her gender; she was told that she would need to have her husband as a co-applicant. And I distinctly remember an episode over a family holiday dinner when a male guest confidently and proudly declared—in a room mostly of women and young girls, no less!—that women should not be allowed to vote because such an arrangement gives their husbands (or fathers, or boyfriends) two votes; his assumption was that women would naturally defer their political judgment to the men in their lives. I should note that this holiday dinner occurred in the mid-1970s, more than fifty years since the Nineteenth Amendment was introduced into the US Constitution.

I hope these events from my youth strike you as unbelievable, the stuff of a dark and thankfully distant history. But, in fact, episodes like these were commonplace not too long ago. We have made great strides in eliminating many of the most overt forms of institutional support for practices that determine an individual's social position and opportunities on the basis of such things as ethnicity, race, and gender. However, practices of this kind undoubtedly persist in our society. Women still tend not to get paid as well as their male equivalents in the workplace, and although legal racial segregation in the United States was eliminated by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, there remains unofficial but nonetheless socially enforced racial segregation in the United States. Whether the progress we have made is sufficient from the point of view of justice will be addressed in Chapter 5. For now, the point, again, is that our lives are undeniably and appreciably shaped by social institutions, and these institutions are not of our own making.

As a further example of the deep impact of institutions on our lives, consider that most individuals are born in a particular country, a fact that commonly renders them *citizens* of particular states. States are large-scale social entities, and though there are philosophical controversies concerning what precisely states are, we could say for now that states are social institutions that govern or preside over all other social institutions within their

territory or jurisdiction. States regulate, structure, and monitor the other facets of our social world. For starters, they make and enforce laws, they imprison people and punish them in other ways; they regulate commerce, they raise and maintain armies, and they can declare war on other states. States are massively powerful.

States of certain kinds wield their power in ways that terrorize, dominate, and oppress their citizens. In fact, in the case of certain states, it is not clear that the term *citizen* even applies properly to those who live within them; those who live under the governments of tyrannical and authoritarian states are perhaps better characterized as *subjects* of the state rather than citizens. In cases of extremely brutal tyranny, we might prefer to speak of those living within the state's territory as among its *victims*. Of course, there are states of other kinds that aspire to govern for the sake of the people living within their borders; they exist and rule *for* their citizens, on their *behalf*. These states also create and enforce laws, punish people, make war, and the rest. But they do so with the express purpose of *serving* their citizens, typically by sustaining a social order in which all could thrive or flourish.

We will have occasion in later chapters to examine a range of questions concerning the nature and power of states. Let us now note that the state into which one is born largely fixes an expansive range of features of one's life. The languages one will speak, the food one eats, the religion one practices (if any), the education one receives, the art to which one is exposed, the occupations that one may pursue, and much else—including the likely length of one's life—are all largely a matter of where one is born. Furthermore, what might be called one's overall worldview—one's general understanding of human history, science, the nature of the universe, the meaning of life, and what it is to live well—is largely a product of the country into which one was born.

But this is not the end of the story. Importantly, citizenship also carries with it obligations to one's state. For example, that one is a citizen of the United States entails that one owes allegiance to its laws and its government. This is why a citizen of, say, Canada cannot commit an act of *treason* against the United States. As a US citizen, one also arguably has a duty to vote and to participate in the shared task of democratic self-government. It is also commonly held that one has an obligation to one's state to contribute to its *protection* in times when it is threatened; consequently, in many states some form of military service is required, or at least under certain circumstances *expected*, of citizens. So one's citizenship determines, or strongly influences, a great deal concerning how one's life will go. And the status of *citizen* is acquired typically at the moment of one's birth. The world of states and citizens, and our own place within it, is something we simply inherit.

Thus far I have been laboring a single simple point, namely, that we are born into an array of social roles and relations and these in turn are defined by their corresponding social institutions: the family, the neighborhood, the city, the religious community, the economic class, the ethnic, racial, and

gender group, the state, and so on. And each role we occupy carries with it various kinds of moral, social, and legal significance. Our place in the social world, though largely not a product of our individual choices, nonetheless establishes for us certain central duties, obligations, and expectations. It also plays a considerable role in determining the range of opportunities and benefits available to us throughout the course of our lives. The impact of social institutions is so pervasive that we may begin to wonder whether human lives really are that much different from the law-governed paths of falling heavy objects. Maybe our lives are merely the effects of all the physical and social forces at work at the moment of our birth.

We have as yet only scratched the surface. Hence we should avoid drawing any distinctively philosophical conclusions at this early juncture. There is much more to say about the nature of social institutions and the roles that they play in our lives. In fact, this entire book is devoted to examining various facets of this very issue. But the little that has been said suffices to show that the social world has at least as much impact on our lives as the brute facts of our physical environment. That fire burns and unsupported heavy objects fall are facts that we all do well to take account of in our everyday knocking about in the world. It is nonetheless important, though, to keep in mind the facts of our social existence. That some given action to which we are inclined is a crime or is harmful to others, for example, is something worthy of note in our day-to-day lives.

Still, what has been said thus far also brings into focus one crucial respect in which the social world is fundamentally different from the physical world. Although neither is of our own making, the social world exists *because* of us. The total disappearance of human beings from the world would not change the fact that fire burns, but it would cause governments, laws, families, and the rest to vanish. Were all human beings to disappear suddenly, the social institutions, roles, and practices that we have been discussing would be things that *used to exist*, but no longer do. So we may say that although the social world is not of our own *individual* making, it exists and persists because we *collectively* sustain it. This means, in turn, that even though we are born into a social world that we did not create, we nonetheless play some role in shaping it. As we know from even very recent and local history, the character of social institutions can change, and along with these changes come alterations in the relationships we have with each other and the rules that govern our interactions. More importantly, we know that *we* can change the institutions and rules by which we live together. So although we do not *create* the social world so much as *inherit* it, it is nonetheless *ours* in that we maintain it by engaging in social relations, and through our participation, sometimes things change.

That the social world is partly our own doing helps to explain one of its central features. Thus far, we have been speaking as if institutions, and the rules or laws that they produce, are detached from us, as if the forces that structure our social interactions could be ultimately of the same kind as the

laws that govern falling objects. To be sure, there are some political philosophers who have defended the view that there are laws of politics that are as fixed and stable as the laws of gravity. But even according to views of this kind, social institutions are not quite as distant as the forces of nature. Institutions are collections of roles and offices that are occupied by people. Unlike physical laws, which all by themselves govern the motion of bodies, the rules and practices that govern our social lives get their force from us. That is, we *enforce* the rules; we hold each other to them.

Of course, not all enforcement is of the same kind. As was mentioned above, states enforce laws by means of the exercise of their power; they enact laws that incentivize or encourage certain kinds of behavior, and they punish those who fail to comply. But there are more subtle and ordinary forms of enforcement that are *direct* in that they do not invoke the power of the state. Consider the familiar phenomenon of line-cutting. When there is a sizeable line of people waiting for coffee at the local café, the social rule says that the person who has most recently arrived on the scene joins the line at its very end. When someone elects to violate this rule by cutting in line, there is often an outcry from the others. Of course, the enforcement of the rule against line-cutting rarely involves anything like a physical removal of the cutter, yet nonetheless the cutter is typically subjected to various signals of disapproval, and sometimes is confronted by others who demand that she take her proper place at the line's end. Similar phenomena prevail with respect to traffic laws. The person who drives recklessly, or who "cuts off" another driver, is often subjected to a protracted horn-blowing. This is a mild form of punishment; it is an expression of condemnation that is intended to shame or chastise the perpetrator. Other examples are easy to formulate.

We might be inclined to view cases of line-cutting or aggressive driving as more on the order of bad manners than rule-violation; we would then see the consequent social signals of disapproval amounting to little more than an expression of dissatisfaction. But this view misses something important about these phenomena. After all, the line-cutter is sometimes reprimanded even by those who are not adversely affected by his cutting; bystanders frequently protest along with those who are impacted by the bad behavior. Indeed, we often go *out of our way* to express disapproval of those who break certain social rules, and we do so at a cost to ourselves. That is, these ordinary reactions to mild forms of social rule-breaking are attempts to affect changes in the behavior of others. When we blow the car horn at a careless driver, we do not simply seek to express our disapproval of his driving; the point of expressing our disapproval is to attach a social cost to careless driving, and thus to encourage the careless driver to drive in accordance with the rules.

These commonplace instances of informal rule-enforcement are in some ways of the same *kind* as the official enforcement enacted by the state. To be sure, a police officer who issues a ticket to a careless driver is acting in a way that differs from your horn-blowing in the severity of the punishment imposed on the violator. The officer acts on behalf of the state in ways that

are designed to encourage compliance with traffic laws and to punish those who violate them. At more complex levels, of course, the state organizes official processes and procedures for making, enforcing, and interpreting laws; these include an expansive court and legal system, a series of representative bodies responsible for making legislation, a broad arrangement of institutions that enact punishment, and much else. But, like car horns and informal rules about queues at cafés, all of this exists for the sake of maintaining a social order. And maintaining a social order involves acts that incentivize, encourage, urge, or even force people to behave in ways that they otherwise would not. Again, the social order is one that we *impose* on each other. As it turns out, this fact provides the primary material for political philosophy.

1.2 What Is Political Philosophy?

Let's take a moment to review. After discussing the impact that the social world has on our lives, we highlighted two of its main aspects. First, we noted its malleability. The social world is a complex of rules, roles, and institutions that give rise to a social order, and there are many different kinds of social order. Moreover, the institutions of society can change, and can be changed by us. Second, I pointed out that the social world exists because we sustain it by imposing its rules on each other; that is, the social world involves the making of *demands* that people act in some ways and refrain from acting in others.

The combination of these two features of the social world occasion a range of decidedly philosophical questions, including those questions that are distinctive of political philosophy. Before we begin to pose these, however, it might be helpful to take a step back and say something about what makes a question philosophical. This will, in turn, enable us to say what political philosophy is.

It is obvious that all areas of inquiry ask why. For example, physicists ask why unsupported heavy bodies fall, and chemists ask why ice melts. These sciences seek *explanations* of these phenomena. Formulating good explanations enables scientists to make predictions about natural events; this in turn enables them to manage and exert control over our natural surroundings. Philosophers also ask why. And they, too, seek explanations of the kind sought by the sciences. For example, philosophers who work in the area known as metaphysics are concerned to explain the most basic features of the world; they ask questions like, "What does it mean for something to exist?," "What is time?," and "What is the nature of causation?" Philosophers of mind ask questions like, "Why does consciousness exist?," "How does perception work?," and "Why do we dream?" In asking questions like these, philosophers attempt to build accounts of the phenomena under consideration; they seek an accurate picture of the world. Accordingly, many areas of philosophical inquiry are tightly partnered with relevant fields of science; for example, contemporary metaphysicians follow closely developments in

physics, and philosophers of mind often work alongside psychologists and cognitive scientists.

But philosophers also ask questions of a different kind. In addition to explanations, philosophers also seek *justifications*. That is, they ask not only how things are, but how things *ought to be*, and whether the way things are is acceptable. This is to say that philosophers investigate *normative* matters, not only descriptive ones. Of course, the endeavor to find out how things ought to be often requires one to begin from an accurate picture of how things are, so the two kinds of investigation are certainly not unrelated. However, when we ask for an accurate description, the standard for correctness is *how things are*; if we have a description of the world according to which there are three hydrogen atoms in a molecule of water, and then discover that there are only two, we conclude that our description is incorrect and must be revised. By contrast, the standard of correctness in a normative account is not how things in fact are. Thus if we develop a normative account of the social world according to which eating fish is unjust, and then discover that fish-eating is extremely widespread, we do not take this fact to prove that our normative account is mistaken; we may, rather, conclude that the world contains a staggering degree of injustice. In other words, descriptive accounts must fit the world in order to be correct, but normative accounts need not fit the world in order to be correct. Their standard of correctness lies elsewhere.

These are highly simplified accounts of the differences between descriptive and normative claims, not to mention the differences between science and philosophy. But what has been said will serve our current purposes well enough. The point is that political philosophy is the normative enterprise of seeking justifications for various aspects of the social world.

This definition of political philosophy is surely insufficient. A little more precision can be gained by introducing a distinction within the social world between the *social* and the *political*. It is worth noting straightaway that any such distinction will be artificial and contestable. But, again, for our present purposes we can distinguish between social institutions that are more or less informal, such as the family and the neighborhood, and the institutions that are centrally elements of the state. One way of drawing the distinction is to recall the point made above that states regulate and thus help to define the other social institutions. They accomplish this by making and enforcing laws and policies. To be sure, all social institutions make rules to which those within the institution are expected to adhere. But it is generally thought that the state's laws are rules of a special kind, as they are enforceable in ways that go far beyond what other social institutions are capable of. To put the point bluntly, only *states* can rightfully imprison those who violate its rules. Consequently, only states can assemble official bodies for the purpose of enforcement, such as a police force and an army. Citizens may certainly band together for the sake of stopping or preventing crime, but citizens as such cannot rightfully act as a police force. They cannot rightly arrest,

apprehend, or handcuff those who break laws. Your neighbor cannot build a jail in her garage and hold criminals there. Only states and their appointed officers can do things of this kind.

Contrast the state's power to make and enforce laws with the power that other social institutions exercise over their members. Consider first the family; there is no denying that families do impose rules on their members, and some of these rules can be very strict and demanding. We can also concede that families wield various kinds of power to encourage compliance; in many families, the consequences of breaking its central rules can be pretty extreme. But the important point about families is that, at least once one reaches an age that the state identifies as adulthood, one can simply declare oneself to be no longer a member of one's family; one can extricate oneself from the family and its rules at will. At the very least, one can create a sufficient amount of emotional and geographical space between oneself and one's family members so as to weaken the rules. This kind of extraction is of course not always emotionally pleasant or easy, but it is possible.

Next take the example of a religious community. As we noted above, such communities impose a broad range of rules on members. Members of religious communities are expected to uphold and live by the community's rules, and there are, again, various kinds of enforcement mechanisms in place that enable the community to secure compliance (or at least discourage defection). As with families, the cost of noncompliance with the religious rules sometimes is rather high. Indeed, for many, their religious community serves as something like an extended family. Accordingly, removal or extrication from the community can bring grave social costs; those who leave their religious communities frequently report losing many of their friends and other forms of social support. But the point, again, is that your religious community cannot rightfully *force* you into membership; it cannot *lock* you inside a church and hold you there against your will, at gunpoint for example. Even though religious communities can arrange things so that the social cost of defection is extremely high, voluntary extraction is always possible, at least legally.

Notice further that in cases where there is reason to suspect that a social organization—religious or otherwise—is indeed holding people against their will or engaging in other extreme forms of compulsion, the state rightfully may get involved. That is, the state demands that other social institutions provide a viable *exit option* for their members. Social institutions such as families and religious communities can decide their rules internally (within broad constraints), and they are given some latitude for enforcing those rules, but they cannot force individuals to be members, and they cannot impose extreme punishments on those who break the rules. They may shame, browbeat, blame, and disenfranchise rule-breakers, but they may not inflict physical punishment or imprison them. The state itself, however, does claim the right to impose such punishments on its members; the state, after all, puts some of its citizens in cages and forces them to stay there, sometimes in nearly complete social isolation, for what remains of their lives. Unlike those who

violate the rules of the family or the religious community, those convicted of breaking certain laws imposed by the state are not able to evade the prescribed punishment by simply disassociating. To put the point in a way that is common among political philosophers, what is distinctive about states is that they hold a monopoly on certain forms of power. Whereas other social institutions hold various kinds of power that enable them to encourage compliance with their rules, only states claim the right to take away your most basic freedoms as punishment for breaking its laws. States can *force* you, against your will, to comply with their rules. We can say, then, that states claim a monopoly on *coercive power*, the power to force you to do what you otherwise would not do, and the power to *threaten* you with the exercise of such force. Yet, crucially, states claim even more than this. In addition to claiming to have a monopoly on coercive power, states claim to be *entitled* to hold a monopoly on coercive power. To introduce some terminology that will be further discussed later, states claim not only the *power* to force you to follow the rules, but the *moral right* to do so; that is, states claim for themselves *authority*.

The point is worth dwelling upon for a moment longer. We can say that power is an empirical thing. Who has power and how much power they have are both matters that can be decided by empirical investigation, roughly in the way that scientists can investigate the temperature at which ice melts. A powerful person is one that has the ability to compel others to do what she wants them to do; accordingly, if we want to discover who has power, we simply look to see who "calls the shots" or gives the orders that are likely to be complied with. Philosophically speaking, *authority* is importantly different from *power*. Authority is the *entitlement* to power, the *right* to hold and exercise power; it is therefore a *moral* thing. Consequently, a person in authority might in fact be powerless or out of control; similarly, someone in power might have no authority. Hence in order to discover who has authority, we cannot simply look to see who successfully wields power; we must ask who—if anyone—has the moral right to power. Put a little differently, someone who has authority is *entitled* to call the shots and give orders; correspondingly, those who are subject to that authority are obliged to do as he or she says.

States often indeed have the power to force their citizens to follow their rules. States command large armies and law enforcement agencies, and they have other instruments of control at their disposal, including prisons, jails, clinics, asylums, as well as a nearly inexhaustible supply of weapons of various kinds. But states also claim for themselves authority over their citizens. That is, your state claims to be *entitled* to your compliance. Suppose for a moment that the state is indeed entitled to your compliance. It follows then that you are obligated to comply with its orders, including (though perhaps not limited to) its laws. In breaking a law, then, you not only act imprudently (in that you risk getting caught and hence subject to punishment), you also do something *immoral*; in breaking the law, you violate an obligation.

Hence you not only make yourself liable to punishment, you make yourself *deserving* of it.

Now, at last, we are able to say something more determinate about what political philosophy is. Whereas social philosophy is the area of philosophy that examines and normatively evaluates the social world in its various aspects, political philosophy, as we will understand it in this book, is the part of social philosophy that is concerned particularly with normative investigation into the state. Political philosophy is the attempt to identify the principal aspects or elements of the state and to assess them normatively. It asks whether there should be states at all, and, if so, how states should be organized. It must be emphasized that the two instances of the word "should" in the previous sentence are both to be understood as normative. That is, political philosophy is not the attempt to figure out whether states are particularly efficient or effective instruments for achieving certain ends; nor is it the attempt to determine which policies or institutional designs are best able to deliver some specified social result or outcome. Questions of that purely empirical kind lie within the domain of political science. Political philosophy, rather, is the enterprise of figuring out whether states have any rightful claim to our allegiance, whether states are ever right in punishing individuals who break their laws, whether a state indeed could be entitled to a monopoly on coercive power, or, in short, whether any state has authority. If the answer to these questions is affirmative, then political philosophy next attempts to figure out how states should be organized by determining the nature and limits of state power. If these matters can be worked out, it remains for political philosophy to ask whether any possibly existing or real-world state could be entitled to that kind of power. If actual states are so entitled, then political philosophy asks about the relations between states, and whether states can rightfully exercise power over other states. As one would expect, political philosophy gets complicated quickly. For now, though, we can say that political philosophy seeks a *justification* for the state.

1.3 How We Will Proceed

This book will proceed according to the understanding of the nature of political philosophy that was just set out above. Our investigation is thus focused on the relation between individuals and states; in other words, we will be engaged in an exploration of the philosophical issues pertaining to the justification of political authority.

As I emphasized earlier, our lives are always embedded within preexisting social networks of norms, rules, and institutions. It should come as no surprise, then, that our examination of the state and its justification cannot begin from scratch, as it were. Rather, our explorations must begin from the particular social and political contexts in which we happen to find ourselves. Just as we find ourselves living within a social and political order that is not of our own making, our ideas about social and political matters originate

with that order. To be sure, this does not mean that we are helplessly entrenched in the commonplace norms and principles of the societies into which we are born (most likely, modern Western democracy), thereby doomed merely to parrot the conventional pieties and traditional platitudes of our respective societies. The aim, after all, is largely to achieve a critical perspective on the social world we inhabit. But in order to gain that kind of intellectual distance from our everyday social environment, it helps to begin with a view from within that environment.

Accordingly, Chapter 2 develops a philosophical articulation of our starting place, our political-philosophical home. The objective there will be to draw a familiar image of our social world. That image will be drawn with the tools of political philosophy, so there may be much that is unfamiliar. However, if the chapter is successful, there will be little in the resulting picture that is foreign; indeed, the image developed in Chapter 2 should strike you as little more than a new way of describing the things you already know.

In describing our political-philosophical starting point, we will have occasion to note several junctures where distinctively philosophical questions reside. Beginning with Chapter 3, we examine many of these questions. In Chapter 3, we explore issues concerning the nature of individual liberty, and then in Chapter 4 we examine the nature of the kind of authority that is claimed by the state. One result of these chapters is that if the state is to be justified at all, its justification depends upon establishing clear *constraints* or *limits* on its authority. And this requires us to devise a conception of what the state's proper role is. It is nearly vacuous to say that the state's primary job is to secure justice, but it is important to note that an *unjust* state is a failed state, no matter what other positive attributes it may manifest. So it is crucial to our inquiry to examine what justice is. This is the topic of Chapter 5.

But even if we figure out what justice requires, there still may be a question of what *authorizes* the state to do what is necessary to secure justice. These days, we are likely to think that a society ruled by a benevolent king who always enacts the right laws would be nonetheless unjustified. This is because we are inclined to think that part of what justifies the state is not simply what laws it enacts, but the way in which it decides what laws to enact and the way in which it regards those living under its jurisdiction. In other words, we tend to think that the state must in some way be *accountable* to those over whom it claims authority; we tend to think that democracy is necessary. This raises a long series of questions about the nature of democracy that is the subject of Chapter 6.

In the Conclusion (Chapter 7), I attempt to tie together all of our results and identify some areas in need of further investigation.

1.4 A Final Preliminary about Philosophy

In the Preface, I suggested that philosophy is in large part the activity of questioning, examining, and arguing for the sake of finding out what's true,

and guarding ourselves against false but comfortable consensus. This renders philosophy squarely out of step with current modes of popular politics. Today's political environment prizes line-toeing, party loyalty, and doctrinal purity, sometimes explicitly without concern for reasons. Our political leaders often profess "moral clarity" and tout the allegedly consequent ability to act "without blinking." They similarly criticize those who change their minds about political questions for "flip-flopping" and "waffling." They tend to overtly dismiss the very thought that fundamental questions of politics and public policy are worth asking; this denial is accompanied by the claim that anyone who opposes, or even questions, the political ideas that they favor is thereby ignorant, foolish, disingenuous, and sometimes even traitorous. The prevailing thought among politicians and popular political commentators is that the truths about politics are not only well known, but so obvious and simple that only the depraved or dishonest could go on examining such matters.

A cursory pass through your local bookstore's collection of politics titles confirms this. Although they are written from different and opposing political perspectives, titles like *Liberalism Is a Mental Disorder*, *The Republican Noise Machine*, *How to Talk to a Liberal (If You Must)*, and *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them* assert the very same political message, namely, that there is no political argument worth having because there is no intelligent and rational political opponent to the author's favored viewpoint. This common refrain is resolutely anti-philosophical. Arguably, it is also profoundly antidemocratic. Philosophers adopt the view that the most important questions are also the most difficult and complicated questions. This in turn means that one should expect such questions to permit a wide range of intellectually responsible and philosophically defensible answers. In fact, the basic premise underlying the activity of philosophy is that rational disagreement is possible, and this means that it is possible for two people who are each intelligent, sincere, well informed, and earnest to nonetheless *disagree* about deep and important matters.

Crucially, the philosopher's commitment to the possibility of rational disagreement is not a commitment to relativism, which is the view that says that no one's opinion about political matters is better (or worse) than anyone else's. That kind of position can easily be shown to be absurd. After all, the relativist position *itself* asserts a position, which it claims is better than the opposing positions; that is, the relativist claims that relativism is *itself* better than non-relativist views about political matters. But that's precisely the kind of claim that relativism is supposed to oppose or disallow. In the parlance of philosophers, relativism is thus *self-defeating*. Again, the philosopher's commitment to the possibility of rational disagreement is not relativism; rather, it is the commitment to the idea that, when it comes to highly complex and difficult questions, we humans are fallible, even when properly exercising our rational faculties. Consequently, the philosopher draws a distinction between the *truth* of a claim and the *rationality* and

intelligence of the person making it. The philosopher contends that sometimes there are well-grounded falsehoods and honest errors. Sometimes impeccably conducted research, reasoning, and argument nonetheless leads to falsehood, just as sometimes a lucky-guesser arrives at the truth. The philosopher holds, then, that even though there is but one true answer to any difficult and complex question, there are many different answers that are false and yet consistent with being rational. To put it in a slogan, the philosopher insists on there being a difference between being *wrong* and being *stupid*.

The billion-dollar industry devoted to producing popular political commentary is unified against this simple idea. The pundits, authors, radio hosts, made-for-television 'experts' are unanimous in thinking that anyone who they deem to be wrong about politics is *therefore* stupid, irrational, ignorant, incompetent, wicked, or worse. They consequently reject the idea that lies at the heart of political philosophy (and this book), namely, that we owe it to our most cherished ideals to subject them to rational scrutiny, to relentlessly test the grounds upon which we hold the beliefs that we hold, and to give a cogent voice to those who oppose those beliefs. As we proceed in this book, then, we will try to give our own political commitments the kind of respect and reverence that they deserve by critically examining the reasons and arguments that underwrite our loyalty to them.

It should be recognized at the start that philosophy can be risky. This seems especially true in the case of political philosophy. In the course of philosophically examining our political views, we could discover that some cherished commitment is in need of revision, refinement, or supplementation. We could also find that a deeply held and important idea is false or inadequate and thus must be abandoned altogether. That is, political philosophy is an activity that sometimes requires us to change our minds about things that we may have grown accustomed to regarding as fixed, firm, and finished. Similarly, we could find that some opposing idea that we have long reviled as mere silliness is in fact a cogent alternative to our own view. Or we may find that even though a long-reviled opposing view is indeed silly, some proponents of that view nonetheless have proposed a serious and difficult objection to our dearly held view. When doing philosophy, we set ourselves up for a kind of disorientation; we invite the destabilization of our beliefs.

Some argue that this disorienting and destabilizing aspect of philosophy is what makes it objectionable. They claim that philosophers try to lead people astray by introducing confusion and uncertainty, in effect diverting people away from tried-and-true traditions while having no positive alternative to offer. It is added that this kind of confusion is especially dangerous when it comes to moral and political matters. These charges against philosophy enjoy a long history going back at least to the trial and execution of Socrates in ancient Athens. And perhaps there is something to them; philosophy may indeed be dangerous.

Yet those who press this kind of critique of philosophy rarely consider the dangers that come with the alternative, namely, an uncritical acceptance of

tradition and unquestioning adherence to the past. There is undeniable danger in these, too. Most obvious among them is the danger of uncritically adhering to traditional ideals that are in fact deeply harmful and unjust. We need not catalogue the famous cases of horrific acts committed simply in the name of tradition and conformity to (what was at the time taken to be) common sense. Of course, critics of philosophy will readily concede that flawed traditions and mistaken ideals should be subjected to unrelenting scrutiny and challenge; they will hold simply that in the case where proper traditions and worthy ideals are in place, philosophy can only mislead. But this, too, seems to be mistaken. When philosophical examination is rejected for the sake of protecting allegedly tried-and-true traditional commitments, we resolve to opt out of the processes by which we could demonstrate to ourselves their enduring value. Proper traditions and worthy ideals should be able to withstand philosophical scrutiny, and the activity of scrutinizing such traditions and ideals should leave us with an ever firmer grasp of their value. By contrast, when we decline to subject our traditions and ideals to philosophical examination, we risk losing our grasp of the reasons and considerations that favor them, and therefore we risk losing our allegiance to them.

So our question is this: To philosophize or not to philosophize? There are risks in either case. But notice that to give any answer to the question is to commit an act of philosophy. Philosophy is risky, but it is also inevitable; we must do it. Our choice is between trying to philosophize self-consciously and deliberately, or instead haphazardly. The aim of this book, then, is not to defend any particular philosophical theory of liberty, authority, justice, or democracy. The aim instead is to attempt to *philosophize well* about these matters.

For Further Reading

The broad themes discussed in this chapter concerning the nature of philosophy in general, and political philosophy in particular, can be explored further by consulting Bertrand Russell's 1947 lecture "Philosophy and Politics" (reprinted in his *Unpopular Essays*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), Isaiah Berlin's 1961 essay "Does Political Theory Still Exist?" (reprinted in his *Concepts and Categories*, Second Edition, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), and Robert Nozick's "The Zigzag of Politics" (reprinted in his *The Examined Life*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989). Some skeptical views about the abstractness of political philosophy can be found in Bonnie Honig's *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) and Raymond Guess's *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Those looking to examine further the idea that political philosophy is centrally concerned with the normative evaluation of the state and its claim to authority may consult the classical anarchist writings of Mikhail Bakunin (collected in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, New York: Knopf, 1972), Peter Kropotkin

(collected in *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings*, New York: Dover Publications, 2002), and Emma Goldman (collected in *The Writings of Emma Goldman*, New York: Red and Black Publishers, 2013). For more recent treatments, see Robert Paul Wolff's *In Defense of Anarchism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), A. John Simmons's *Moral Principles and Political Obligation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), and Margaret Gilbert's *A Theory of Political Obligation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

20
ANARCHISM

Roderick T. Long

1. Defining Anarchism

Anarchism is a political philosophy, or better, a family of political philosophies, favoring a social order based on voluntary association and rejecting the legitimacy of the state. Although for most of its adherents anarchism means an opposition not solely to the state but also to various broader forms of hierarchy, domination, or aggression (with the details differing from theorist to theorist), anarchists agree at the very least on the desirability of abolishing the state in particular, whatever else they might agree or disagree about.

The Greek word *anarkhia* means the absence of a ruler or *arkhon*; that the term has traditionally been associated with disorder and social chaos is due solely to the presumption, rejected by anarchists, that such chaos is the natural result of the absence of rulers. Indeed, for anarchists it is precisely uncoerced, anarchic association that is responsible for social order, while government produces mainly disorder.

Throughout most of its history, the word "anarchist" has been used as a term of abuse; the first thinker to embrace the term and apply it to his own ideas appears to have been the French writer Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865) in 1840, and it took some time for the term to catch on with most other anarchists. The term remains difficult to define precisely, inasmuch as the question of which thinkers and positions count as genuinely anarchist has long been a matter of intense debate among self-described anarchists, with virtually every faction having been read out of the movement by some other faction at some point.

2. Before Modern Anarchism

Visions of a utopian society without government have been put forward by a number of premodern thinkers, including Stoics such as Zeno of Citium (Greece, fourth–third century BCE), Epicureans such as Diogenes of Oenoanda (Anatolia, third century CE), and Taoists such as Bao Jingyan (China, fourth century CE). While such premodern proposals for anarchist societies were often premised on the precondition of radical moral transformation, in the Islamic world anarchist thinkers like al-Asamm and Abbad ibn Sulayman, in ninth-century Basra, appealed to precisely the opposite premise—that people are not sufficiently virtuous either to produce a trustworthy ruler or to agree upon one; to this the Najdiyya sect added the claim that rulership is incompatible with the ideal of human equality (Crone 2000).

In medieval Christian thought, Augustine's (fourth–fifth century CE) view that the state is the consequence of original sin (by contrast with Thomas Aquinas's view that

the state is natural and so would have been appropriate for human beings even in an unfallen condition of grace) doubtless contributed to millenarian visions of a stateless future; in subsequent centuries this vision was translated into action by religious movements such as the Anabaptists, who rejected private property, military service, and participation in human government. A later movement of similar orientation was led by the English reformer Gerrard Winstanley (1609–1676), whose "Diggers" or "True Levellers" not only rejected, on scriptural grounds, both private land ownership and the authority of the state (and indeed all authority of one human being over another), but sought to put these ideas into practice by taking over undeveloped land and cultivating it along communal lines. The following century would see the emergence of secular forms of anarchism as well.

3. Roots of Modern Anarchism

A number of historical developments appear to have contributed to the development of modern anarchist ideas. The growth of anti-monarchical sentiment generally favored republicanism, but arguments against monarchy—particularly those stressing political equality and the need for consent of the governed—were sometimes extended to critiques of government as such. European fascination with the New World, and the impression (whether correct or not) that Indian tribes lived without government, helped to make statelessness seem more viable. The rise of industrial capitalism would also spur anarchist reflections, both positively (with market competition being seen as a source of social order distinct from government) and negatively (with the dominance of wealthy elites under capitalism demonstrating that even democratic institutions were not enough to establish true freedom and equality).

Anarchist ideas were also given an impetus by the attempts of political thinkers to respond to the arguments of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). In his 1651 *Leviathan*, Hobbes had painted a dismal picture of the "state of nature," or life prior to the rise of government, arguing that without external enforcement there would be insufficient trust to ground cooperation and social order; the moral he drew was that, given the fragility of cooperation, and the preferability of nearly any government to none, subjects of oppressive rulers should remain content with their governments rather than risk plunging society into anarchy by attempting to overthrow them. In order to respond to Hobbes, thinkers more sympathetic to revolution, even if they held no brief for anarchy, felt the need to argue that the state of nature was less horrendous than the "war of all against all" depicted by Hobbes.

In his *Two Treatises of Government*, John Locke (1632–1704) argued that inasmuch as God has made us all equal, none can exercise legitimate authority over another except either (a) by that other's consent, or (b) as a response to acts of aggression by the other. Hence anarchy is, morally, the default position. Locke further maintained that recognition of at least the rudiments of the moral law is sufficiently widespread that we could expect there to be a fair bit of social order, including private property, without the state—enough order to make anarchy preferable, if not to limited constitutional government, at least to absolute monarchy.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) also depicted anarchy favorably in his 1754 *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. By contrast with Locke, Rousseau envisions the state of nature as a primitivist utopia without private property or selfish motivations, and takes both Hobbes and Locke to task for attributing to pre-political humanity the sorts

of motives, ideas, and institutions that are in fact the product of developed civilization. Despite presenting the state of nature in a largely positive light, Rousseau does not advocate its (re)establishment; he describes it in the *Discourse* as unstable and unrecoverable, and in his 1762 *Social Contract* he makes clear that the task of political theory is not to strike off the chains of government but to legitimate them. Nevertheless, by presenting morally attractive (though deeply different) portraits of stateless society, both Locke and Rousseau helped to inspire positive commitments to anarchism in later thinkers.

One such thinker, possibly, was Edmund Burke (1729–1797), whose 1756 *Vindication of Natural Society* is one of the first explicit secular defenses of stateless society in the modern era. Scholars continue to debate whether Burke's anarchism was meant sincerely or, as he himself claimed, satirically (Kramnick (1977) makes a compelling case that it was some of each) but in any case the *Vindication* shows that anarchist ideas were in the air. And in his 1775 speech on *Conciliation With the Colonies*, Burke did point to the persistence of social order in the American colonies during the Revolution as evidence of the viability of anarchy.

The same example is invoked by Burke's archrival Thomas Paine (1737–1809) in his 1791–92 *Rights of Man*, where he argues that most cooperative social order is the result not of government but of a combination of self-interest and moral sentiment, and so would survive even without the state. While Paine's system is broadly Lockean, he is still more optimistic about the prospects for stateless social order than Locke had been, perhaps owing to the influence of invisible-hand explanations of social order from theorists like Adam Smith (whom Paine praises at Burke's expense). Another Smith devotee, French economist Jean-Baptiste Say (1767–1832), went even further, suggesting that it might one day be possible to dispense with the state altogether (Say 2003a: 101; 2003b: 324–7, 484). Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), an admirer of both Locke and Smith, suggested in a 1787 letter to James Madison that anarchy might be the best political system if only it could be applied to large populations; while French historian Augustin Thierry (1795–1856), a follower of Say's, developed a theory of class struggle that made the state the linchpin of the ruling class's power, and forecast a time when the principle of government would give way to the principle of association (Raico 1993). And as early as 1793, the young Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) was defending the right of secession down to the individual in his *Contribution to the Rectification of the Public's Judgment of the French Revolution*.

The contemporary division of anarchists into (misleadingly labeled) "individualist anarchist" and "social anarchist" camps may be seen (albeit with some oversimplification) as in part a reflection of the influence of these competing visions of stateless society—the individualist anarchists drawing more on the tradition of Locke and Smith, embracing private property, and seeing market mechanisms as an important means of coordinating individuals' actions in the absence of state enforcement (contrary to a popular misconception, most individualist anarchists have no objection to social cooperation and organization); and the social anarchists drawing more on the tradition of Rousseau, rejecting private property, and seeing market relations as a form of exploitation and domination to be abolished along with the state.

4. Godwin and Proudhon

Paine did not take the viability of anarchy as a reason to embrace anarchism himself; but Paine's arguments were explicitly credited by William Godwin (1756–1836)—arguably the first indisputable exemplar of modern secular anarchism—with convincing him of

the dispensability of the state. In his 1793 *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, Godwin maintained that, given the vast proportion by which the ruled generally outnumber their rulers, the power of governments necessarily rests on public opinion rather than force; Godwin concluded that public opinion must therefore be sufficient to maintain social order on its own, without the intermediary of government. Godwin does not fit easily into either the individualist anarchist or social anarchist category; he maintained that property should be shared rather than held privately—but also that private property should not be interfered with while it lasts, since the communal alternative must be pursued via moral education rather than by expropriation.

Another thinker who defies easy categorization is the aforementioned Proudhon, whose most important works include *What Is Property?* (1840), *System of Economic Contradictions* (1846), and *General Idea of the Revolution* (1851). While famously defining private property as a form of robbery, Proudhon nevertheless defended an alternative, less absolutist form of individual holding, called *possession*, depending on ongoing occupancy and use, and subject to reallocation with changes in population; such possession he saw as a synthesis of the opposed principles of communism on the one hand and bourgeois property on the other. Proudhon attacked the economic phenomena of rent, profit, and interest as expressions of property rather than possession; he called for the replacement both of capitalist firms and of the state by free associations of workers, under a system he called "mutualism." In response to those who argued that liberty presupposes a framework of order provided by the state, Proudhon maintained that "liberty is the mother, not the daughter, of order." In a later work, *Theory of Property* (1866), Proudhon offered a qualified endorsement of private property in the absolutist sense as a counterweight against excessive social and political power. It is a testament to Proudhon's complexity that individualist anarchists such as Benjamin Tucker and social anarchists such as Mikhail Bakunin have alike claimed him as their standard-bearer.

5. The Rise of Individualist Anarchism

The first half of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of a number of individualist anarchist thinkers, most of them also involved in the abolitionist, feminist, and labor movements, and frequently the free-love movement (i.e., the separation of state and sex, or more broadly of domination and sex) as well (Sears 1977; Blatt 1990; McElroy 1991; Perry 1993; Passet 2003; Martin 2009).

In England, Thomas Hodgskin (1787–1869) radicalized classical political economy and the Lockean theory of property, arguing that governments existed to enforce artificial property claims based on political privilege at the expense of natural property claims based on labor (Stack 1998).

In the United States, Josiah Warren (1798–1874) was circulating *The Peaceful Revolutionist* (1833), which has been claimed as the first anarchist periodical. Warren defended the complete sovereignty of the individual, and also argued for the cost principle—i.e., the moral requirement that producers should sell their products at no higher price than that necessary to recompense them for the cost of producing them; he was also involved in founding intentional communities that put his ideas into practice (Sartwell 2011). The Warrenite cause was taken up by a number of able disciples, most notably Stephen Pearl Andrews (1812–1886).

Back on the other side of the Atlantic, three very different contributions to individualist anarchism were in development. In Germany, Max Stirner (1806–1856), in his

lyrical manifesto *The Ego and Its Own* (1845), rejected as "spooks" all abstract norms—such as God, government, rights, and morality—that seek to limit individual self-assertion; individuals should regard all of reality as their property, and cooperate with one another only on the basis of mutual and temporary self-interest. Stirner's book is often taken to be the principal guiding text of individualist anarchism; one scholar even describes the entire individualist anarchist tradition as merely "a footnote to Max Stirner" (Graham 2005: xiii). In fact, however, Stirner's influence on individualist anarchism has been fairly slight, with most of its thinkers either being unaware of Stirner or rejecting him. (Even the most prominent American Stirnerite, Benjamin Tucker, had already developed his anarchist system in fairly full detail before ever reading Stirner.)

In France, Belgian-born economist Gustave de Molinari (1819–1912), working in the tradition of Say and Thierry, seems to have been the first to describe how security firms competing under conditions of *laissez-faire* might replace the monopoly state in the provision of the traditionally governmental function of protection against crime. Molinari also defended private property and the wage system, but argued for the need for workers to associate into "labor-exchanges" to redress the imbalance of bargaining power between labor and capital.

In England, Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) developed an evolutionary theory of social progress having as its culmination a stateless society governed by a Law of Equal Freedom. By contrast with Stirner, Spencer saw the process of civilization as a development toward greater and greater altruism; by contrast with Molinari, Spencer placed his hopes for an anarchist future in this blossoming of altruism rather than in the operation of economic incentives. While Spencer has acquired the reputation of being a conservative defender of bourgeois privilege, he rejected private ownership of land (while endorsing private ownership of other means of production), and called for the abolition of the wage system in favor of enterprises collectively owned and managed by their workers. The doctrine for which he is perhaps best known—that the poor and sick should be allowed to die off in order to improve the species—is one he never maintained, and in fact vehemently repudiated, defending a duty of positive beneficence, though he did criticize forms of charity that relied on state compulsion or that he interpreted as fostering dependence.

Both Molinari and Spencer retreated from a complete antistatist position in their later years; but Spencer, at least, inspired a cadre of radical Spencerians such as Auberon Herbert, Wordsworth Donisthorpe, and Victor Yarros, who continued to develop the anarchistic side of Spencer's social theory. Molinari may likewise have found at least a partial disciple in his countryman Paul Émile de Puydt, whose doctrine of "panarchy" called for different systems of government to compete for citizens' allegiance within the same geographical territory; and French anarchist Anselme Bellegarrigue put forward ideas bearing various similarities to those of Proudhon, Stirner, and Molinari, though the extent to which he was influenced by any of these thinkers remains unclear.

In the United States, individualist anarchism continued to play an important role in the abolitionist movement, often in conjunction with a struggle to bring greater empowerment to all workers, slave and free (Perry 1993; Martin 2009; Blatt 1990). Abolitionists who based their opposition to slavery on individualist anarchist principles included (in addition to the aforementioned Warren and Andrews) Adin Ballou (1803–1890), William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879), William Batchelder Greene (1819–1878), Ezra Heywood (1829–1893), Charles Lane (1800–1870), Nathaniel P. Rogers (1794–1846), Lysander Spooner (1808–1887), and of course Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862).

Garrison and Spooner were among the most influential. Garrison was an advocate of nonresistance who favored promoting emancipation through education and persuasion rather than through political methods; he famously denounced the U.S. Constitution as "a covenant with death and an agreement with hell" for its compromises with slavery. Spooner, by contrast, was no pacifist, advocating liberation through federal intervention if possible and violent insurrection if necessary, and lending his support to John Brown's vigilante activities against slaveholders; he also held that the Constitution, if interpreted according to its strict meaning (with contested normative terms being read in light of a somewhat anarchistic version of natural law) rather than the unknowable intentions of its ratifiers, discountenanced slavery. With the coming of the Civil War, however, Garrison disappointed many of his pacifist supporters by embracing the Union cause, while Spooner, convinced of the essential hypocrisy of both Union and Confederacy, denounced the Constitution he had once defended, arguing that human legislation has no claim on our obedience except insofar as it rests on the genuine and explicit consent of the governed as individuals.

American individualist anarchists also campaigned for sexual freedom and gender equality, with prominent "free-love" periodicals being *The Word* (1872–1893), edited by Ezra Heywood and his wife Angela, and *Lucifer the Lightbearer* (1893–1907), edited by Moses Harman and his daughter Lillian Harman. Yet individualist anarchist principles were also enunciated by socially conservative Christians like educator David Lipscomb (1831–1917), founder of the university that bears his name.

The most influential individualist anarchist in the United States during the period after the Civil War was Benjamin Tucker (1854–1939) of Boston, editor of the periodical *Liberty* (1881–1908). Tucker's anarchism was a blend of Warren, Proudhon, Stirner, and Spencer, with individual rights to liberty and (occupancy-and-use-based) property being grounded in contractual agreements among self-interested individuals, rather than in abstract moral law. Tucker's proposal for competing security firms also resembles Molinari's, though whether through influence or coincidence is unclear. The reduction of price to labor cost was for Tucker a prediction of the results to be expected from the abolition of state-supported privilege for the capitalist class, not an independent moral imperative as it had been for Warren and Andrews.

Tucker called his position "consistent Manchesterism," since he shared the Manchesterites' endorsement of competition and rejection of monopoly, but accused them of inconsistently failing to oppose the monopolies of security, currency, and land enjoyed by the state and the capitalist class. Tucker also called his radical free-market proposals "socialist" (his disciple Francis Tandy would prefer "voluntary socialism") since their implementation would lead to the abolition of class privilege and the wage system; though as the term "socialism" became increasingly associated with state control and the suppression of free exchange he began to use it pejoratively instead. Tucker's attitude toward labor unions was sympathetic but cautious, worrying about the dangers of regimentation, bureaucratization, and seduction into a quest for political power; but some of Tucker's associates, such as Dyer Lum (1839–1893) and Joseph Labadie (1850–1933), embraced the union movement and promoted broadly Tuckerite ideas within it.

Like many of her generation, Voltairine de Cleyre (1866–1912) was radicalized by the blatant injustice of the 1886–87 Haymarket trials. Initially an individualist anarchist in Tucker's circle (though never sharing his commitment to egoism), and a close associate of Lum's, de Cleyre was one of the first to describe herself, if in a somewhat

tongue-in-cheek manner, as a "capitalistic anarchist," although she more often followed Tucker in using "capitalist" as a pejorative. In later years she retreated from identification with any one school of anarchism, favoring a pluralistic vision where various different economic arrangements, whether individualistic or communistic, could coexist; she also attacked marriage as an impediment to individual growth.

Across the Atlantic, the cause of individualist anarchism was kept alive by Scottish-born German writer John Henry Mackay (1864–1933) and French writer Émile Armand (1872–1963), both of whom, working broadly in the Stirner-Tucker tradition, extended the free-love principles of the American individualists to a defense of homosexual emancipation (and in Armand's case, polyamory); as well as by German sociologist Franz Oppenheimer (1864–1943), who distinguished between the "economic means" (production and trade) and "political means" (theft and exploitation) of satisfying one's needs, and defined the state as the organization of the political means.

6. The Rise of Social Anarchism

In the meantime, anarchist theories of a more communist or collectivist character had been developing as well. One important pioneer is French anarcho-communist Joseph Déjacque (1821–1864), who argued, against Proudhon and the individualists, that what workers have a right to is not the product of their labor but, rather, the satisfaction of their needs. Déjacque appears to have been the first thinker to adopt the term "libertarian" for his position; hence "libertarianism" initially denoted a communist rather than a free-market ideology.

The most famous communistic ideology, Marxism, has served as both inspiration and adversary for social anarchists. Marx and Engels arguably count as anarchists themselves, since they call for the (eventual) withering away of the state, and establishment of a stateless communist society; but their advocacy of proletarian dictatorship in the interim, their relentless attacks on anarchism both in print and in the First International, and the literal violence against anarchists perpetrated by regimes calling themselves Marxist, have earned them a somewhat ambiguous place in the history of anarchist thought. Although favorable views of Marxism are, unsurprisingly, most common in the social anarchist wing, many aspects of Marxist thought find admirers among individualist anarchists (Carson 2004) and even anarcho-capitalists (Hoppe 1990); and Marx himself had been influenced by anarchist thinkers of a more individualist temper, including Thierry, Hodgskin, Proudhon, and Stirner.

Russia soon became a hotbed of both Marxist and anarchist ideas; three of the most prominent Russian anarchist thinkers—all members of the nobility—were Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876), Lëv Tolstoj (1828–1910), and Pëtr Kropotkin (1842–1921). Bakunin's "collectivist" version of anarchism, which assigned control over the means of production to federated workers' collectives and contemplated the continued existence of wages and monetary exchange, followed a middle path between two of Bakunin's chief influences, Proudhon's market-based individualism and Marx's marketless communism. Bakunin sharply criticized Marx's plan for a "dictatorship of the proletariat" during the transitional period between the overthrow of capitalism and the withering away of the state, arguing that this would simply mean a new ruling class and the perpetuation of oppression; and the two thinkers clashed within the First International. Kropotkin for his part, while sharing Bakunin's misgivings about Marxism, rejected

Bakunin's collectivism, with its retention of wages and money, in favor of pure communism. In his hostility to money, Tolstoj was perhaps closer to Kropotkin.

Bakunin was an advocate of violent revolution and a fierce opponent of all religion, while Tolstoj defended a mostly pacifist position inspired by Christianity and thought that inner moral transformation must precede political reform. Kropotkin developed an evolutionary and ecological approach to anarchism, stressing the role of mutual aid in human history and in the animal kingdom generally.

Anarcho-communist ideals, largely though not solely through Kropotkin's influence, were widely influential, being promulgated by Élisée Reclus (1830–1905) in France, Gustav Landauer (1870–1919) in Germany, Errico Malatesta (1853–1932) in Italy, Emma Goldman (1869–1940) and Alexander Berkman (1870–1936) in the United States, arguably Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) in Britain, and by still others in Spain, Asia, and Latin America. One movement having a high degree of overlap with both collectivist and communist forms of anarchism is anarcho-syndicalism, in which the means of production are owned and their use directed by federations of labor unions characterized by bottom-up democratic self-management; a major anarcho-syndicalist theorist was Rudolf Rocker (1873–1958).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, anarchism, particularly social anarchism, played an important role in popular life, especially the labor movement. Anarchist militias played important roles in both the Russian Revolution and the Spanish Civil War, fighting (unsuccessfully, in the event) for an alternative to Marxism and reactionary conservatism alike. On an individual level, "direct action" and "propaganda of the deed" encompassed acts of terrorism, a controversial and debated tactic within the anarchist community, and one that has continued to shape public perceptions of anarchism to this day; the list of state dignitaries assassinated by anarchists includes a French president, an American president, an Italian king, a Russian tsar, an Austrian empress, and two Spanish prime ministers. In turn, the anarchist movement suffered heavily from state repression, including the mass arrest and deportations of anarchists in the United States (the "Palmer Raids," 1919–20) and, in subsequent decades, the still more sanguinary fate that awaited anarchists in Europe in regions under fascist, Nazi, and Communist rule.

7. The Rise of Anarcho-capitalism

In the 1930s through the 1950s, individualist anarchism reemerged on the American right, as part of the fledgling free-market libertarian movement, with such authors as Albert Jay Nock (1870–1945), Rose Wilder Lane (1886–1968), and Robert LeFevre (1911–1986). In the 1960s and 70s, under the influence (though without the approval) of radical individualist philosopher Ayn Rand and radical individualist economist Ludwig von Mises, thinkers like Murray Rothbard (1926–1995), Karl Hess (1923–1994), Roy A. Childs Jr. (1949–1992), Samuel E. Konkin III (1947–2004), George H. Smith (b. 1949), Randy E. Barnett (b. 1952), and Linda and Morris Tannehill developed these anarchist tendencies into a full-blown theory of *anarcho-capitalism*. (See Rothbard 2006.) These anarcho-capitalists accept private property and economic *laissez-faire* (typically on pragmatic grounds, natural-rights grounds, or both), and take the state's monopoly of the rights-protection industry to be an illegitimate interference with free competition; in place of the state, they revive the Molinari–Tucker model of competing security firms. Another important anarcho-capitalist thinker to emerge during this era is David Friedman (b. 1945), son of economist Milton Friedman, who points to the

success of the medieval Icelandic legal system as evidence of the viability of a non-monopolistic legal order (Friedman 1989). The generic term "market anarchism" is sometimes used to include both anarcho-capitalism and the market-friendly varieties of more traditional individualist anarchism.

While most "minarchist" libertarians (i.e., advocates of the minimal state rather than anarchy) had an adversarial relationship with the New Left, many of the anarcho-capitalists—particularly Rothbard, Hess, Childs, and Konkin—were more sympathetic, maintaining that defenders of the free market had much to learn from leftist analyses (as well as vice versa). In particular, they rejected the right-wing tendency to see big business as the victim of government regulation, arguing instead that big business represents an unjustly privileged elite that is more often the beneficiary of such regulation (Rothbard 1965a, 1965b; Childs 1971). Konkin notably abandoned the term "anarcho-capitalism" in favor of "agorism" (from *agora*, the Greek word for market), situating himself on the anti-capitalist left (Konkin 1983, 2002).

Anarcho-capitalism was brought to academic notice largely via Robert Nozick's criticisms in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Nozick 1974: 3–146). Nozick maintained that a competitive security market lacked both pragmatic superiority—because conflicts among security firms, whether resolved violently by conquest or peacefully by arbitration, would in either case tend to give rise to a territorial monopoly and so reestablish the state—and moral superiority, since a security firm's right to protect its clients by prohibiting risky adjudicative procedures used by other firms could lead to the establishment of a monopoly state via an invisible-hand process that would violate nobody's rights. In response, anarcho-capitalists have argued that security firms would be compelled, by their need to retain customers, to choose the lower-cost option of arbitration over the higher-cost option of violence; that arbitration networks among firms do not constitute a state so long as they allow free entry; and that the right to prohibit risky adjudicative procedures is too weak to license a monopoly (Barnett 1977; Childs 1977; Davidson 1977; Paul 1977; Rothbard 1977; Sanders 1977; Osterfeld 1980; Roark 1986; Young 1986; Skoble 2008b). More recently the debate has turned to the question of whether arbitration networks could profitably exclude free entry (Cowen 1992; Caplan and Stringham 2003; Cowen and Sutter 2005).

Social anarchists, while generally recognizing individualist anarchism as a genuine (albeit mistaken) form of anarchism, largely deny that anarcho-capitalism counts as anarchist (and similarly reject the anarchist credentials of such forerunners as Molinari and Spencer), on the grounds that anarchism, whether social or individualist, has traditionally been anti-capitalist. This dispute is partly terminological (since by "capitalism" anarcho-capitalists mean a completely free market, while most individualist anarchists have reserved the term for a system of privilege which they take to result from government intervention), but also substantive: social anarchists charge that anarcho-capitalists countenance economic relationships that "genuine" individualist anarchists reject, such as rent, profit, interest, hierarchical workplaces, and the wage system, and so conclude that anarcho-capitalism is simply a rationalization for corporate power and existing property holdings. But it is difficult to find a criterion that draws the division neatly: Spooner, for example, is recognized by social anarchists as a genuine individualist anarchist despite his support for rent, while Konkin and Friedman are rejected despite their opposition to hierarchical workplaces and the wage system; and many anarcho-capitalists have attacked corporate power (Childs 1971) and called for thoroughgoing redistribution to rectify past injustice (Rothbard 1969, 2008). Anarcho-capitalists for

their part tend to challenge the libertarian credentials of social anarchists, generally on equally contestable grounds.

8. Recent Anarchism

The political ferment of the mid-twentieth century saw the revival of social anarchism as well (see, e.g., Ward 1992; Goodman 1994; Zinn 1997; Graeber 2004; Chomsky 2005); in recent decades, social anarchists have played a leading role in the anti-globalization and Occupy movements. The growth of the internet has given additional impetus to the propagation of anarchist ideas, both social and individualist.

At a theoretical level, both social anarchists (Taylor 1982) and anarcho-capitalists (Narveson 1988; De Jasay 1997; Stringham 2005; Skoble 2008a) have employed game-theoretic arguments to show that cooperation represents a stable equilibrium under stateless conditions; likewise, both social anarchists (Clastres 1989; Scott 2010) and anarcho-capitalists (Friedman 1979; Anderson and Hill 2004; Benson 2011) have appealed to historical examples of stateless societies to demonstrate anarchism's viability.

Although there are exceptions (Proudhon being an especially egregious one), anarchists have traditionally embraced feminist concerns, seeing patriarchy, statism, and capitalist privilege as mutually reinforcing forms of social control (McElroy 1991; Long and Johnson 2005), and contemporary anarcha-feminists (e.g., Brown 1993; Lilith 2011) have made the same identification.

The anarchist community continues to be the scene of vigorous debate on many topics, including the legitimacy of private property (or, among those accepting private property, the legitimacy of absentee land ownership) and the extent to which prevailing capitalist economic forms are the result of free markets or of government intervention. (Interestingly, the rejection of intellectual property seems to have become the dominant position among all schools of anarchism.) Also in dispute are the appropriate moral foundations for anarchism (e.g., consequentialist vs. deontological), as well as whether anarchism should respect the authority of morality at all. With respect to religion, for some adherents anarchism's anti-authoritarianism entails atheism, and the slogan "no gods, no masters" is popular in the movement; but for others, it is precisely respect for God's authority that discountenances all human authority. And views on technology vary from the "technoanarchist" embrace of high-tech urban life (Kostelanetz 1999), through the preference for decentralized, human-scale, more environmentally responsible forms of technology (Goodman 1994; Bookchin 2004), all the way to the complete rejection of industry, civilization, and even language itself, as found in anarcho-primitivism (Zerzan 1994).

Anarchists are also divided over tactics and methods; most reject or at least de-emphasize electoral politics in favor of a variety of approaches ranging from violent revolution, through anti-corporate hacktivism, to education, counter-economic activity, nonviolent mass civil disobedience, and building alternative institutions. Moreover, a body of overlapping but by no means unitary social anarchist approaches, variously called poststructuralist anarchism, post-left anarchism, and post-anarchism, has challenged the rigidity of traditional anarchist ideology and activism, and emphasized the importance of achieving autonomous modes of experience and practice in everyday life (May 1994; Black 1997; Bey 2003; Jun and Wahl 2010; Nadia C. n.d); other social anarchists such as Murray Bookchin have criticized these approaches as a self-indulgent "lifestyle

anarchism" that distracts from the task of organizing collective action for meaningful social change (Bookchin 1995).

9. Terminological Note

The term "philosophical anarchism" is ambiguous. Initially it referred to the position of anarchists who favored educational rather than violent means to the establishment of an anarchist society (Yarros 1936); but in recent years it has come to mean the thesis that the state's laws do not in themselves give citizens any moral obligation to obey—*without* any further implication either as to its being morally impermissible for the state to enforce such laws, or as to the abolition of states being desirable. This newer sense, which renders philosophical anarchism not strictly a species of anarchism, seems to have arisen out of a misunderstanding of social anarchist Robert Paul Wolff's 1970 *In Defense of Anarchism*, which is widely interpreted as defending merely the narrow thesis, despite the book's closing call (Wolff 1998: 78–82) for a literally stateless society. (At least one self-described anarchist (Barnett 2005) defends the reverse position; that laws may be morally binding on citizens because they are commanded by a state of the right sort, even though it is impermissible for that state to enforce them, or indeed to exist at all.)

The term "left-libertarianism" has at least three meanings. In its oldest sense, it is a synonym either for anarchism in general or social anarchism in particular. Later it became a term for the left or Konkinite wing of the free-market libertarian movement, and has since come to cover a range of pro-market but anti-capitalist positions, mostly individualist anarchist, including agorism and mutualism, often with an implication of sympathies (such as for radical feminism or the labor movement) not usually shared by anarcho-capitalists (Carson 2007, 2008; Johnson 2008; Chartier 2011; Chartier and Johnson 2011). In a third sense it has recently come to be applied to a position combining individual self-ownership with an egalitarian approach to natural resources (Vallentyne and Steiner 2001, 2007); most proponents of this position are not anarchists.

Related Topics

Marxism and Contemporary Political Thought; Natural Law and Rights Theory; Left-Libertarianism; Libertarianism; Equality; Freedom; Autonomy; Power; Authority and Legitimacy

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1 Sustainability of What?

Widespread concern with the idea of sustainability is a relatively recent phenomenon. It increased dramatically from 1987, in the wake of the Brundtland Report's call for 'sustainable development', famously defined as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED 1987).

The word 'development', of course, changes the focus of debate. As used in 'sustainable development' it does not simply denote social organisation or human activity, but has a very specific (and question-begging) meaning. This usage can be traced back to the 1949 inaugural speech of US president Harry Truman, which called for 'a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas' (Truman 1949, cited in Esteva 1992). The assumed end point of human social and economic 'development' was henceforth defined as industrialised, growth-oriented, market-economy societies on the US model, redefining the majority of the world, with its prodigious variety of other social and economic traditions, as 'underdeveloped'. The powerful organic metaphor of 'development' lent an air of irresistible teleology to this highly ideological picture.[1]

However, while far from irrelevant to this book, the historical and political contexts of Truman's – and Brundtland's – words go well beyond its scope. The focus here will be specifically on the philosophical and ethical implications of striving for *ecological sustainability*, not on the political economy of 'sustainable development', or indeed on other 'sustainabilities' such as economic or financial.

Still, Brundtland's definition remains a good place to start, not just because of its historical significance, but because it contains an implicit ethical appeal which is hard to resist. Surely present people should be able to meet their needs – and surely this should not be achieved in such a way as to make it impossible for future people to meet theirs? The ethical force derives in large part from the fact that the definition talks not about wants, desires or preferences but about *needs*. It appeals to fundamental notions of respect for the dignity and autonomy of persons, to support a strong ethical claim that genuine human needs should, in principle at least, not go unmet. As John O'Neill (2011) points

out, such claims are much more compelling when they refer to needs, rather than preferences.

A tricky question immediately arises though – what will future people's needs be? How, indeed, could anyone in the present know the answer to such a question? One possible response is to say that the ethical imperative that needs be met applies in fact only to 'basic' needs. Though these are still notoriously difficult to define, it is tempting to think that this reduced task should nonetheless not be impossible, even in respect of future people.[2] This response will not solve the problem though. Both reason and compassion militate against seeing present obligations to future generations as limited to safeguarding the provision of their basic needs. The bare minimum is certainly a good starting point for identifying what to pass on, but a starting point is surely all it should be. Present actions should aim at maximising the chances that future people not only survive, but flourish.

Needs, Options and Decisions: Choosing Sustainability

The Brundtland definition, of course, leaves present people's needs equally undefined; but present people can (at least in principle) be consulted about their needs. No one can find out what future people will need by asking them. It seems then that taking Brundtland seriously implies an ethical obligation to reflect *now* on what future people's needs will be, and then act so as to ensure, as far as possible, that these needs will be able to be met.

Perhaps though, given the inevitable uncertainty under which such reflection takes place, we present-day humans should not impose our present-day expectations on future people, but simply aim to *maximise the range of options* that will be available in the future, enabling them to fulfil their autonomously defined needs in the widest possible range of ways. This seems at first sight a plausible and even attractive position. However, this book will argue that such agnosticism about what will be valued by future people is neither ethically tenable, politically defensible, nor practically viable. One simple *ethical* argument to this effect, expanded below and in Chapter 2, has already been alluded to: it seems clearly wrong to knowingly deny future people options which we value now. In practice, at least in the environmental context, this is where such agnosticism leads.

Present decisions to create or preserve some options will always close off other options, but not always significantly so. Some decisions taken in the present can effectively be reversed in the future; and in some cases the diminution of future options will be of only trivial consequence. Decisions to take actions involving significant anthropogenic changes to the non-human environment, however, rarely fall into either of these two categories. They tend rather to inescapably involve depriving future (and often also present) people of significant options. There are thus also formidable *practical* difficulties in maintaining an agnostic position on future needs. We cannot for instance pass on both the option to live in a world free of radioactive waste, and the option

to live in a world equipped with nuclear power plants.[3] We cannot pass on both the option to live in a world with Yangtze River dolphins, and the option to live in a world in which that river serves as a major freight shipping route. In both of these cases the choice has already been made, and only one of each pair of options will be passed on. Whether the choice was conscious or deliberate is now largely immaterial. The nuclear waste is here, and the dolphins are extinct. Humanity's current trajectory is closing off options at an accelerating rate, multiplying the choices we are required to make about what we leave for future generations. Do we want to pass on rainforests, or biofuel plantations? An increased supply of oil, or intact Arctic ecosystems? An expanding global economy, or a stable climate?

Contemporary environmental policy-making increasingly seeks 'win–win solutions' to such dilemmas, which do not require attitudinal or political change. The problems with this approach are well illustrated by the idea of 'offsetting', which is spreading rapidly from carbon markets into biodiversity conservation. An offsetting mindset sees no ethical or ontological problems with the claim that ecological degradation arising from overexploitation, overproduction and overconsumption can be cancelled out by additional conservation efforts elsewhere, leaving 'no net loss'. The calculative utilitarianism which legitimises such approaches assumes, and enforces, an unjustifiably extreme commensurability of value (Hannis and Sullivan 2012; Sullivan and Hannis 2015). Creative solutions to particular problems may reconcile ecological sustainability with other objectives, perhaps even in some contexts with economic growth. But the possibility of such reconciliation cannot be assumed, and certainly cannot avoid the need for choices.

Simply seeking to *maximise* the options available to future people, in order to allow them to define and meet their needs in whatever way they choose (rather than seeking to reach conclusions now about what they will need, and acting accordingly) will not therefore remove the need to *evaluate* those options and somehow weigh them against one another. From an option-maximising perspective it could be the case in a given instance that the options opened up by changing the non-human environment, even changing it irreversibly, might be so valuable as to outweigh or compensate for those other options closed off by the change. But even for agnostics this would somehow need to have been calculated and demonstrated in advance, if they are to meet their obligations to future people.

The position is of course further complicated by the fact that such calculations are by definition made in conditions of radical uncertainty. For instance, the impact of this year's catch on North Sea cod stocks in ten years' time is impossible to calculate without knowing whether quotas in the intervening years will be set to allow recovery or to maximise yield. A meaningful calculation of the ecological impact of cutting down a square mile of forest requires precise knowledge not only of how large the whole forest is now, and of how much intact forest is needed for it to remain a viable self-sustaining ecosystem, but also of how likely the remaining forest is to be

left intact in the future. Further uncertainty arises regarding counterfactuals, both in the context of assessing unintended degradation and that of planning deliberate conservation efforts (Maron et al. 2013). In the case of proposed forest clearance, for instance, it matters not only what species are present now, but also what species *might have been present in the future* had the current trajectory continued. This is of course in addition to all the other impacts on livelihoods, climate and so forth which must also be factored in to arrive at any realistic assessment of what future options are being closed off.

'Natural Capital' – Strong and Weak Sustainability

Thinking about the world and human impacts upon it in this way leads onto the territory of environmental economics, where talk about things like fish and forests is translated first into talk about natural resources, then into talk about natural capital, and then into talk about the substitutability of different forms of capital. The validity and accuracy of such translations is by no means uncontested, but nonetheless it is in these terms that the concept of sustainability has arguably been most comprehensively analysed. In the wake of Brundtland, mainstream economists framed sustainability as an economic problem, best addressed (like other economic problems) by ensuring the most efficient allocation of scarce resources. Sustainability was generically defined by Pearce et al. (1989) as 'non-declining capital'. This entailed the inclusion of 'natural resources', alongside other human and financial resources, as another form of capital. A series of debates ensued about the relationships between these forms of capital, centring on the distinction between 'weak' and 'strong' sustainability.[4]

Advocates of weak sustainability such as Pearce (Pearce et al. 1989; Pearce and Atkinson 1993), Solow (1993) and Beckerman (1994, 1995; see also 2003) essentially held that sustainability should simply be seen as a matter of sustaining over time the *total stock of capital* required for the continuance of human civilisation. What form this capital took was in effect largely immaterial, since its economic value derived not from any of its intrinsic properties, but from the human welfare its consumption produced. On this view a great deal of 'natural capital' could in principle be substituted by human or financial capital, and properly operating markets would ensure that this happened as and when it became economically efficient. From a weak sustainability perspective, therefore, only those natural resources which are both indispensable for human survival *and* impossible to substitute for, could constitute the *critical* natural capital which must be sustained intact into the future if a non-diminishing total stock of capital is to be maintained.

Even this narrow category of 'critical natural capital', of course, is susceptible to radically divergent interpretations. However, it is generally taken to mandate the preservation of considerably less 'natural capital' than does strong sustainability, which while not denying that some parts of the non-human world might indeed be substitutable by the technological fruits of human

ingenuity, claims that this applies in only a much more limited range of cases. On the strong sustainability view, to the (limited) extent that natural resources can be meaningfully treated as capital, natural and human capital should be seen as qualitatively different, and should therefore be conserved separately. They are complementary rather than substitutable: in economic terms, any production of goods capable of giving rise to human welfare will generally require both, and hence scarcity of one cannot necessarily be compensated for by abundance of the other. As Herman Daly puts it:

> To economists, resources are a form of capital, or wealth, that ranges from stocks of raw materials to finished products and factories. Two broad types of capital exist—natural and man-made. Most neoclassical economists believe that man-made capital is a good substitute for natural capital and therefore advocate maintaining the sum of the two, an approach called weak sustainability. Most ecological economists, myself included, believe that natural and manmade capital are more often complements than substitutes and that natural capital should be maintained on its own, because it has become the limiting factor. That goal is called strong sustainability. … For example, the annual fish catch is now limited by the natural capital of fish populations in the sea and no longer by the man-made capital of fishing boats. Weak sustainability would suggest that the lack of fish can be dealt with by building more fishing boats. Strong sustainability recognizes that more fishing boats are useless if there are too few fish in the ocean and insists that catches must be limited to ensure maintenance of adequate fish populations for tomorrow's fishers.
>
> (Daly 2005:103; see also 1995)

Furthermore, from the perspective of strong sustainability, the limited possible substitutions of one form of capital for another are also not symmetrical. Natural resources are more likely to provide effective substitutes for human capital than vice versa. As Daly and Cobb observe (1989:409), 'capital cannot substitute for resources because capital itself is composed of resources'.

What should be sustained on this view, therefore, are 'aspects and features of non-human nature whose loss would be irreversible' (Dobson 1998:47). This category contains not only 'critical natural capital' as envisaged by weak sustainability theorists, but a lot more besides. Clearly, it requires some qualification in order to be remotely operationalisable. Notwithstanding the observations above, there will in practice inevitably be some 'aspects and features of non-human nature' whose loss, while irreversible, is nonetheless of trivial consequence when set against the potential gain from courses of action which entail their loss. Importantly though, such trade-offs are not in principle precluded by any essential aspect of the strong sustainability view.

At the 'stronger' end of strong sustainability lie a range of ecocentric perspectives which claim that (at least some of) the non-human world is *intrinsically valuable* and thus should, as a matter of moral duty, be sustained

anyway irrespective of any instrumental value it may have for humans (Rolston 1988; Naess 1989; Eckersley 1992; Curry 2011). The moral duties in question are said to be owed not only to humans but to non-human entities as well, ranging from animals to mountains to ecosystems, and sometimes to the planet as a whole. Some ecocentrists thus question the legitimacy of reducing the 'total stock of natural capital' for human purposes *at all*. This last position is sometimes described as very strong or even 'absurdly strong' sustainability, though as Alan Holland (1997; see also 1999) points out, it need not be as impractical or absurd as its detractors claim.

Substitutability and Commensurability

Dobson (1998) offers a useful typology of conceptions of sustainability which escapes the overworked strong/weak distinction. His survey of the contemporary literature found clusters of views around three distinct core conceptions, which he distinguishes primarily by their ideal-type answers to the question 'what is to be sustained?' The three answers Dobson identifies, as may be anticipated from the foregoing discussion, are critical natural capital, 'irreversible nature' and natural value. However, Dobson's question can itself be understood on many levels. Three are of interest here:

A What features or aspects of human life should be sustained?
B What features or aspects of the nonhuman world should be sustained in order to give effect to the answer given to question A?
C What features or aspects of the non-human world should be sustained independently of any value or utility they may have to humanity?

For anyone except an ecocentrist, the answer to question B will depend on what answer they give to question A. This relationship can be observed in the positions previously outlined. Thus the weak sustainability theorist's answer to question B, 'critical natural capital', is straightforwardly premised on answering question A with 'human welfare'. Welfare, for such theorists, is directly proportional (though not strictly equivalent) to total capital, including natural capital where this is critical. Capital is assumed to be directly convertible into welfare. It is worth noting that this means that the weak sustainability theorist's answer to question B, 'critical natural capital', would still be the same if their chosen answer to question A was 'capital' rather than 'human welfare'.

On the face of it, it seems clear that non-ecocentrists, of whatever variety, can only answer 'none' to question C (although as discussed below, this need not be as drastic as it might sound). Meanwhile the ecocentrists' answer to question C will by definition lie between 'some of them' and 'all of them'. For a 'pure' ecocentrist this would perhaps be the end of the matter. But there is no reason why an ecocentrist cannot *also* take a view on question A, and hence on question B, and end up with a list of things to sustain based on the sum of

answers given to questions B and C. They might for instance wish to sustain old-growth forest for its own intrinsic value, but also a non-diminishing stock of plantation-grown construction timber for human welfare reasons. Dobson (1998:47–48) characterises arguments for strong sustainability as based on such a hybrid position. The presence of an ecocentric component appears to be taken as the only possible justification for the injunction to sustain aspects and features of the non-human world which do not constitute 'critical natural capital'.

It is, however, not necessary to adopt an ecocentric position in order to support the injunction to sustain what Dobson calls 'irreversible nature'.[5] Question A can be answered in terms of *sustaining the broader conditions for human flourishing*, rather than just in terms of sustaining 'human welfare' as modelled by economists. On such a view, for instance, old-growth forest would be valued not directly for its posited intrinsic value, but for its contribution to the quality of human lives lived in a world in which it existed. Its value, for practical and political human purposes, is thus acknowledged to be anthropogenic, and might even (in the sense urged by Wissenburg 1998:91–97) be said to be instrumental, in that nature is being effectively valued as a means to the end of human flourishing.

To answer the 'what is to be sustained' question in terms of human flourishing is to accept that only anthropogenic value can meaningfully be counted in human ethical deliberations, without denying or discounting the reality that human individuals and cultures often consider nature to have intrinsic value. It should be stressed that this does not make the position *anthropocentric* in the commonly encountered pejorative sense. That is, it does not assume some objectively superior place for humanity in the grand scheme of things, nor does it assert that nature is valueless except where it is instrumentally useful as a provider of resources or services. One important source of anthropogenic value is *human flourishing as facilitated and constituted by human relationships with the non-human world*. These include relationships characterised by subjective human experiences of intrinsic value in nature. They also include other experiences such as sacredness (Verschuuren et al. 2010), which are similarly resistant to rationalisation.

English-speaking environmental philosophy has historically been strongly focussed on debates between anthropocentrism and various flavours of non-anthropocentrism. This alleged polarity is reflected in lengthy but inconclusive metaethical debates about the supposed locus of value, and in particular the supposedly binary question of whether or not there can really be intrinsic value in the non-human world. Millions of erudite words have been expended on defending various 'centrisms' including ecocentrism, biocentrism, anthropocentrism and 'enlightened anthropocentrism'. On this spectrum the position adopted in this book might seem closest to the latter, but as already suggested my preference is to attend to the *connections* between human and non-human, rather than to bolster the idea of a polarity between the two. John Dryzek's injunction to 'downplay 'centrism' of any kind, and focus instead on the kinds of interactions

that might occur across the boundaries between humanity and nature' (1998:588) seems apposite here. As Kerry Whiteside observes:

> The debate between nonanthropocentrists and anthropocentrists typically problematises neither nature nor humanity. As much as they reject age-old assumptions of nature's limitless bounty or maintain that humans are no longer unique in their moral considerability, neither side makes reflection on the conceptual interdependency of humanity and nature the focus of its philosophical project. We humans are one thing; nature is another.
>
> (Whiteside 2002:45)[6]

Beyond Capital

A flourishing-based argument for strong sustainability, like its ecocentric or hybrid cousins, would then be marked by a strong presumption in favour of the non-diminution of irreplaceable nature. This would include as paradigm cases non-renewable resources, species and the integrity of natural systems, but it could also include less obviously 'critical' aspects and features of the natural world, such as valued landscapes. Trade-offs would not be prohibited in principle, but would need to be considered and justified in every case – and some would in practice probably never be justifiable. The presumption against destruction, loss or (where possible) substitution would thus be of varying strength depending on just what stood to be lost, the consequences of losing it, and the value of whatever might be foregone in preserving it.

In natural capital terms then, this position mandates not only the preservation of 'critical natural capital', but also the preservation of a great deal of what a weak sustainability theorist might consider *non*-critical natural capital. The justification for this preservation rests not on any idea of 'duties to nature' but on the protection of *valuable non-instrumental human relationships with the non-human world* (Benton 1997:35–37). In political as well as philosophical terms the fact that it does not rest on the metaethically problematic concept of intrinsic value is (as discussed in Chapters 6 and 7) a significant strength, rather than a weakness.

It is important to be clear though that claiming that the presence in the world of (for instance) old-growth forest can contribute to human flourishing is *not* equivalent to claiming that it does in fact constitute 'critical natural capital essential for human welfare'. That is, the non-ecocentric version of strong sustainability I am proposing does not simply collapse back into a version of weak sustainability with a broader definition of 'critical natural capital'. This is because it takes a distinctly different line on substitutability. One way to express this would be to say that different sorts of natural capital make qualitatively different contributions to human flourishing, and that this incommensurability makes the different sorts of capital non-substitutable. This would, however, be misleading, since once incommensurability is taken seriously, the whole analogy between nature and capital breaks down.

'Natural capital' is, it turns out, not only an inappropriate metaphor, but one that begs these key questions of commensurability and substitutability. This is hardly surprising, since it was created precisely in order to reframe the complex issue of ecological sustainability as a problem capable of being analysed and solved using the tools of economics and finance. As O'Neill puts it:

> It uses as a general metaphor a very specific set of relations of humans to each other and to nature that has emerged in commercial societies of the past 300 years or so. The fact that the metaphor of natural capital lends itself to monetisation is neither accidental nor surprising.
>
> (2007:106)

Even when such reframings do not insist that natural capital can be directly substituted by human or financial capital, they still make unjustified assumptions of commensurability between disparate parts of the non-human world, by claiming that these can be meaningfully aggregated on some kind of natural capital balance sheet (see e.g. TEEB 2015).

The analogy of 'nature as capital' has become both less analogical and considerably more hegemonic in recent years, moving swiftly from clearly metaphorical exhortations to 'live off nature's interest, not her capital' through well-intentioned efforts to 'internalise the externalities of production' into what is now termed the Green Economy. Critics (e.g. Spash 2008; Sullivan 2014; Read and Scott Cato 2014) argue that this rapidly advancing 'financialisation of nature' not only replaces potentially effective environmental regulation with ineffective market incentives, but also accelerates the enclosure and privatisation of nature as a source of very real financial value which can be leveraged for profit, driving increased resource consumption and frequently producing further ecological degradation. One need not be an ecocentrist to agree with Brian Barry's observation that

> 'Capital' is a term that is inherently located within economic discourse. A mountain is, in the first instance, just a mountain. To bring it under the category of 'capital' – of any kind – is to look at it in a certain light, as an economic asset of some description. But if I want to insist that we should leave future generations mountains that have not been strip-mined, quarried, despoiled by ski-slopes, or otherwise tampered with to make somebody a profit, my point will be better made by eschewing talk about 'capital' altogether.
>
> (B Barry 1999:103)

Capabilities and Intergenerational Justice

Different aspects and features of the non-human world, then, contribute to human flourishing in different ways, and these contributions cannot be meaningfully summed or substituted. The contribution of old-growth forest is not the same as that of the climate system, or that of the Yangtze dolphin. None of these is the

same as the contribution made by health, wealth, power or love, which are of course all similarly incommensurable. To recognise such incommensurability is to celebrate the richness both of human experience and of the world we inhabit. To deny it is, at best, to present that world in two-dimensional black and white.

Monist metrics based solely on financial figures, such as (most notoriously) per capita gross domestic product (GDP), have been largely discredited as a source of data on people's actual well-being (see e.g. Jackson 2009; Wilkinson and Pickett 2010). However, the increasingly common strategy of supplementing such statistics with measurement of subjectively perceived 'happiness' (e.g. ONS 2014) still fails to address the incommensurability problem, as well as being subject to many more specific shortcomings, as discussed further below (and in more detail in Chapter 7).

It is in fact now widely accepted that only eschewing the false goal of commensurability and adopting some kind of multidimensional framework can distil this complexity into any useful understanding of human well-being. This embrace of multidimensionality is closely associated with a shift of focus away from people's *actual* resource use or reported welfare, and towards their *potential* 'capabilities to function' in fulfilling ways, in Amartya Sen's (1980) influential formulation. For instance, in discussing how 'the environment' contributes to human well-being, a 2007 UNEP report describes the 'evolution' of attempts to classify human well-being as progressing from 'the resources people have', through 'how people feel about their lives', to 'what people are able to be and to do' (2007:13–14). The third is evidently conceived as encompassing the first two. It is clear from the report's emphasis on freedom, and its repeated references to Sen, that what is being described here is the institutional adoption of a capabilities approach. As Sen put it more recently:

> We must think not just about sustaining the fulfillment of our needs, but more largely about sustaining, and extending, our freedoms (including, of course, the freedom to meet our own needs, but going well beyond that). The sustaining of ecosystems and the preservation of species can be given new grounds by the recognition of human beings as reflective agents rather than as passive patients. Thus recharacterized, the idea of sustainable development can be broadened from the formulations proposed by Brundtland and Solow to encompass the preservation and expansion of the substantive freedoms and capabilities of people today without compromising the capability of future generations to have similar or more freedoms. This broader way of seeing sustainable development can accommodate our concerns—and our anxieties—about the fragility of some of the ecosystems that surround us.
>
> (Sen 2014)

Ed Page agrees with Sen that 'capabilities to function' provide the best answer to the question 'intergenerational justice of what?', since it escapes the problems which beset attempts to understand intergenerational justice in

terms of resources or of welfare. (Page defines welfare as 'some function of a person's desires (or preferences) being satisfied' (2007:454).) Page argues that seeking intergenerational equality of 'ecological space' is merely 'reformist resourcism', and is undermined by the differing effects on different individuals' welfare of equal amounts of resources or ecological space. For instance, those living in colder climates may require larger amounts of ecological space to achieve a given level of welfare. Welfarism, meanwhile, suffers particularly badly in the context of declining environmental quality: it seems not only possible but likely that 'future people who adapt their desires in the face of environmental degradation may experience more welfare than their ancestors even if they possess far fewer resources' (ibid.:465). (Page here is identifying an *adaptive preference* problem: these will be further discussed in Chapters 3 and 7.)

Both these problems, Page suggests, can be avoided by adopting *capabilities* as the 'currency' of intergenerational justice. He proposes adapting Martha Nussbaum's (2000, 2011) existing list of 'core capabilities for functioning' (see Box 3.1) by adding a new specifically *ecological* capability, defined as 'the capability to experience life in an environment devoid of dangerous environmental impacts such as those associated with climate change' (Page 2007:464). With this new capability added, the requirements of intergenerational justice are restated:

> [E]arlier generations should not act so as to undermine the possibility that later generations enjoy an adequate (Nussbaum) or equal (Sen) level of capability satisfaction. To the extent that global environmental problems make it impossible for future people to enjoy adequate or equal levels of capability, these problems (and the actions and policies that caused them) involve great injustice.
>
> (Page 2007:465)

Page endorses Nussbaum's version of the capability approach rather than Sen's – a 'satisficing rather than equalising' version (2007:467). He has to, since he wishes to propose a specific new capability, and only a 'satisficing' or 'adequacy' approach can support a list of such substantive capabilities. This comes at a price, for as will be discussed in Chapter 3, while Nussbaum is at pains to point out that her list is to be seen as subject to political deliberation, it is nonetheless inescapably non-neutral between conceptions of the good life. As Page admits, 'there is a sense in which the approach is perfectionist for it will prohibit consumption patterns and lifestyles which harm the central functioning capabilities of others' (ibid.:466).

This perfectionism is, however, precisely the strength of the approach Page identifies, and precisely what may equip it to serve as an ethical basis for liberal policy-making aimed at strong sustainability. No approach that baulks at such prohibition will ultimately be effective. Once 'intrinsic value' approaches are rejected, then if unsustainable lifestyles are to be reined in without

vulnerability to the charge of illiberalism, something else must legitimise their discouragement. Some kind of substantive capabilities approach which is prepared to identify capabilities (and hence options) which are in some sense genuinely *valuable*, as opposed to contingently *valued*, looks potentially well suited to achieve this. It can not only argue, as Page notes, that unsustainable lifestyles are harmful: it can perhaps also, where appropriate, draw on the further argument that the unsustainable consumption or behaviour is not in fact deserving of protection since it does not genuinely contribute to human flourishing.

This, however, is to jump ahead to matters which will be explored later in the book. First, a more detailed examination is required of how the distinction between *valued* and *valuable* options can affect attempts to provide a robust theoretical underpinning for sustainability policy.

Valued and Valuable Options

Building on Brundtland, Bryan Norton declares that: '[S]ustainability is a relationship between generations such that the earlier generations fulfil their individual wants and needs so as not to destroy, or close off, important and valued options for future generations' (2006:363). 'Valued' here clearly refers to whether future people themselves value these options. 'Important', though, suggests that it also matters whether we, now, believe they are in fact valuable. An earlier paper makes this explicit:

> [I]t is reasonable to say, whether they recognise their loss or not, that future people who are deprived of the opportunity to experience wilderness are simply worse off than they would have been if that option had been held open.
>
> (Norton 1999:132)

This latter claim appears at first sight to put Norton on the 'objectivist' side on the fence, with Robert Goodin (1992) and John O'Neill (1993) and against those such as David Miller (1999, 2004) who resist the idea that it could ever be legitimate to tell those who were indifferent to natural beauty that they were 'making a mistake'. (Miller's position will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.) The option of 'experiencing wilderness' seems for Norton (notwithstanding Cronon's (1996) telling critique) an example of an option which just *is* a valuable one, and will remain so even if future people – for whatever reason – do not, in fact, value it. We in the present are, he says, required not only to 'hold open options and opportunities for the future', but within this and more specifically, to hold open 'certain options which are prerequisites for *true* opportunities' (Norton 1999:150, emphasis added).

This is, in fact, the only conclusion which could be of any practical use in guiding sustainability policy. Future people cannot be consulted about what opportunities they value and would want us to preserve for them. The choice

has to be made in the present, and it would surely be perverse for us, in choosing what to preserve, to not include the physical prerequisites for what *we* sincerely believe today to be valuable opportunities. It may well, of course, not be possible to include the prerequisites for *all* such opportunities, not least since some will be mutually exclusive. This, however, simply underlines how important it is to grasp the nettle and *make* choices – hopefully good ones – about what to preserve, now rather than later.

Norton (1999) promotes the adoption of a 'listing stuff' approach to intergenerational justice, rather than a 'utility comparison' approach. This is an endorsement of a 'strong' conception of sustainability: he argues convincingly that, as discussed above, attempts to define sustainability as equivalent to, or implied by, the preservation of non-diminishing utility or 'economic welfare' are not only beset by extreme uncertainty problems but also inevitably rely on far-reaching and ultimately untenable assumptions of substitutability. Furthermore, even if complete fungibility of resources were assumed, some second-guessing of future priorities would *still* be involved, in order to know what levels of 'capital' will be required.

Proponents of 'utility comparison' approaches can of course retort that any attempt in the present to decide 'what to preserve' by predicting more substantively just *what* will be of value to future people (whether features of the natural environment or other goods) must rely on unprovable assumptions about future societies, states of mind and physical conditions. However, if one is prepared to stick one's neck out and assert (with Nussbaum and Page) that certain goods which are of value to present people will *remain* of value to future humans, simply *in virtue of their humanity*, this problem is greatly diminished. In the context of natural resources this is to some extent an uncontroversial assertion. It is hardly daring to claim that future people will still value breathable air and drinkable fresh water. Indeed it is the implied claim by advocates of 'weak sustainability' that other goods might be substitutable for these that seems outlandish. But any assertion that future people *will* for instance value the Iberian lynx, or the Amazon rainforest, or particular climatic conditions, seems to stand on shakier ground. Why, exactly, are such assumptions justified? [7]

It would be possible at this point to just dig one's heels in and say for instance that the Amazon 'just is' objectively or even intrinsically valuable. Norton's approach though is more subtle, notwithstanding his bold invocation of 'true opportunities'. Recalling that 'living sustainably and caring for the future have something to do with maintaining an undiminished range of free choices open to people of the future' (1999:131), he seeks to recast the value of the 'stuff' preserved as effectively deriving from the value of the options which its continued existence keeps open. Given this, progress towards sustainability requires an 'index of options and constraints (OCI) … linked to physical indicators', against which development paths could be evaluated in terms of the extent to which they protect valued options for the future (ibid.:142). This need not lead to the unhelpful conclusion that *everything* is valuable because it is required for the exercise of some theoretical option or other, because 'all

possibilities provided by nature ("options") cannot be treated as equal in the face of prevailing human values' (ibid.:141).

The proposed index of valuable options which there is an obligation to preserve can then guide policy via measurable indicators of the existence or health of the physical prerequisites for those options' continued availability. So far this sounds entirely compatible with a Nussbaum-style list of basic capabilities for functioning which there is an obligation to protect for everyone, in order for them to have the opportunity to live a flourishing life. Norton's OCI sounds, in fact, like a policy tool for safeguarding those basic capabilities which require the preservation of certain environmental conditions. The exercise of a valued option (in Norton's terms) would thus be broadly analogous to a successful functioning (in Nussbaum's): the preservation of the prerequisites for the existence of a valued option would equate to the safeguarding of the conditions required to protect the capability for functioning in the relevant way.

But is the analogy really so close? Important differences emerge when the models are put under pressure. Nussbaum's argument for the protection of basic capabilities is grounded in her explicitly Aristotelian conception of the human person: people (and thus governments) have an obligation to protect for all the necessary conditions for a good life. While she is keenly aware of the potential for tension between this obligation and the duty of a democratic government to reflect the wishes of citizens, the value of these capabilities is in a very real sense non-negotiable. It is entirely possible, on such a view, for communities to be 'wrong' about matters such as, for instance, gender roles. Practices or beliefs of particular communities may be such as to deny certain members of the community the basic capabilities they need to be able to flourish, and thus breach norms derived from universally applicable values. If the preservation of certain physical conditions is essential for the protection of one or more of the basic capabilities, then on a Nussbaumian model it can be convincingly claimed that a society or community which did not enact such preservation was acting wrongly or unjustly. If Page's 'ecological functioning capability' is added to the model this claim becomes stronger still.

For Norton on the other hand, whether or not a particular option is valuable is *entirely a matter for the relevant community to agree upon*. His 2006 definition, quoted at the beginning of this section, is closely followed by a clarification:

> This definition … refers to 'important options' for communities. The general definition treats these options as a sort of variable, to be specified as particular communities articulate their values and decide what is important for them to save for their posterity.
>
> (Norton 2006:363)

Much of Norton's 2006 book is taken up with discussion of how such articulations and decisions might be best facilitated, and then translated into operationalisable indicators. This is valuable work. But the implication is that no one outside the community in question, or indeed in a minority position within

it, has any grounds for questioning the ensuing judgement, since 'sustainable opportunities – which are in turn defined in terms of socially valued options – can only be specified more precisely on a local and regional basis' (Norton 1999:149). In an environmental context this specification of valued options will be based on the 'core sense of values that unite them as a culture with their physical environment'. Making decisions and policy on this basis, he goes on, will lead to the preservation of a region's 'keystone natural resources', since these contribute both to the distinctiveness of landscape and habitat, and to 'place-based cultural identity', including healthy local economies (ibid.:142).

This, though, seems a rather rose-tinted picture. Even Norton's own example, comparing actual and potential development paths of the US Pacific Northwest, seems to undermine his communitarian optimism: it seems likely that much of the unsustainable development detailed in his potted history of what actually happened flowed from decisions made at local and regional level. Communities do not necessarily make ecologically sustainable choices, even (or perhaps especially) when they inhabit regions rich in 'natural resources'. Communities in urban or already degraded areas are perhaps even less likely to value 'place-based cultural identity' above, for instance, economic survival.

There is also the awkward fact that people belong to many nested communities, at local, regional, national, international and global scales, the interests of which frequently conflict. There are indeed many communities which are not geographically defined at all. These observations reveal the tip of an iceberg of complex issues: but the key question is a simple one. What happens if democratic political processes do *not* produce ecologically sustainable 'development paths'?

Norton does not confront this issue in the 1999 chapter discussed above. Elsewhere, however, he is very clear. He argues for 'environmental pragmatism' and against 'non-negotiable second-order principles', even in the face of 'the undeniable evidence that some democracies are environmentally destructive': '[W]e must decide whether we are, first and foremost, environmentalists or, first and foremost, democrats … For my part, given these alternatives, I choose democracy (Norton 2002:23–24). His position thus turns out to be that the obligation to bequeath to future people the 'prerequisites for true opportunities' can effectively be overridden by the obligation to abide by democratic principles. The obligation to the future does not cease to exist, but cannot trump the commitment to democracy in the present. The appropriate course of action is 'to educate, to improve process, and to improve policy through democratic means' (ibid.:24).

Having listed what they want to preserve, then, a model such as Norton's requires environmentalists or policy-makers to ensure there is a democratic mandate for its preservation before taking any action. This may (in theory) reflect current reality in modern liberal democracies; but given such democracies' sorry environmental record it hardly inspires confidence for the future. Would it really be illegitimate for public authorities to take measures to preserve the 'stuff' on the list, even if this proved unpopular?

A Nussbaumian model could potentially accommodate this, while Norton's apparently could not. Such measures (including legislation) need not necessarily be illiberal: this need not be a choice between democracy and eco-authoritarianism. For instance as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, Nussbaum's favoured route, the formalised protection of capabilities as rights, looks like one way of putting at least some environmental protection measures on such a footing. A rights framework can potentially afford important matters of principle some legitimate protection from the vulnerability of day-to-day politics. (The standard British example of this is the prohibition of capital punishment, despite alleged popular support for the reintroduction of hanging: in the modern context this prohibition rests on the UK's recognition of a universal human right against capital punishment.) If certain aspects and states of the non-human world constitute essential prerequisites for full and flourishing human lives, then the case for sustaining them does not cease to be morally compelling just because some, or even a majority, may disagree.

Conclusion

The non-ecocentric argument for strong sustainability that I defend in this book does not rely on intrinsic value. It does, however, rest on a commitment to the existence of genuinely valuable capabilities and options, implying a substantive non-procedural conception of human flourishing. As human beings alive today, our choices of what to sustain rest on our view of what sorts of lives we want people to be able to lead in the future. This in turn is inescapably connected with the question of what sorts of lives we want people to be able to lead today.

The point is not only that what we want to pass on to our children is connected with what sort of parents we may want to be, or indeed that what sorts of relationships with 'nature' people will be able to have in the future will depend on what sort of attitudes to the non-human world we foster now. More fundamentally than either of these, making rational and ethically sound judgements about what options will be valuable in the future requires reflection on what is valuable *now*. I pursue this line of argument further in Chapter 2 with respect to the provision of environmental goods. I will then argue in Chapter 3 that it also applies to the protection of freedom(s), before going on to explore the idea that this parallel may perhaps be the key to reconciling the apparently conflicting goals of sustainability and freedom.

Notes

1 On the history and genealogy of development discourse, including the emergence of the 'sustainable development' paradigm, see contributions to Crush's (1995) anthology, particularly Porter (1995). Porter discusses the background assumptions of Truman's speech, relating it to Arndt's (1981) distinction between intransitive (Marxist) and transitive (colonialist, as in the British 1929 Colonial Development Act) usages of the verb 'develop'. See also Deb (2009) on 'developmentality', and discussion in Hannis 2011a and 2011b.

2 Influential attempts to define basic needs from varying perspectives include Maslow (1968), Max-Neef (1991) and Shue (1996). For philosophical reflections on the problem, see contributions to Reader's (2005) anthology on the philosophy of need, especially Wiggins (2005) and Alkire (2005). Soper's (1997:47–48) defence of a 'minimal essentialism on needs' is also relevant here.

3 On ethical issues arising from nuclear waste disposal, see Vanderheiden 2011; Hannis and Rawles 2013.

4 Neumayer (1999) and Dresner (2008) give helpful overviews of weak and strong sustainability. The terminology is perhaps unfortunate given the potentially value-laden connotations of the terms in some contexts (those in which 'strong' is seen as 'good' and/or 'weak' as 'bad'). No such value judgements are implied however, since the intended analogy is with concentration, as in 'a strong/weak sugar solution' rather than with physical vigour, as in 'a strong/weak person'.

5 The phrase 'irreversible nature' is problematic for a number of linked reasons. The irreversibility alluded to is not really a property of 'nature' but of either the *loss* of whatever is being so described, or of the anthropogenic *changes* being cautioned against. As Humphrey argues (drawing on Holland (1997)), 'the call to avoid irreversible change is a call to freeze-frame nature, as all evolutionary change is by its nature irreversible' (Humphrey 2001:15; see also Manson 2007). Dobson's 'sustain irreversible nature' conception of sustainability does not, however, make such an implausible call. It is clear that what he, and the writers he is discussing, have in mind is irreversibility of *loss*: 'The organising point behind this conception of environmental sustainability is precisely that some forms and features of irreversible nature are not substitutable, and therefore not compensable in anything other than an attenuated sense' (Dobson 1998:50). The phrase 'irreplaceable nature' expresses this idea with less ambiguity, and this is the phrase I shall use to describe this category of non-substitutable 'forms and features' of the non-human world.

6 There are many ways of escaping 'centrism': see for instance Roman Altshuler's recent claim that his 'constitutivist' position holding that 'our tendencies to value nonhuman entities are constitutive of our valuing of humans' can succeed in 'defending a non- anthropocentric worldview on the basis of an anthropocentric metaethic' (2014:482–484).

7 It is worth noting here the difference between asserting that future people will value something specific such as a lynx or the Amazon, and asserting that they will share currently fashionable framing concepts such as biodiversity (Maier 2012), natural capital (Sullivan 2014), ecosystem services (Costanza et al. 1997; Sullivan 2009) or indeed sustainability (Foster 2014; Farley and Smith 2014). The former may be justifiable, but the latter is probably not.

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