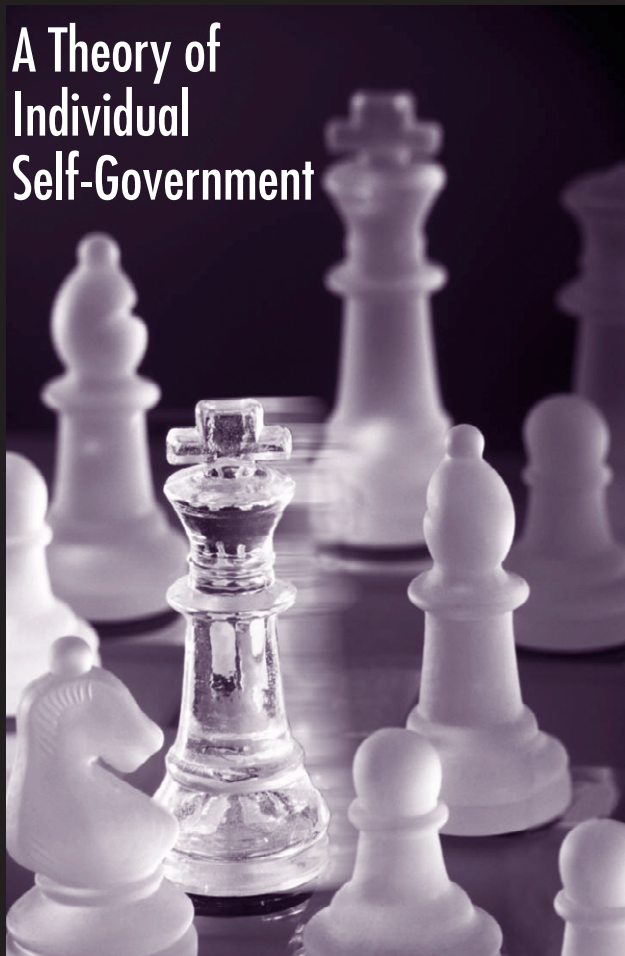# The Game of Justice

A Theory of Individual Self-Government

RUTH LANE

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A Theory of Individual Self–Government

Ruth Lane

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Preface

Typically I do not write prefaces, feeling that a book should explain itself without outside help, but *The Game of Justice* has had a sufficiently irregular provenance that a brief introductory comment may be in order. The book centers on three themes, which are not so much controversial in themselves as they are unexplored. First, I have separated the political from the state, so that politics is not restricted to the citizen's relationship to the national government, but occurs over the breakfast coffee, in the office corridors, everywhere one individual person relates to another. These interactions are political because they allocate human values, and the allocation is authoritative—for good or for ill—for the person involved.

Second, I have brought game theory to bear on this micropolitical world. Game theory as I use it here has two aspects: social science and social philosophy. Both originated in ordinary technical game theory but have escaped that narrow origin to provide an expanded framework for considering the human political condition in all its complexity. The game of justice defines the micropolitical world in two ways. On the one hand, every individual interaction between everyday people is seen as allocating values, implicitly and silently, for themselves and others who may resemble or emulate them. Justice is being decided whether the participants notice this or not.

On the other hand, the game of justice designation suggests to participants in the quotidian political processes that they might wish to revise some of their behavior in light of the game concept. Institutions may seem solid and immovable, but are sustained only by human actions, and in a game new actions can be devised to assert and reassert claims to just treatment. As this makes plain, these games of justice are open to new strategies that transform them. It is Wittgenstein most prominently who suggests that these open existential games have philosophical quality in that, as we define them, we define ourselves. But social scientists have a role, too, in explicating just how the grassroots interactions work.

The book's third theme is the idea of individual self-government. To some this seems paradoxical. Can the individual *as an individual* be political and thus an appropriate site for self-government? In fact, such a perspective, affirming

the necessity of individual self-government, entails a new dignity for the political person. Rather than being restricted to a narrow range of civic duties directed toward the state—voting, paying taxes, and so on—the individual takes on a fully developed range of political experience. Within that wide band of daily activity where no federal or local law reaches, the individual assumes the right and responsibility of self-government, able and willing to define personal values and goals, accepting the norms of political maturity that this allows. Such self-governed individuals are able to participate creatively in the game of justice.

Self-government is a particularly American value, bringing to a new concentration that individualism which has been our contribution to the exploration of human political possibilities. The democratic state has shown some of the marks of human self-government, but leaves more to be accomplished. Individual self-government, in the context of the themes of micropolitics and the game of justice, is a new step in this political inquiry.

The game of justice has debts in many fields of inquiry. I have been a student of game theory since graduate student days when I first encountered that formative generation of thinkers who brought modern analytic rigor to the study of politics: Anthony Downs, James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, and especially Thomas Schelling. I have relied also on a newer empirical approach, agent-centered modeling or self-organization theory, with which as a computer programmer I had a long experience before it became stylish, and without which I would never have proposed the questions that launched the inquiry, nor could I have found any resolution to the problems the questions created. In all this my debt to Wittgenstein is large and documented in the text, but the debt is equally large to Nietzsche, less fully documented here but pervasive nonetheless.

Classic political theory is another important debt, especially the work of Rousseau, with whom the inquiry began, since I have never quite recovered from the *Second Discourse;* also important is American political theory, in the work of Thoreau, where a theory of individual self-government had been more fully defined than even my New England upbringing could have predicted. Then of course there were the Europeans, Foucault and Bourdieu and others, who seemed to share my interest in the overlap between political theory and social science, and the straight political scientists, such as Migdal, who built substantive theories of self-organization in all countries at all levels of political experience.

The book is therefore political theory, political science, social science, and social philosophy. I hope I have not entirely failed to make a coherent whole out of these parts, in an attempt to provide a response to the oldest of all political questions.

Prologue

Politics, Democracy, and
the Game of Justice

Watermelon, Marching Bands, and Fireworks

Democracy means many contradictory things to many different people, and most definitions of democracy are unsatisfactory because their high level of abstraction fails to capture the ambiguities of the democratic experience. Sometimes a metaphor is more effective. Picture one of the Independence Day celebrations that have traditionally marked the Fourth of July in communities of all sizes in the United States. For generations, the Fourth has been a major summer holiday, marked by community and individual festivities, colorful parades, marching bands, flags flying, flowers blooming, speeches by local officials and visiting politicians, feasts of watermelon and ice cream, and finally the long anticipated fireworks display in the evening, spectacular and beautiful against the night sky, but too short; the performance never lasts long enough thoroughly to satisfy the enthusiastic audience.

And after the fireworks die down, the revelers go happily home to bed, waking the next morning to find that life has returned to its normal everyday routine. The storekeeper shortchanges his customers, the parade marshal is indicted on drug distribution charges, the mayor leaves town taking the road funds with him, the marching band and the volunteer firefighters have a disagreement so severe that the police must be called, the high school students stage a sit-down strike against the principal's new grading policy, the bank president resigns from the zoning board charging corruption and cronyism, the school valedictorian is found painting graffiti of questionable taste on the fence around the ballfield, and, in general, people must change back into their working clothes and take care of life's daily challenges.[1]

This colorful picture makes an austere point: democracy, like such political celebrations, can be something of a disappointment after the initial euphoria is over. The fireworks are fun, but, on the morning after, democracy turns out to be not so much a glorious solution to the political problems of human organization as a very preliminary beginning. The real work remains to be done. The inauguration of new democracies is good and is gratifying, as is the flourishing of old democracies, but both represent only partial steps along the road toward self-government. The real challenge begins on July Fifth, the day after the celebrations.

The problem is more than just the frictions and irregularities to which all human associations are prone. Even when democracy is the official constitution of a society, there remains in place a silent government that represents old hierarchies, old status systems, old exploitations, old favoritisms, old illusions, and old power relations. This silent government remains sufficiently effective that it permeates all the apparently democratic institutions on which so many people place their hopes. The mayor, who ran off with the road funds, would, for instance, never have been elected in a truly fair election based on candidate merits; in fact, he was a known scoundrel, elected only because he was from the town's traditional elite class, while his opponent was from an ethnic group that had not traditionally been considered worthy of public office. The marching band, involved in the postfestivity fracas, had been formed as a direct challenge to the Volunteer Fire Company several years earlier when the firefighters were shown to have used their central position in town affairs for personal enrichment. The zoning board members had a record of granting appeals from code regulations when their friends and relatives were involved, but denying comparable appeals from town newcomers. The valedictorian's disaffection occurred when the school guidance counselor told him that despite his intellectual talents he should not aspire to attend college but should find a manual trade more appropriate to his social group. One might go on to ask *which* customers the storekeeper shortchanged, and so on, but enough has been said to make the point.[2]

July Fifth is not just normal human irregularity but a manifestation of the implicit value structures found in every known human group, whether that group is a society, a community, a state, or even the local bowling league. These value structures are not 'democratic' in any idealistic sense, but are political; they define a value structure that ensures that some members of the group get most of what they want, given gladly, while other members of the group get very little of what they want and it is given grudgingly. This is the phenomenon I call political society, the micropolitical foundation of all states and nations, a foundation that serves to allocate the rights and the duties of the members to different *kinds* of persons. Political society exists in all societies of course, not just in democracies; but it is most

troublesome for democratic societies—and for democratic theorists—because it is often inconsistent with the professed and constitutional norms characteristic of democratic governments.

It is a frequent boast of democracies, for instance, that any man, however humble his background or low his station, can hope to become president; we teach this to our sons, and our daughters get the implicit point. Once upon a time, when members of privileged social groups were given silent, 'private' preference in school admissions, in employment opportunities, in promotions and economic advantages, such preferences seemed 'natural' and went unchallenged. Later, when 'public' programs were instituted to give opportunities to other, nonprivileged groups, such preferential treatment was sharply challenged and was seen as unacceptable and unconstitutional. It all depends, as folk wisdom has it, on whose ox is being gored. Or, in more formal terms, it depends on the exact shape of the silent value system I call political society, and whether the speaker benefits from, or suffers from, that value allocation.

My purpose here is not to quarrel with these manifestations of political society but to study the idea of political society with some theoretical care, and to attempt to bring it within the purview of political science and political philosophy as an element of the democratic experience to which it is, in the twenty-first century, now appropriate to turn.[3] My analysis of political society takes place within the context of traditional democratic theory: I assume the basic institutions of democratic government, that, as Downs (1957: 23-24) so concisely put it, leaders are chosen by popular election between at least two parties, elections are periodic, all adults vote, each adult gets one vote, that the majority wins, that the losers never try to prevent winners from taking office, and that the winners do not use their victory to destroy the losers. I assume also as the context for my discussion that a variety of liberal democratic provisions are in place to protect the disabled, the unemployed, and the needy; and that a legal structure is in place to deal with the usual crimes.[4]

Within this conventional democratic structure I go on to argue, however, that there is a great deal of political space that is untouched by the state, yet still deserves recognition for its political qualities and the political opportunities and challenges it presents. This ubiquity of politics is the starting point because it brings politics directly in contact with the individual woman and man, rather than restricting it to a far-off, official state. In everyday action and in interaction with others, individual behavior defines political society and the values that are distributed there. This is the arena in which the game of justice is played, where individual persons consciously or unconsciously negotiate with one another over their status in the society. To take effective part in this strategic game, individuals need their wits about them, need what I call individual self-government. Individual self-government is based on a full, personal understanding of the self, as well as a strong understanding of other people and

the social world in which everyone lives. The game of justice includes several levels of analysis, from the practical to the existential; from questions of classical philosophical inquiry, to social scientific techniques of sociology and political economy, to practices on various types of playing field. What the term "game" provides for political scientists and citizens as well is a radical opening of all established institutions. In a game perspective, the status quo is neither absolute nor inevitable, but is the result of past political controversy, a result created by the winners to express and consolidate their victory. But winners and losers change places over time, which serves as encouragement to past losers and a cautionary reminder to past winners. Traditional rights lose the patina of legitimacy, as do traditional wrongs. The gaming field is open to talent.[5]

Who Governs Whom, When, How?

Modern political theory has traditionally centered on the state, its sources, its premises, its principles, its legitimacy, and its justification. But in recent years a vibrant and creative dialogue among political theorists has turned into something of a standoff, where no one is gaining ground, no one is giving ground, and no one is breaking new ground. The debates among liberals, communitarians, classical rationalists, genealogists, and libertarians over the condition of the liberal democratic state have converged toward a conclusion that the state and the self are inextricably related. Like it or not, political society and the political system mold their inhabitants; that the opposing schools agree on the central role of the state may be just the factor that makes the debate so intractable. If the state is the causal force theorists assume it to be, then any amelioration of the modern condition—toward community, rationality, aesthetic liberation, freedom, or justice—must be accomplished by the state. This possibility seems so unlikely that the debates have come to seem chimerical. The problem is that the liberal democratic state, long viewed as the culmination of Western, and perhaps universal, political development, has ceased to satisfy observers.[6]

Classical rationalists claim the state undermines human values and human capacities, communitarians charge that the liberal state has deprived its members of the close human relations essential to human development, genealogists argue the state disciplines and distorts its subjects, and liberals are left with the residual argument, which is by that point obviously true, that in the face of such dissensus, the liberal pluralist state is the best we can expect. Dead-end paths can be creative if they provoke people to leave well-tried solutions and break into more open and perhaps uncharted country. Observation of recent activity in a number of intellectual domains suggests that some

such process may be under way. Especially relevant to the present argument is the impact of late modern and postmodern criticism of the metaphysical bases on which political science and political theory have historically based themselves.[7] While few thinkers have accepted an absolute relativism in respect to the traditional truths of democratic liberal governments, most theorists have come, if reluctantly, to accept the difficulty of defending any absolute claims in respect to individual or group rights and liberties, the norms of contract and representation, or the justifications of state sovereignty. In this more contentious world, where rules are less clear and expectations are less secure, the division between political science and political theory is fast fading. What *should* be, in political systems, is increasingly influenced by what *is*.[8] Political theory is thus being transmuted into political science; political science, with a new responsibility to explain human behavior beyond the state, is open to all of the social sciences and to questions hitherto considered normative. If individual women and men are to flourish in an everyday world permeated by politics, political science increases in both extent and content. Self-government at the state level becomes only a starting point, and theoretical interest shifts to the ways and means by which a greater self-government, *individual* self-government, is achieved.

Modern liberal democracies cannot be expected to 'correct' their course in accord with the hopes of their critics. Modern societies continue in the direction they have already established, where the miracles of modern technology are counterbalanced by the evils of crime, drugs, consumerism, media triviality, and social irresponsibility. If the modern state has any ameliorative power here, it has failed to manifest it. If the state cannot be depended on to improve the modern condition, some new direction in political thinking is needed. This new direction will not include burning bridges or abolishing the fruits of the political past, nor will it discard the liberal democratic politics to which we have all become accustomed. Where there are felt interests to be defended and reconciled, modern democracies work passably well.

But if state-centered politics is not the problem, neither is it the solution. Those who seek higher meanings of freedom, community, or justice in the operation of state-centered politics are doomed to a long and fruitless search. Neither will those who seek amelioration of social inequity find solutions in the state. To put the matter baldly, the liberal state is not the problem. *It* does not burn churches, *it* does not establish glass ceilings, *it* does not mandate social discrimination and violence.[9] People of various kinds in modern liberal societies do face serious threats, but these are not of the state's making; they are created within and by political society, the grassroots everyday interactions that form the invisible basis of human institutions. Political theory needs to address these issues with both philosophy and political science.[10]

My argument is that an approach to these kinds of issues can be found in the notion of individual, personal self-government, and in the participation of such self-governed individuals in the complex social process I call the game of justice. If the citizens of modern democracies are to achieve results worthy of their resources in time, wealth, education, and purpose, they will stop focusing on the state and look elsewhere. 'Civil society' is not the solution because, despite the pious hopes of its advocates, civil society is often uncivil.[11] Solutions will instead look to the modern individual and the personal political games in which such individuals take part. Such individuals need to be defined in a different way, not as self-indulgent paradigms of democratic whim but as self-governing individuals, placed within existing legal and constitutional structures but looking beyond them for fulfillment.

The model to be investigated here begins with micropolitics, which surrounds individuals on all sides, among their friends, family, teachers, and associates. In this political society, values are allocated by an invisible interactive process, most effectively defined as a game that is both existential, in Wittgenstein's sense, and practical, in standard game theoretic terms. Effective participation in such a daily political environment is achieved only by individuals who are themselves self-governed; in other words, the center of the political experience is not the state but real persons. Individual self-government is distinguished from other contemporary norms, such as authenticity or autonomy, by its deeply *political* nature. Self-government for individuals, as for states, involves the active protection of borders and a close attention to matters of domestic order. It is an ongoing exercise in the construction of justice. My purpose is to extend the idea of self-government from states and societies to individual women and men. Such an extension would suggest that individual or personal self-government is the next stage in political development. It will occur when liberal democratic states have freed their citizens from tyranny and want, and left them the political space in which to investigate this particular type of individual value.

Self-government in respect to groups, societies, or nations is of course an ancient ideal, but it has always contained considerable ambiguity in reference to the central issue of just how, in practical terms, any group can actually govern itself.[12] Should decisions be made by representative leaders, by group consensus, by majority vote? Do any of these methods of self-government provide legitimacy sufficient to compensate for the opportunities they offer—opportunities for some members to take advantage of other members, through the manipulation and coercion of the weak by the strong, or the domination of the tractable by the stubborn? Only perhaps at the level of the individual person does self-government achieve clarity of definition and coherence of purpose because only in the individual case is the political system reduced to its most basic elements and brought under individual control.

Self-Government in Political Society

The picture I would like to sketch includes the following elements.

- The concept of self-government is a familiar and justly valued aim in politics, and deserves to be given a wider usage in political discourse now that in many industrialized societies its principles have been largely satisfied in various forms of constitutional government. The idea of individual self-government, moving to a more personal level of government, provides this wider scope and suggests new directions of analysis.
- The concept of individual self-government builds on trends already more than evident in most advanced societies, trends based on denigration of states and governments and the associated idea that the more local government is, the better it is.
- The problems of society in modern liberal democracies are not state problems and the state cannot be asked to solve them. Blaming the state is impractical and fruitless because states have neither the will nor the power to meet such challenges.
- Political systems are not simply the sum of state, citizen, and (sometimes) 'civil' society; they include also 'political' society where individuals work out through personal interactions with one another what are to be the basic principles of the system.
- These implicit, negotiated principles include silent categorizations of different types of people. Some types of persons are accorded most of the rights in society, others are assigned most of the social duties; some individuals are defined as those worthy of admiration, others are worthy of scorn; some types are given opportunities, others constraints; some people are to be trusted, others are not worthy of trust.
- These categorizations do not, as is sometimes claimed, reflect 'natural' categories, nor are they the result of merit and performance. The categorizations are political, created by the winners in the ongoing interactive negotiation called the game of justice, and politics can be played with high principles or low blows. Either may win, depending on the luck of the game. This imposes on the individual player both a discipline and an opportunity.
- Modern societies are beset by ills often attributed to individualism. Rather than attempting to change individualism into some wholly different belief structure, the idea of self-government accepts the modern trend and builds on it. The focus of this analysis is on individual politics, the game of justice played by women and men in the micropolitical society in which we all live our daily lives. It is an arena where political theory and political science meet.

The Original Position

The basic argument of political theories going back to Thomas Hobbes and John Locke has been the premise of free men entering society only as a result of freely given consent to the terms of a more or less explicit social contract. From this it often followed that citizens had, from the very beginning of their association, rights against the state, claims that could not be denied if the state were to continue to call itself legitimate. Of course no one meant these states of nature to be historical facts; they were 'as if' models designed to gather one's thoughts and direct them along certain paths. The current problem is that, even allowing the liberal model great poetic license, the model has become implausible. Everything modern social science has discovered about human behavior—and political theory cannot entirely ignore the basic research of the social sciences—flies in the face of such an idealization. People are born embedded in, and at the mercy of, society. Even their goals are learned (e.g., Berger and Luckmann 1967).

Political theory needs therefore to reconsider its premises. One approach to such a reconsideration would be to begin with inherently social beings and ask what becomes of them in the course of their own and others' political development. Political theory thus takes on a whiff of *realpolitik,* covering the ways in which individual women and men strategically and tactically may find freedom in confrontation with other individuals and institutions that seek to deny them that freedom. In such a discussion, government and politics (in both the highest and the lowest sense) play a central role. Traditional philosophers, nontraditional political theorists, contemporary deconstructionists, and political commentators find place in the inquiry, from Nietzsche to Garfinkel, from Rousseau to von Neumann and Morgenstern. The inquiry casts a new light on what may be going on behind the veil of ignorance.[13]

Self-government at the individual level is much easier to handle than self-government at the group or whole-society level. At the individual level of self-government there is one decision-maker legislating for one (and the same) person.[14] This reformulation not only simplifies many of the old problems, it also directs theorists toward new questions, such as the criteria by which we judge government as an actual condition. At the state level, government is considered adequate if it is orderly, legal, and provides for the feasible expressed wants of the governed. Indeed government is often considered adequate if it maintains itself in power, with the observer applying no criteria at all, beyond the bald fact of a state's existence. By bringing the question of government to the individual level, much sterner questions can be raised about what it means to govern or to be well-governed. What general criteria should be employed in assessing government? Is good government the same as democracy? What would self-government entail for individual women and men? What circumstances

hinder self-government? Does the state hinder individuals? Or do individuals perhaps hinder themselves from self-government?

A balanced evaluation of the major players in the discussion surrounding liberalism (Digeser 1995) emphasizes several areas of agreement between the contending schools. Communitarians, rationalists, and genealogists all tend to agree, Digeser argues, in their "willingness to judge the quality of political and cultural life, at least in part, by their effect upon our identities," in their perception of selves as "deeply political," with an "internal politics" reflecting preferences about external politics, and in their belief that political and social organizations are responsible for counteracting the negative effects of present regimes (Digeser 1995: 59–60). Despite these areas of agreement, however, rationalists, communitarians, and genealogists speak different languages and valorize contrasting models of human experience. By their strong disagreements, the various contending schools give support to the basic liberal argument that social and political agreement is impossible in the modern world and that, because of this diversity, contractual pluralism is the only workable solution for modern societies.[15]

The liberal democratic argument has always been based on the social contract model which, although it may lead the theorists in many different directions, as with Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, or Kant, nonetheless implies and perhaps cannot be supported without the existence of individual consent to the contract (Kukathas and Pettit 1990). Vigorous challenge to this assumption of individuals' consenting freely to membership in social and political groups has been mounted by Alford (1994), who argues that the 'state of nature' is an inaccurate model of society. The classic theorists, according to this approach, had their argument exactly backward: The political problem is *not* "to socialize autonomous individuals" but "to help group members individuate themselves . . . so that they may come to live freely and critically" (Alford 1994: 7).

This argument suggests that the state of nature may more closely resemble William Golding's novel *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) than the pure and abstract original position. The story describes what happens when a group of hitherto "well-brought-up" boys find themselves marooned on an uninhabited island. The resulting events are neither Hobbes's war of all against all, nor Locke's industrious mixing of labor with land under the natural law, nor Rousseau's General Will where perfect unity is created through complete self-sacrifice. Instead, the basic picture Golding draws in *The Lord of the Flies* is of people *caught in a situation and in a group over which they have had no choice and in respect to which they have little control.* The interesting element of the novel is the precise particular way in which the inherent structural dynamics work out in actual practice.

First, one of the older boys slips into a leadership position, supported in his role by the smartest member of the group who is, however, because of physical

weakness, the butt of the group's scorn. These two leaders 'rationally' decide that the primary task must be to keep a fire going so that some ship will see it and rescue them. As they struggle with this task, which is hard, boring work, a challenger to the leaders emerges and lures away the smaller boys, who think it much better fun to paint their faces with clay and conduct war parties hunting wild pigs than to do the heavy work necessary to maintain the signal fire. The new leader also makes war on any who do not voluntarily join him. By the close of the narrative, the former choirboys have killed three of their members, one by accident, one during a savage orgy, another in calculated cold blood. They have also set fire to the entire island, and this disaster threatens all their lives (until the smoke finally attracts a naval vessel, whose officers restore order).[16]

The story gives color to theory such as Alford's and corresponds with recent theory in comparative politics (Migdal 1988) that emphasizes that the basic political—indeed human—problem is to protect oneself and one's interests in the teeth of threatening social and physical conditions. The lost boys on their uninhabited island could not choose their fate or the attributes that forced them into certain relations with others in the group. The young deferred to the elder, the slow-thinking leader needed a smart advisor, who, however, faced group hostility that he could not, given his physical appearance, escape; the work needed for survival created discontent and a niche for a new leader; keeping one's group happy required enemies, and so on. Events quickly progressed to murder and conflagration. Even readers with knowledge of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' rationalistic interpretation of an innocent state of nature cannot escape the lesson of *The Lord of the Flies,* that life and politics are inextricable and they may take a severe toll on unprepared individuals.

Defining Self-Government

Critics of liberal democracy often make the error of prescribing remedies that fly in the face of obvious facts. If everything in the liberal democratic economy and culture has led to the ever-increasing individualization of the citizen, then the role of theory seems to be defined as 'talking people around' until they reform themselves and adopt whatever principles the theorist himself prefers. Charles Taylor (1992) has spoken against this patronizing strategy, arguing rather that one should study what is actually happening and try to find the logic of it. The culture of narcissism, he contends, is not simply self-centered or self-indulgent but an (albeit flawed) attempt at "ethical aspiration." The ideal that makes "self-fulfillment the major value in life" and that denies "moral demands or serious commitments to others" is an "ideal that is not fully comprehended, and which properly understood would challenge" many of its own

practices (Taylor 1992: 55–56). Yet there is no 'trend' in this modern debate, he concludes, only the possibility that social theory can enter into the current culture and try to show the true meaning of its animating ideal (79).

The popular ideals of agency, autonomy, authenticity, and autarchy, for all their intuitive appeal, are extremely difficult to defend. As Digeser (1995) sympathetically shows, the wise are not necessarily just or moral, the self united with the community is not necessarily realized, autonomy is not necessarily the most satisfying way to run a life, and an ideal of authenticity is difficult to maintain in a deconstructionist world where inherent meanings are absent—what is one authentic *to,* when there are no essences?[17] The threat of solipsism that dogs authenticity need not, however, be wholly destructive; its self-referential nature need not mean that the substance is narrowly personal, but may include a political cause, stewardship of the environment, or anything "that stands beyond" the merely personal (Taylor 1992: 82).

The concept of individual self-government works in this direction. Modern practice has debased the idea of government by using it to refer to the powers that be, regardless of their excellence, justice, or values. In thinking about individual self-government, therefore, it is useful to return to the ancient metaphor of government: the pilot of a ship. She does not pilot the ship well, does not govern it, if it runs aground and sinks, if it fails to take in sail and capsizes in a storm, or if it makes port at the wrong destination. Government in this metaphor meant to govern well, and it is used here in that sense. The self is only governed if it is well-governed. A preliminary definition of self-government might be the following:

> Individual self-government entails the construction of a personal value and goal structure answering the specific needs, resources, and desires of the individual person; the defense of these goals against invaders; the basing of social relations on a respect for the self-government of those with whom one disagrees; and on a respect for, and an affection for, those with whom one agrees.

This individual self-government does not replace public forms of government but supplements them from within. Self-government occurs within the usual existing democratic structures, toward which one displays vigilance but not interest. In modern democracies, the state is not the problem. One drives on the right side of the street, pays one's taxes, and never finds the Leviathan a personal issue.[18] This leaves the citizen with a good deal of spare time, time that is—despite the absence of the state—still political because it needs to be defined, ordered, and defended.

The game of justice bridges several philosophical distinctions within theory and social science. It is, on the one hand, classical, recalling Socrates's personal

politics in respect to the meaning, practice, and rewards of the just life, but it has learned much from the study of the modern state, beginning with Machiavelli's political realism, and extending into Hobbesian wars of all against all and Rousseau's social origins of inequality. The game of justice also bridges epistemological divisions current in present-day social science and social philosophy. Its approach is on the one hand modern, emphasizing operational goals of strategy and tactical calculation, and the belief that there are, within some limits, laws of human behavior that can be known and utilized. On the other hand, along with its allegiance to modern norms of science, the game of justice has a distinctly postmodern dimension, expressed best by Wittgenstein's late philosophy, that exemplifies an openness of definition and an acceptance of previously uncharted possibilities in the human condition. Such an approach is not normative in the absolute sense of defining ideals that *ought* to inhere in political action, yet the approach is not without an ability to be useful in respect to the problems of individual women and men and the societies they create, maintain, or destroy with their actions. The model of the game of justice has the following basic elements.

- First, that justice *is politics,* in all the high and low meanings of that ambiguous word.
- Second, that politics is always micropolitics, close to ordinary people; it is not a far-off phenomenon located in some abstract institution known as the state.
- Third, that individualism does not entail, as sometimes charged, a vacuous narcissism, but is politically disciplined, based on self-definition, self-defense, and, most important, on the goal of self-government.
- Fourth, that the concept of game provides a new appreciation of the possibilities of creating justice because the game model shows that both winners and losers may be temporary; this gives courage to the underprivileged, and caution to the overprivileged.
- Fifth, that playing the game well requires ordinary folks to become self-governing individuals who are able to find in themselves their own definitions of justice, and to live by those definitions as responsible participants in a personal political world.
- Last, that social science is a useful tool for everyday women and men, in understanding and in playing the games that make and remake the societies in which we live and work.

The game of justice is played in a challenging world that makes serious demands on participants, in terms of self-knowledge and individual self-government, and also in terms of understanding of social behavior, the actions

of people around them. The subtitle of the book summarizes this as a theory of individual self-government, in which "government" entails the ability to know one's deepest principles, the courage to maintain them in good times and in bad, and the skill to carry them proudly into practical games. Self-government of the individual woman or man means that, where all else fails, individual persons find justice within themselves, independent of circumstances. Politics is, in short, not only local, it is personal.

Summary of the Argument

The following chapters are built around several related themes, weaving them together within a single model of the potentially independent individual within a rich and omnipresent political milieu that is both the source of individual growth and a constant challenge to that growth. Fundamental to the entire argument is the assumption of the expanded definition of the political, leaving the state behind in intellectual terms and exploring the possibilities of politics beyond the state's traditional borders. Equally important to the discussion is the microanalytic method, which begins from the bottom up and seeks to understand the human experience from the viewpoint of everyday women and men, allowing their actions and interactions to define the relevant field and any institutions that may arise within its purview, rather than working from top down, squeezing people into the shape prescribed by 'higher' or macro institutions. Related to the microanalytic approach is the bringing together under a single model of research and theory from social sciences such as sociology and economics, along with political thinkers from the past and present.

Because of the diversity of human experience and of the social sciences as they attempt to encompass that experience, the idea of the game is given a central position, and game theory is expanded to allow it to cover the several analytic levels important to understanding micropolitical experience. I emphasize the openness of the game model, as well as its rigor; and argue that because it allows observers to give structure to micropolitical activity but does not impose artificial constraints on the analysis, it is particularly appropriate to the development of both knowledge and wisdom in the actual practice of politics. The central political concept in this inquiry is justice, and how in a systematically imperfect world, justice is formed from the bottom up, through accident or through the efforts of individuals who are caught in games they have not willingly joined and of which they are perhaps unaware. The educational aspect of the game of justice is advice to the unwary; suggesting that only self-governing individuals can sufficiently rise to the challenges the game imposes on each of the participants. As a corollary to the thesis that the state is now of less political interest than it once received, the model emphasizes the relation of self-knowledge to