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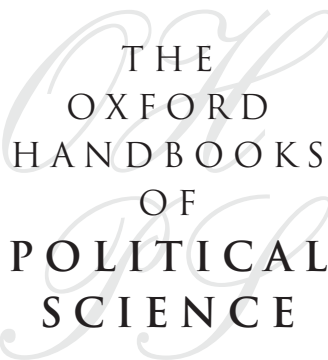
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The Oxford Handbook *of*
POLITICAL
THEORY

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF
POLITICAL THEORY



THE OXFORD HANDBOOKS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

GENERAL EDITOR: ROBERT E. GOODIN

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THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

POLITICAL THEORY

Edited by

JOHN S. DRYZEK
BONNIE HONIG
and
ANNE PHILLIPS

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CONTENTS

About the Contributors

xi

PART I INTRODUCTION

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Introduction | 3 |
| JOHN S. DRYZEK, BONNIE HONIG & ANNE PHILLIPS | |

PART II CONTEMPORARY CURRENTS

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 2. Justice After Rawls | 45 |
| RICHARD J. ARNESON | |
| 3. Power After Foucault | 65 |
| WENDY BROWN | |
| 4. Critical Theory Beyond Habermas | 85 |
| WILLIAM E. SCHEUERMAN | |
| 5. Feminist Theory and the Canon of Political Thought | 106 |
| LINDA ZERILLI | |
| 6. After the Linguistic Turn: Post-structuralist and Liberal
Pragmatist Political Theory | 125 |
| PAUL PATTON | |
| 7. The Pluralist Imagination | 142 |
| DAVID SCHLOSBERG | |

PART III THE LEGACY OF THE PAST

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 8. Theory in History: Problems of Context and Narrative
J. G. A. Pocock | 163 |
| 9. The Political Theory of Classical Greece
Jill Frank | 175 |
| 10. Republican Visions
Eric Nelson | 193 |
| 11. Modernity and Its Critics
Jane Bennett | 211 |
| 12. The History of Political Thought as Disciplinary Genre
James Farr | 225 |

PART IV POLITICAL THEORY IN THE WORLD

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 13. The Challenge of European Union
Richard Bellamy | 245 |
| 14. East Asia and the West: The Impact of Confucianism on Anglo-
American Political Theory
Daniel A. Bell | 262 |
| 15. In the Beginning, All the World was America: American Exceptionalism
in New Contexts
Ronald J. Schmidt, Jr. | 281 |
| 16. Changing Interpretations of Modern and Contemporary Islamic
Political Theory
Roxanne L. Euben | 297 |

PART V STATE AND PEOPLE

17. Constitutionalism and the Rule of Law SHANNON C. STIMSON	317
18. Emergency Powers JOHN FEREJOHN & PASQUALE PASQUINO	333
19. The People MARGARET CANOVAN	349
20. Civil Society and the State SIMONE CHAMBERS & JEFFREY KOPSTEIN	363
21. Democracy and the State MARK E. WARREN	382
22. Democracy and Citizenship: Expanding Domains MICHAEL SAWARD	400

PART VI JUSTICE, EQUALITY, AND FREEDOM

23. Impartiality SUSAN MENDUS	423
24. Justice, Luck, and Desert SERENA OLSARETTI	436
25. Recognition and Redistribution PATCHEN MARKELL	450
26. Equality and Difference JUDITH SQUIRES	470
27. Liberty, Equality, and Property ANDREW WILLIAMS	488

28. Historical Injustice	507
DUNCAN IVISON	

PART VII PLURALISM, MULTICULTURALISM, AND NATIONALISM

29. Nationalism	529
DAVID MILLER	
30. Multiculturalism and its Critics	546
JEFF SPINNER-HALEV	
31. Identity, Difference, Toleration	564
ANNA ELISABETTA GALEOTTI	
32. Moral Universalism and Cultural Difference	581
CHANDRAN KUKATHAS	

PART VIII CLAIMS IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

33. Human Rights	601
JACK DONNELLY	
34. From International to Global Justice?	621
CHRIS BROWN	
35. Political Secularism	636
RAJEEV BHARGAVA	
36. Multiculturalism and Post-colonial Theory	656
PAUL GILROY	

PART IX THE BODY POLITIC

37. Politicizing the Body: Property, Contract, and Rights	677
MOIRA GATENS	

38. New Ways of Thinking about Privacy BEATE ROESSLER	694
39. New Technologies, Justice, and the Body CÉCILE FABRE	713
40. Paranoia and Political Philosophy JAMES M. GLASS	729

PART X TESTING THE BOUNDARIES

41. Political Theory and Cultural Studies JODI DEAN	751
42. Political Theory and the Environment JOHN M. MEYER	773
43. Political Theory and Political Economy STEPHEN L. ELKIN	792
44. Political Theory and Social Theory CHRISTINE HELLIWELL & BARRY HINDESS	810

PART XI OLD AND NEW

45. Then and Now: Participant-Observation in Political Theory WILLIAM E. CONNOLLY	827
46. Exile and Re-entry: Political Theory Yesterday and Tomorrow ARLENE W. SAXONHOUSE	844

<i>Index</i>	859
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PART I

INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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“What’s your line of business, then?”

“I’m a scholar of the Enlightenment,” said Nicholas.

“Oh Lord!” the young man said. “Another producer of useless graduates!”

Nicholas felt despondent.

(Lukes 1995: 199)

IN *The Curious Enlightenment of Professor Caritat*—Steven Lukes’ fictionalized round-up of contemporary political theory—the hapless professor has been kidnapped by the resistance movement and sent off to search for grounds for optimism. In Utilitaria, he is asked to give a lecture on “Breaking Free from the Past;” in Communitaria, on “Why the Enlightenment Project Had to Fail.” Neither topic is much to his taste, but it is only when he reaches Libertaria (not, as one of its gloomy inhabitants tells him, a good place to be unlucky, unemployed, or employed by the state) that he is made to recognize the limited purchase of his academic expertise. At the end of the book, the professor still has not found the mythical land of Egalitaria. But he has

derived one important lesson from his adventures: in the pursuit of any one ideal, it is disastrous to lose sight of all the others.

This *Handbook* is not organized around categories such as utilitarianism, communitarianism, or libertarianism, and though it also notes the continuing elusiveness of egalitarianism, it does not promote any single ideal. The *Handbook* seeks, instead, to reflect the pluralism of contemporary political theory, a pluralism we regard as a key feature and major strength of the field. In this introduction, we clarify what we understand by political theory, identify major themes and developments over recent decades, and take stock of the contemporary condition of the field. We end with an explanation of the categories through which we have organized the contributions to the *Handbook*.

1 WHAT IS POLITICAL THEORY?

Political Theory is an interdisciplinary endeavor whose center of gravity lies at the humanities end of the happily still undisciplined discipline of political science. Its traditions, approaches, and styles vary, but the field is united by a commitment to theorize, critique, and diagnose the norms, practices, and organization of political action in the past and present, in our own places and elsewhere. Across what sometimes seem chasms of difference, political theorists share a concern with the demands of justice and how to fulfill them, the presuppositions and promise of democracy, the divide between secular and religious ways of life, and the nature and identity of public goods, among many other topics.

Political theorists also share a commitment to the humanistic study of politics (although with considerable disagreement over what that means), and a skepticism towards the hegemony sometimes sought by our more self-consciously “scientific” colleagues. In recent years, and especially in the USA, the study of politics has become increasingly formal and quantitative. Indeed, there are those for whom political theory, properly understood, would be formal theory geared solely towards the *explanation* of political phenomena, where explanation is modeled on the natural sciences and takes the form of seeking patterns and offering causal explanations for events in the human world. Such approaches have been challenged—most recently by

the Perestroika movement (Monroe 2005)—on behalf of more qualitative and interpretive approaches. Political theory is located at one remove from this quantitative vs. qualitative debate, sitting somewhere between the distanced universals of normative philosophy and the empirical world of politics.

For a long time, the challenge for the identity of political theory has been how to position itself productively in three sorts of location: in relation to the academic disciplines of political science, history, and philosophy; between the world of politics and the more abstract, ruminative register of theory; between canonical political theory and the newer resources (such as feminist and critical theory, discourse analysis, film and film theory, popular and political culture, mass media studies, neuroscience, environmental studies, behavioral science, and economics) on which political theorists increasingly draw. Political theorists engage with empirical work in politics, economics, sociology, and law to inform their reflections, and there have been plenty of productive associations between those who call themselves political scientists and those who call themselves political theorists. The connection to law is strongest when it comes to constitutional law and its normative foundations (for example, Sunstein 1993; Tully 1995, 2002; this connection is covered in our chapters by Stimson and by Ferejohn and Pasquino).

Most of political theory has an irreducibly normative component—regardless of whether the theory is systematic or diagnostic in its approach, textual or cultural in its focus, analytic, critical, genealogical, or deconstructive in its method, ideal or piecemeal in its procedures, socialist, liberal, or conservative in its politics. The field welcomes all these approaches. It has a core canon, often referred to as Plato to NATO, although the canon is itself unstable, with the rediscovery of figures such as Sophocles, Thucydides, Baruch Spinoza, and Mary Wollstonecraft, previously treated as marginal, and the addition of new icons such as Hannah Arendt, John Rawls, Michel Foucault, and Jürgen Habermas. Moreover, the subject matter of political theory has always extended beyond this canon and its interpretations, as theorists bring their analytic tools to bear on novels, film, and other cultural artifacts, and on developments in other social sciences and even in natural science.

Political theory is an unapologetically mongrel sub-discipline, with no dominant methodology or approach. When asked to describe themselves, theorists will sometimes employ the shorthand of a key formative influence—as in “I’m a Deleuzian,” or Rawlsian, or Habermasian, or Arendtian—although it is probably more common to be labeled in this way by others than to claim the description oneself. In contrast, however, to some neighboring producers

of knowledge, political theorists do not readily position themselves by reference to three or four dominant schools that define their field. There is, for example, no parallel to the division between realists, liberals, and constructivists, recently joined by neoconservatives, that defines international relations theory. And there is certainly nothing like the old Marx–Weber–Durkheim triad that was the staple of courses in sociological theory up to the 1970s.

Because of this, political theory can sometimes seem to lack a core identity. Some practitioners seek to rectify the perceived lack, either by putting political theory back into what is said to be its proper role as arbiter of universal questions and explorer of timeless texts, or by returning the focus of political theory to history. The majority, however, have a strong sense of their vocation. Many see the internally riven and uncertain character of the field as reflective of the internally riven and uncertain character of the political world in which we live, bringing with it all the challenges and promises of that condition. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, liberal, critical, and post-structuralist theorists have (in their very different ways) responded to the breakdown of old assumptions about the unitary nature of nation-state identities. They have rethought the presuppositions and meanings of identity, often rejecting unitary conceptions and moving towards more pluralistic, diverse, or agonistic conceptions in their place. These reflections have had an impact on the field's own self-perception and understanding. Happily for political theory, the process has coincided with a movement within the academy to reconceive knowledge as more fundamentally *interdisciplinary*. This reconsideration of the function and role of the boundaries of the academic disciplines may help others, as well as political theorists, to see the field's pluralism as a virtue and a strength, rather than a weakness in need of rectification.

1.1 Relationship with Political Science

Political theory's relationship to the discipline of political science has not always been a happy one. Since the founding of the discipline in the late nineteenth century, there have been periodic proclamations of its newly scientific character. The "soft" other for the new science has sometimes been journalism, sometimes historical narrative, sometimes case-study methods. It has also, very often, been political theory. Beginning in the 1950s, behavioral

revolutionaries tried to purge the ranks of theorists—and had some success at this in one or two large Midwestern departments of political science in the USA. The later impact of rational choice theory encouraged others, like William Riker (1982a: 753), to reject “belles lettres, criticism, and philosophic speculation” along with “phenomenology and hermeneutics.” For those driven by their scientific aspirations, it has always been important to distinguish the “true” scientific study of politics from more humanistic approaches—and political theory has sometimes borne the brunt of this.

Political theorists have noted, in response, that science and objectivity are steeped in a normativity that the self-proclaimed scientists wrongly disavow; and theorists have not been inclined to take the description of political “science” at face value. They have challenged the idea that their own work in normative theory lacks rigor, pointing to criteria *within* political theory that differentiate more from less rigorous work. While resisting the epistemic assumptions of empiricism, many also point out that much of what passes for political theory is profoundly engaged with empirical politics: what, after all, could be more “real”, vital, and important than the symbols and categories that organize our lives and the frameworks of our understanding? The French have a word to describe what results when those elected as president and prime minister are representatives of two different political parties: *cohabitation*. The word connotes, variously, cooperation, toleration, sufferance, antagonism, and a sense of common enterprise. Cohabitation, in this sense, is a good way to cast the relationship between political theory and political science.

1.2 Relationship with History

History as a point of reference has also proven contentious, with recurrent debates about the extent to which theory is contained by its historical context (see Pocock and Farr in this volume), and whether one can legitimately employ political principles from one era as a basis for criticizing political practice in another. When Quentin Skinner, famous for his commitment to historical contextualism, suggested that early principles of republican freedom might offer a telling alternative to the conceptions of liberty around today, he took care to distance himself from any suggestion that “intellectual historians should turn themselves into moralists” (Skinner 1998: 118). He still drew criticism for abandoning the historian’s traditional caution.

In an essay published in 1989, Richard Ashcraft called upon political theorists to acknowledge the fundamentally historical character of their enterprise. While contemporary theorists recognize the “basic social/historical conditions which structure” their practice, “this recognition does not serve as a conscious guideline for their teaching and writing of political theory.” Ashcraft continued: “On the contrary, political theory is taught and written about *as if* it were great philosophy rather than ideology” (Ashcraft 1989: 700). For Ashcraft, acknowledging the ideological character of political theory meant embracing its political character. The main objects of his critique were Leo Strauss and his followers, whom Ashcraft saw as seeking evidence of universally valid standards in canonical political theorists and calling on those standards to judge their works. For Straussians, the wisdom of the ancients and greats is outside history.

Ashcraft also criticized Sheldon Wolin, who shared Ashcraft’s displeasure with Straussians, on the grounds of their inadequate attention to politics (see Saxonhouse’s contribution to this volume). Although Wolin acknowledged the historicity of the texts he had examined in his seminal *Politics and Vision* (1960), Ashcraft claimed that Wolin resisted the “wholesale transformation” that would result, in both his view and Ashcraft’s, from putting that historicity at the center of his interpretative practice. Wolin is famous for championing what, in the style of Hannah Arendt, he termed “the political:” politics understood, not in its instrumental capacity (Harold Lasswell’s (1961) “‘Who gets what, when, and how’”), but rather in its orientation toward the public good coupled with a commitment to the “public happiness” of political participation. Contra Ashcraft, one might see Wolin’s move to the political as a way of splitting the difference between a Straussian universalism and the thick contextualism of Ashcraft’s preferred historicist approach.

“The political” is a conceptual category, itself outside of history, that rejects the idea that politics is about universal truths, while also rejecting the reduction of politics to interests. “The political” tends to connote, minimally, some form of individual or collective action that disrupts ordinary states of affairs, normal life, or routine patterns of behavior or governance. There are diverse conceptions of this notion. To take three as exemplary: the political takes its meaning from its figuration in Wolin’s work by contrast primarily with statism, constitutionalism, and political apathy; in Arendt’s work by contrast with private or natural spheres of human behavior; and in Ranciere’s (1999) work by contrast with the “police.”

1.3 Relationship with Philosophy

The most un-historical influence on political theory in recent decades has been John Rawls, whose work represents a close alliance with analytic philosophy. On one popular account, Rawls arrived from outside as political theory's foreign savior and rescued political theory from the doldrums with the publication in 1971 of *A Theory of Justice* (see Arneson in this volume). Rawls' book was an ambitious, normative, and systematic investigation of what political, economic, and social justice should look like in contemporary democracies. With the distancing mechanisms of a veil of ignorance and hypothetical social contract, Rawls followed Kant in looking to reason to adjudicate what he saw as the fundamental question of politics: the conflict between liberty and equality. Writing from within the discipline of philosophy, he returned political theory to one of its grand styles (Tocqueville's two-volume *Democracy in America*, also written by an outsider, would represent another). Much subsequent work on questions of justice and equality has continued in this vein, and while those who have followed Rawls have not necessarily shared his conclusions, they have often employed similar mind experiments to arrive at the appropriate relationship between equality and choice. The clamshell auction imagined by Ronald Dworkin (1981), where all the society's resources are up for sale and the participants employ their clamshells to bid for what best suits their own projects in life, is another classic illustration. Starting with what seems the remotest of scenarios, Dworkin claims to arrive at very specific recommendations for the contemporary welfare state.

As the contributions to this volume demonstrate, one strand of current debates in political theory revolves around the relationship between the more abstracted or hypothetical register of analytic philosophy and approaches that stress the specificities of historical or contemporary contexts. Those working in close association with the traditions of analytic philosophy—and often preferring to call themselves political philosophers—have generated some of the most interesting and innovative work in recent decades. But they have also been repeatedly challenged. Communitarians and post-structuralists claim that the unencumbered individual of Rawlsian liberalism is not neutral but an ideological premise with significant, unacknowledged political effects on its theoretical conclusions (Sandel 1982; Honig 1993). Feminists criticize the analytic abstraction from bodily difference as a move that reinforces heteronormative assumptions and gender inequalities (Okin 1989; Pateman

1988; Zerilli and Gatens in this volume). As we indicate later in the introduction, analytic liberalism has made some considerable concessions in this regard. In *Political Liberalism*, for example, Rawls no longer represents his theory of justice as addressing what is right for all societies at all times, but is careful to present his arguments as reflecting the intuitions of contemporary liberal and pluralistic societies.

1.4 Relationship with “Real World” Politics

The way political theory positions itself in relation to political science, history, and philosophy can be read in part as reflections on the meaning of the political. It can also be read as reflections on the nature of theory, and what can—or cannot—be brought into existence through theoretical work. The possibilities are bounded on one side by utopianism. Political theorists have seemed at their most vulnerable to criticism by political scientists or economists when their normative explorations generate conclusions that cannot plausibly be implemented: principles of living, perhaps, that invoke the practices of small-scale face-to-face societies; the or principles of distribution that ignore the implosion of communism or the seemingly irresistible global spread of consumerist ideas (see Dunn 2000, for one such warning). There is an important strand in political theory that relishes the utopian label, regarding this as evidence of the capacity to think beyond current confines, the political theorist’s version of blue-sky science. Ever since Aristotle, however, this has been challenged by an insistence on working within the parameters of the possible, an insistence often called “sober” by those who favor it. At issue here is not the status of political theory in relation to political science, but how theory engages with developments in the political world.

Some see it as failing to do so. John Gunnell (1986) has represented political theory as alienated from politics, while Jeffrey Isaac (1995) argues that a reader of political theory journals in the mid 1990s would have had no idea that the Berlin Wall had fallen. Against this, one could cite a flurry of studies employing empirical results to shed light on the real-world prospects for the kind of deliberative democracy currently advocated by democratic theorists (see for example the 2005 double issue of *Acta Politica*); or testing out theories of justice by reference to empirical studies of social mobility (Marshall, Swift, and Roberts 1997). Or one might take note of the rather large number of

political theorists whose interest in contemporary political events such as the formation of a European identity, the new international human-rights regime and the politics of immigration, the eschewal of the Geneva Convention at the turn of the twentieth century, or the appropriate political response to natural disasters leads them to think about how to theorize these events. Concepts or figures of thought invoked here include Giorgio Agamben's (1998) "bare life" of the human being to whom anything can be done by the state, Michel Foucault's (1979) "disciplinary power" that conditions what people can think, Carl Schmitt's (1985) "state of exception" wherein the sovereign suspends the rule of law, Ronald Dworkin's (1977) superhuman judge "Hercules," Jacques Derrida's (2000) "unconditional hospitality" to the other, or Etienne Balibar's (2004) "marks of sovereignty" which signal the arrogation to themselves by political actors in civil society of rights and privileges of action historically assumed by states.

As is clear from the contributions in this *Handbook*, political theorists take their cue from events around them, turning their attention to the challenges presented by ecological crisis; emergency or security politics; the impact of new technologies on the ways we think about privacy, justice, or the category of the human; the impact of new migrations on ideas of race, tolerance, and multiculturalism; the implications of growing global inequalities on the way we theorize liberty, equality, democracy, sovereignty, or hegemony. In identifying the topics for this collection, we have been struck by the strong sense of political engagement in contemporary political theory, and the way this shapes the field.

1.5 Institutional Landscape

Institutionally, political theory is located in several disciplines, starting of course with political science, but continuing through philosophy and law, and including some representation in departments of history, sociology, and economics. This means that the professional associations and journals of these disciplines are hospitable (if to varying degrees) to work in political theory. Among the general political science journals, it is quite common to find political theory published in *Polity* and *Political Studies*, somewhat less so in the *American Journal of Political Science*, *British Journal of Political Science*, and *Journal of Politics*. On the face of it, the *American Political Science Review*

publishes a substantial number of political theory articles, but the majority of these have been in the history of political thought, with Straussian authors especially well represented. In philosophy, *Ethics* and *Philosophy and Public Affairs* are the two high-profile journals most likely to publish political theory. Some of the more theoretically inclined law journals publish political theory, and so do some of the more politically inclined sociology journals.

Political theory's best-established journal of its own is *Political Theory*, founded in 1972. Prior to its establishment, the closest we had to a general political-theory academic periodical were two book series. The first was the sporadic *Philosophy, Politics and Society* series published by Basil Blackwell and always co-edited by Peter Laslett, beginning in 1956 and reaching its seventh volume in 2003. Far more regularly published have been the NOMOS yearbooks of the American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy, which began in 1958 and continue to this day. Recent years have seen an explosion in political theory journal titles: *History of Political Thought*; *Journal of Political Philosophy*; *The Good Society*; *Philosophy, Politics and Economics*; *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*; *European Journal of Political Theory*; *Contemporary Political Theory*; *Constellations*; and *Theory and Event* (an online journal). The *Review of Politics* has been publishing since 1939, although its coverage has been selective, with a Straussian emphasis for much of its history. Political theorists can often be found publishing in related areas such as feminism, law, international relations, or cultural studies. Journals that feature their work from these various interdisciplinary locations include *differences*; *Politics, Culture, and Society*; *Daedalus*; *Social Text*; *Logos*; *Strategies*; *Signs*; and *Millennium*. However, political theory is a field very much oriented to book publication (a fact which artificially depresses the standing of political theory journals when computed from citation indexes, for even journal articles in the field tend to cite books rather than other articles). All the major English-language academic presses publish political theory. Oxford University Press's *Oxford Political Theory* series is especially noteworthy. While the world of the Internet changes rapidly, at the time of writing the Political Theory Daily Review is an excellent resource that opens many doors.¹

Political theory is much in evidence at meetings of disciplinary associations. The Foundations of Political Theory section of the American Political Science Association is especially important, not just in organizing panels and

¹ <http://www.politicaltheory.info/>

lectures and sponsoring awards but also in hosting what is for a couple of hours every year probably the largest number of political theorists in one room talking at once (the Foundations reception). The field also has associations of its own that sponsor conferences: the Conference for the Study of Political Thought International, and the Association for Political Theory (both based in North America). In the UK, there is an annual Political Theory conference in Oxford; and though the European Consortium for Political Research has tended to focus more on comparative studies, it also provides an important context for workshops on political theory.

2 CONTEMPORARY THEMES AND DEVELOPMENTS

As befits a relentlessly critical field, political theory is prone to self-examination. We have already noted controversies over its relationship to various disciplinary and interdisciplinary landscapes. Occasionally the self-examination takes a morbid turn, with demise or death at issue: the most notorious example being when Laslett (1956) claimed in his introduction to the 1956 *Philosophy, Politics and Society* book series that the tradition of political theory was broken, and the practice dead. Even the field's defenders have at times detected only a faint pulse.

Concerns about the fate of theory peaked in the 1950s and 1960s with the ascendancy of behavioralism in US political science. Such worries were circumvented, but not finally ended, by the flurry of political and philosophical activity in the USA around the Berkeley Free Speech movement (with which Sheldon Wolin 1969, and John Schaar 1970, were associated), the Civil Rights movement (Arendt 1959), and protests against the Vietnam war and the US military draft (Walzer 1967, 1970). At that moment, the legitimacy of the state, the limits of obligation, the nature of justice, and the claims of conscience in politics were more than theoretical concerns. Civil disobedience was high on political theory's agenda.² Members of activist networks

² See notably Marcuse's "Repressive Tolerance" contribution in Wolff, Moore, and Marcuse (1965), Pitkin (1966), Dworkin (1968), the essay on "Civil Disobedience" in Arendt (1969), and Rawls (1969).

read and quoted Hannah Arendt, Herbert Marcuse, and others in support of their actions and visions of politics.

Throughout the 1960s, the struggle over the fate of theory was entwined with questions about what counted as politics and how to find a political-theoretical space between or outside liberalism and Marxism. It was against this political and theoretical background that John Rawls was developing the ideas gathered together in systematic form in *A Theory of Justice* (1971), a book devoted to the examination of themes that the turbulent 1960s had made so prominent: redistributive policies, conscientious objection, and the legitimacy of state power. Later in that decade Quentin Skinner and a new school of contextualist history of political thought (known as the Cambridge school) rose to prominence in the English-speaking world. Still other works of political theory from this period give the lie to the idea that political theory was in need of rescue or revivification. The following stand out, and in some cases remain influential: Leo Strauss's *Natural Right and History* (1953), Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955), Karl Popper's *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957), Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* (1958) and *On Revolution* (1963), Sheldon Wolin's *Politics and Vision* (1960), Friedrich A. von Hayek's *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960), Michael Oakeshott's *Rationalism in Politics* (1962), James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock's *The Calculus of Consent* (1962), Judith Shklar's *Legalism* (1964), Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), Brian Barry's *Political Argument* (1964), and Isaiah Berlin's *Four Essays on Liberty* (1969).

2.1 Liberalism and its Critics

Looking at the field from the vantage point of the first years of the twenty-first century, there is certainly no indication of political theory failing in its vitality: this is a time of energetic and expansive debate, with new topics crowding into an already busy field. For many in political theory, including many critics of liberal theory, this pluralistic activity obscures a more important point: the dominance that has been achieved by liberalism, at least in the Anglo-American world. In its classic guise, liberalism assumes that individuals are for the most part motivated by self-interest, and regards them as the best judges of what this interest requires. In its most confident variants, it sees the material aspects of interest as best realized through

exchange in a market economy, to the benefit of all. Politics enters when interests cannot be so met to mutual benefit. Politics is therefore largely about how to reconcile and aggregate individual interests, and takes place under a supposedly neutral set of constitutional rules. Given that powerful individuals organized politically into minorities or majorities can turn public power to their private benefit, checks across different centers of power are necessary, and constitutional rights are required to protect individuals against government and against one another. These rights are accompanied by obligations on the part of their holders to respect rights held by others, and duties to the government that establishes and protects rights. Liberalism so defined leaves plenty of scope for dispute concerning the boundaries of politics, political intervention in markets, political preference aggregation and conflict resolution mechanisms, and the content of rights, constitutions, obligations, and duties. There is, for example, substantial distance between the egalitarian disposition of Rawls and the ultra-individualistic libertarianism of Robert Nozick (1974).³ Liberalism's conception of politics clearly differs, however, from the various conceptions of the political deployed by Arendt, Wolin, Ranciere, and others, as well as from republican conceptions of freedom explored by Quentin Skinner (1998) or Philip Pettit (1997).

In earlier decades, liberalism had a clear comprehensive competitor in the form of Marxism, not just in the form of real-world governments claiming to be Marxist, but also in political theory. Marxism scorned liberalism's individualist ontology, pointing instead to the centrality of social classes in political conflict. The market was seen not as a mechanism for meeting individual interests, but as a generator of oppression and inequality (as well as undeniable material progress). Marxism also rejected liberalism's static and ahistorical account of politics in favor of an analysis of history driven by material forces that determined what individuals were and could be in different historical epochs. Different versions of this were hotly debated in the 1970s, as theorists positioned themselves behind the "humanist" Marx, revealed in his earlier writings on alienation (McLellan 1970),⁴ or the "Althusserian" Marx, dealing in social relations and forces of production (Althusser 1969; Althusser and Balibar 1970). Disagreements between these schools were intense, although both proclaimed the superiority of Marxist over liberal

³ Other important works in the vast liberal justice literature include Gauthier (1986), Barry (1995), and Scanlon (1998).

⁴ See also the work of the US-Yugoslav Praxis group, and their now-defunct journal *Praxis International*.

thought. In the period that followed, however, the influence of academic Marxism in the English-speaking world waned. The fortunes of Marxist theory were not helped by the demise of the Soviet bloc in 1989–91, and the determined pursuit of capitalism in China under the leadership of a nominally Marxist regime.

Questions remain about liberalism's success in defeating or replacing this rival. One way to think of subsequent developments is to see a strand from both liberalism and Marxism as being successfully appropriated by practitioners of analytic philosophy, such as Rawls and G. A. Cohen (1978). Focusing strictly on Marxism vs. liberalism, however, threatens to obscure the presence of other vigorous alternatives, from alternative liberalisms critical (sometimes implicitly) of Rawlsianism, such as those developed by Richard Flathman (1992), George Kateb (1992), Jeremy Waldron (1993), and William Galston (1991), to alternative Marxisms such as those explored by Jacques Ranciere (1989) and Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (1991), and Nancy Hartsock (1983). Michael Rogin combined the insights of Marxism and Freudian psychoanalysis to generate work now considered canonical to American studies and cultural studies (though he himself was critical of that set of approaches; see Dean's essay in this *Handbook*). Rogin (1987) pressed for the centrality of race, class, property, and the unconscious to the study of American politics (on race, see also Mills 1997).

Liberal theory's assumptions about power and individualism were criticized or bypassed from still other perspectives through the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, a fecund period during which political theorists had a wide range of approaches and languages from which to choose in pursuit of their work. In France, social theorists writing in the 1970s (in the aftermath of May 1968) included, most famously, Michel Foucault, whose re-theorization of power had a powerful influence on generations of American theorists. In Germany, a discursive account of politics developed by Jürgen Habermas (for example, 1989, first published in German 1962) captured the imaginations of a generation of critical theorists committed to developing normative standards through which to assess the claims of liberal democratic states to legitimacy. The 1970s Italian *Autonomia* movement inspired new Gramscian and Foucaultian reflections on equality, politics, violence, and state power (Virno 2004). For much of this period, feminism defined itself almost as an opposite of liberalism, drawing inspiration initially from Marxism, later from psychoanalytic theories of difference, and developing its own critique of the abstract individual. In Canada and at Oxford, Charles Taylor (1975) was

thinking about politics through a rereading of Hegel that stressed the importance of community to political autonomy, influencing Michael Sandel (1982) and many subsequent theorists of multiculturalism. Deleuze and Guattari combined post-structuralism and psychoanalysis into a series of difficult ruminations on the spatial metaphors that organize our thinking at the ontological level about politics, nature, and life (1977; see also Patton in this volume). Ranging from Freudian to Lacanian approaches, psychoanalysis has provided political theorists with a perspective from which to examine the politics of mass society, race and gender inequalities, and personal and political identity (Butler 1993; Laclau 2006; Žizek 2001; Irigara 1985; Zerilli 1994; Glass in this volume).

2.2 Liberal Egalitarianism

As the above suggests, alternatives to liberalism continue to proliferate, and yet, in many areas of political theory, liberalism has become the dominant position. Marxism has continued to inform debates on exploitation and equality, but in a shift that has been widely replayed through the last twenty-five years, reinvented itself to give more normative and analytic weight to the individual (Roemer 1982, 1986; Cohen 1995, 2000). There has been a particularly significant convergence, therefore, in the debates around equality, with socialists unexpectedly preoccupied with questions of individual responsibility and desert, liberals representing equality rather than liberty as the “sovereign virtue” (Dworkin 2000), and the two combining to make liberal egalitarianism almost the only remaining tradition of egalitarianism. One intriguing outcome is the literature on basic income or basic endowment, which all individuals would receive from government to facilitate their participation in an otherwise liberal society (van Parijs 1995; Ackerman and Alstott 1999).

For generations, liberalism had been taken to task for what was said to be its “formal” understanding of equality: its tendency to think that there were no particular resource implications attached to human equality. In the wake of Rawls’s “difference principle” (see Arneson in this volume) or Dworkin’s “equality of resources” (see Williams in this volume), this now seems a singularly inappropriate complaint. At the beginning of the 1980s, Amartya Sen posed a question that was to frame much of the literature on distributive justice through the next decade: equality of what? This generated a multiplicity

of answers, ranging through welfare, resources, capabilities (Sen's preferred candidate), to the more cumbersome "equality of opportunity for welfare," and "equality of access to advantage."⁵ None of the answers could be dismissed as representing a merely formal understanding of equality, but all engaged with key liberal themes of individuality and responsibility. The subsequent explosion of liberal egalitarianism can be read as a radicalization of the liberal tradition. But the convergence between what were once distinctively liberal and socialist takes on equality can also be seen as demonstrating the new dominance of liberal theory. Much of the literature on equality is now resolutely individualist in form, running its arguments through thought experiments designed to tease out our intuitions of equality, and illustrating with stories of differently endowed individuals, exhibiting different degrees of aspiration and effort, whose entitlements we are then asked to assess. It is not always clear what purchase this discourse of individual variation (with a cast of characters including opera singers, wine buffs, surfers, and fishermen) has on the larger inequalities of the contemporary world. "What," as Elizabeth Anderson has asked, "has happened to the concerns of the politically oppressed? What about inequalities of race, gender, class, and caste?" (Anderson 1999, 288).

In the course of the 1990s, a number of theorists voiced concern about the way issues of redistribution were being displaced by issues of recognition, casting matters of economic inequality into the shade (Fraser 1997; also Markell and Squires in this volume). There is considerable truth to this observation, but it would be misleading to say that no one now writes about economic inequality. There is, on the contrary, a large literature (and a useful web site, The Equality Exchange⁶) dealing with these issues. The more telling point is that the egalitarian literature has become increasingly focused around questions of individual responsibility, opportunity, and endowment, thus less engaged with social structures of inequality, and less easily distinguishable from liberalism.

2.3 Communitarianism

One central axis of contention in the 1980s was what came to be known as the liberal–communitarian debate (for an overview, see Mulhall and Swift 1996).

⁵ Key contributions to this debate include Sen (1980, 1992); Dworkin (1981, 2000); Arneson (1989); and G. A. Cohen (1989).

⁶ <http://aran.univ-pau.fr/ee/index.html>

Communitarians like Michael Sandel (1982), influenced by both Arendt and Taylor, argued that in stressing abstract individuals and their rights as the building blocks for political theory, liberalism missed the importance of the community that creates individuals as they actually exist. For communitarians, individuals are always embedded in a network of social relationships, never the social isolates that liberalism assumes, and they have obligations to the community, not just to the political arrangements that facilitate their own interests. This opposition between the liberal's stripped-down, rights-bearing individual and the communitarian's socially-embedded bearer of obligations seemed, for a period, *the* debate in political philosophy. But voices soon made themselves heard arguing that this was a storm in a teacup, a debate within liberalism rather than between liberalism and its critics, the main question being the degree to which holistic notions of community are instrumental to the rights and freedoms that both sides in the debate prized (Taylor 1989; Walzer 1990; Galston 1991). Liberalism, it is said, was misrepresented. Its conception of the individual was never as atomistic, abstracted, or self-interested, as its critics tried to suggest.

2.4 Feminism

In the 1980s, feminists had mostly positioned themselves as critics of both schools. They shared much of the communitarian skepticism about disembodied individuals, and brought to this an even more compelling point about the abstract individual being disembodied, as if it made no difference whether "he" were female or male (Pateman 1988; also Gatens in this volume). But they also warned against the authoritarian potential in holistic notions of community, and the way these could be wielded against women (e.g. Frazer and Lacey 1993). Growing numbers challenged impartialist conceptions of justice, arguing for a contextual ethics that recognizes the responsibilities individuals have for one another and/or the differences in our social location (Gilligan 1982; Young 1990; Mendus in this volume). Still others warned against treating the language of justice and rights as irredeemably masculine, and failing, as a result, to defend the rights of women (Okin 1989).

As the above suggests, feminism remained a highly diverse body of thought through the 1980s and 1990s; but to the extent that there was a consensus, it was largely critical of the liberal tradition, which was represented as overly

individualistic, wedded to a strong public/private divide, and insufficiently alert to gender issues. There has since been a discernible softening in this critique, and this seems to reflect a growing conviction that liberalism is not as dependent on the socially isolated self as had been suggested. Nussbaum (1999: 62) argues that liberal individualism “does not entail either egoism or normative self-sufficiency;” and while feminists writing on autonomy have developed their own distinctive understanding of “relational autonomy,” many now explicitly repudiate the picture of mainstream liberal theory as ignoring the social nature of the self (see essays in MacKenzie and Stoljar 2000). Some of the earlier feminist critiques overstated the points of difference with liberalism, misrepresenting the individual at the heart of the tradition as more self-contained, self-interested, and self-centered than was necessarily the case. But it also seems that liberalism made some important adjustments and in the process met at least part of the feminist critique. It would be churlish to complain of this (when you criticize a tradition, you presumably hope it will mend its ways), but one is left, once again, with a sense of a tradition mopping up its erstwhile opponents. Some forms of feminism are committed to a radical politics of sexual difference that it is hard to imagine liberalism ever wanting or claiming (see Zerilli in this volume). But many brands of feminism that were once critical of liberalism have made peace with the liberal tradition.

2.5 Democracy and Critical Theory

In the literature on citizenship and democracy, liberalism has faced a number of critical challenges, but here, too, some of the vigor of that challenge seems to have dispersed. Republicanism predates liberalism by two thousand years (see Nelson in this volume), and emphasises active citizenship, civic virtue, and the pursuit of public values, not the private interests associated more with the liberal tradition. Republicanism enjoyed a significant revival through the 1980s and 1990s as one of the main alternatives to liberal democracy (Sunstein 1990; Pettit 1997); indeed, it looked, for a time, as if it might substitute for socialism as *the* alternative to the liberal tradition. Nowadays, even the republican Richard Dagger (2004: 175) allows that “a republican polity must be able to count on a commitment to principles generally associated with liberalism, such as tolerance, fair play, and respect for the

rights of others;" this is not, in other words, a total alternative. Deliberative democracy also emerged in the early 1990s as a challenge to established liberal models that regarded politics as the aggregation of preferences defined mostly in a private realm (J. Cohen 1989). For deliberative democrats, reflection upon preferences in a public forum was central; and again, it looked as though this would require innovative thinking about alternative institutional arrangements that would take democracies beyond the standard liberal repertoire (Dryzek 1990). By the late 1990s, however, the very institutions that deliberative democrats had once criticized became widely seen as the natural home for deliberation, with an emphasis on courts and legislatures. Prominent liberals such as Rawls (1997, 771–2) proclaimed themselves deliberative democrats, and while Bohman (1998) celebrates this transformation as "the coming of age of deliberative democracy," it also seems like another swallowing up of critical alternatives.

The recent history of critical theory—and more specifically, the work of Jürgen Habermas—is exemplary in this respect. Critical theory's ancestry extends back via the Frankfurt School to Marx. In the hands of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (1972; first published 1947) in particular, critique was directed at dominant forms of instrumental rationality that defined modern society. Habermas rescued this critique from a potential dead end by showing that a communicative conception of rationality could underwrite a more congenial political order and associated emancipatory projects. Habermas's theory of the state was originally that of a monolith under sway of instrumental reason in the service of capitalism, which had to be resisted. Yet come the 1990s, Habermas (1996) had redefined himself as a constitutionalist stressing the role of rights in establishing the conditions for open discourse in the public sphere, whose democratic task was to influence political institutions that could come straight from a liberal democratic textbook (see Scheuerman in this volume).

2.6 Green Political Theory

Green political theory began in the 1970s, generating creative proposals for ecologically defensible alternatives to liberal capitalism. The center of gravity was left-libertarianism verging on eco-anarchism (Bookchin 1982), although (at least in the 1970s) some more Hobbesian and authoritarian voices were

raised (Ophuls 1977). All could agree that liberal individualism and capitalist economic growth were antithetical to any sustainable political ecology. In his chapter, Meyer charts the progress of “post-exuberant” ecological political theory, characterized by engagement with liberalism. Not all green theory has moved in this direction. For example, Bennett and Chaloupka (1993) work more in the traditions of Thoreau and Foucault, while Plumwood (2002) draws on radical ecology and feminism to criticize the dualisms and anthropocentric rationalism of liberalism.

2.7 Post-structuralism

Post-structuralism is often seen as merely critical rather than constructive. This mistaken impression comes from a focus on the intersections between post-structuralist theory and liberal theory. Some post-structuralist theorists seek to supplement rather than supplant liberalism, to correct its excesses, or even to give it a conscience that, in the opinion of many, it too often seems to lack. Hence Patton’s suggestion (in this volume) that the distance between post-structuralist and liberal political theory may not be as unbridgeable as is commonly conceived. And some versions of liberal theory are more likely to be embraced or explored by post-structuralists than others: Isaiah Berlin, Richard Flathman, Jeremy Waldron, and Stuart Hampshire are all liberals whose work has been attended to in some detail by post-structuralist thinkers.

But post-structuralists have also developed alternative models of politics and ethics not directly addressed to liberal theory. One way to canvas those is with reference to the varying grand narratives on offer from this side of the field. Post-structuralism is often defined as intrinsically hostile to any sort of grand narrative, a claim attributed to Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984). This claim is belied by a great deal of work in the field that does not so much reject grand narrative as reimagine and reiterate it (Bennett 2002). Post-structuralists do reject foundational meta-narratives: those that present themselves as transcendently true, for which nature or history has an intrinsic purpose, or that entail a two-world metaphysic. Those post-structuralists who do use meta-narratives tend to see themselves as writing in the tradition of social contract theorists like Hobbes, whose political arguments are animated by imaginary or speculative claims about the origins and trajectories of social life. Post-structuralists, however, are careful to represent their post-metaphysical

views as an “onto-story whose persuasiveness is always at issue and can never be fully disentangled from an interpretation of present historical circumstances” (White 2000, 10–11; see also Deleuze and Guattari 1977).

What post-structuralists try to do without is not the origin story by means of which political theory has always motivated its readers, nor the wagers by way of which it offers hope. Rather, post-structuralists seek to do without the ends or guarantees (such as faith, or progress, or virtue) which have enabled some enviable achievements (such as the broadening of human rights), but in the name of which cruelties have also been committed (in the so-called “developing” world, or in the West against non-believers and non-conformists).⁷ These ends or guarantees have sometimes enabled political theorists to evade full responsibility for the conclusions they seek, by claiming the goals or values in question are called for by some extra-human source, like god or nature.

3 POLITICAL THEORY AND THE GLOBAL TURN

Liberalism has demonstrated an almost unprecedented capacity for absorbing its competitors, aided by the collapse of its rival, Marxism, but also by its own virtuosity in reinventing itself and incorporating key elements from opposing traditions. Yet this is not a triumphalist liberalism, of the kind proclaimed in Fukuyama’s (1989) “end of history,” which celebrated the victory of liberal capitalism in the real-world competition of political-economic models. The paradox is that liberalism’s absorption of some of its competitors has been accompanied by increasing anxiety about the way Western liberalism illegitimately centers itself. The much discussed shift in the work of Rawls is one classic illustration of this, for while the Rawls of *A Theory of Justice* (1971) seemed to be setting out “the” principles of justice that would be acceptable to any rational individual in any social context, the Rawls of *Political Liberalism* (1993) stressed the reasonableness of a variety of “comprehensive doctrines,” including those that could be non-liberal, and the Rawls of *The Law of Peoples* (1999) encouraged us to recognize the

⁷ On the role of progress in India, see Mehta (1999). On the fate of non-conformists in Rawls, for example, see Honig (1993).

“decency” of hierarchical, non-liberal societies that are nonetheless well-ordered and respect a certain minimum of human rights.

Having won over many erstwhile critics in the metropolitan centres, liberals now more readily acknowledge that there are significant traditions of thought beyond those that helped form Western liberalism. They acknowledge, moreover, that the grounds for rejecting these other traditions are more slippery than previously conceived. The critique of “foundationalism” (for example, Rorty 1989) used to arouse heated debate among political theorists. Many were incensed at the suggestion that their claims about universal justice, equality, or human rights had no independent grounding, and accused the skeptics of abandoning normative political theory (see, for example, Benhabib et al. 1995). In the course of the 1990s, however, anti-foundationalism moved from being a contested minority position to something more like the consensus. Post-structuralist critiques of foundationalism led to liberalism’s late twentieth-century announcement that it is “post-foundational” (Rawls 1993; Habermas 1996)—although with no fundamental rethinking of the key commitments of liberal theory. In the wake, however, of Rawls and Habermas disavowing metaphysical support for their (clearly normative) projects, Western political theorists have increasingly acknowledged the historical contingency of their own schools of thought; and this is generating some small increase in interest in alternative traditions. The awareness of these traditions does not, of itself, signal a crisis of confidence in liberal principles (arch anti-foundationalist, Richard Rorty, certainly has no trouble declaring himself a liberal), but it does mean that political theory now grapples more extensively with questions of moral universalism and cultural or religious difference (e.g. Euben 1999; Parekh 2000; Honig 2001).

The explosion of writing on multiculturalism—largely from the 1990s—is particularly telling here. Multiculturalism is, by definition, concerned with the multiplicity of cultures: it deals with what may be radical differences in values, belief-systems, and practices, and has been especially preoccupied with the rights, if any, of non-liberal groups in liberal societies. The “problem” arises because liberalism is not the only doctrine on offer, and yet the way the problem is framed—as a question of toleration, or the rights of minorities, or whether groups as well as individuals can hold rights—remains quintessentially liberal. Will Kymlicka (1995) famously defended group rights for threatened cultural communities on the grounds that a secure cultural context is necessary to individual autonomy, such that the very importance liberals attach to individual autonomy requires them to support multicultural

policies. His version of liberal multiculturalism has been widely criticized (see Spinner-Halev and Kukathas in this volume); and many continue to see liberalism as at odds with multiculturalism (for example, Okin 1998, 2002; Barry 2001). But in analyzing the “problem” of multiculturalism through the paradigm of liberalism, Kymlicka very much exemplifies the field of debate. Liberalism simultaneously makes itself the defining tradition and notices the awkwardness in this. Its very dominance then seems to spawn an increasing awareness of traditions other than itself.

It is not entirely clear why this has happened now (liberalism, after all, has been around for many years) but that useful shorthand, globalization, must provide at least part of the explanation. It is difficult to sustain a belief in liberalism as the only tradition, or in secularism as the norm, when the majority of the world’s population is patently unconvinced by either (Gray 1995, 1998). And although political theorists have drawn heavily on the liberal tradition in their explorations of human rights or global justice, the very topics they address require them to think about the specificity of Western political thought. Political theory now roams more widely than in the past, pondering accusations of ethno-centricity, questioning the significance of national borders, engaging in what one might almost term a denationalization of political theory. That description is an overstatement, for even in addressing explicitly global issues, political theory draws on concepts that are national in origin, and the assumptions written into them often linger into their more global phase. Terms like nation or state are not going to disappear from the vocabulary of political theory—but the kinds of shift Chris Brown (in this volume) discerns from international to global conceptions of justice are being played out in many corners of contemporary political thought.

It is hard to predict how this will develop, although the combination of a dominant liberalism with a concern that Western liberalism may have illegitimately centered itself looks unstable, and it seems probable that pockets of resistance and new alternatives to liberalism will therefore gain strength in future years. It seems certain that moves to reframe political theory in a more self-consciously global context will gather pace. This is already evident in the literature on equality, democracy, and social justice, where there is increasing attention to both international and global dimensions. It is also becoming evident in new ways of theorizing religion. Religion has been discussed so far in political theory mainly in the context of the “problem” of religious toleration, with little attention to the internal structure of religious beliefs. But other dimensions are now emerging, including new ways of understanding

the politics of secularism, and closer examination of the normative arguments developed within different religions. It seems likely that new developments in science (particularly those associated with bio-genetics) will provide political theorists with difficult challenges in the coming decade, especially as regards our understanding of the boundaries between public and private, and the prospects for equality. And while the prospect of a more participatory or deliberative democracy remains elusive, we can perhaps anticipate an increasing focus on the role of pleasure and passion in political activism.

It is harder to predict what will happen in the continuing battle to incorporate issues of gender and race into mainstream political theory. The contributors to this *Handbook* include people who have played significant roles in the development of feminist political theory, but it is notable that few have chosen to make feminism and/or gender central to their essays. The optimistic take on this is that gender is no longer a distinct and separate topic, but now a central component in political thought. The more pessimistic take is suggested in the final comment of Linda Zerilli's chapter: that the attempt to think politics outside an exclusively gender-centered frame may end up reproducing the blind spots associated with the earlier canon of political thought. The likely developments as regards race are also unclear. We can anticipate that racial inequality will continue to figure in important ways in discussions of affirmative action or political representation, but the explosion of work on multiculturalism has focused more on culture or ethnicity, and political theory has not engaged in a thoroughgoing way with the legacies of colonialism or slavery. The essays in this *Handbook* suggest, however, that important new developments are under way.

4 POLITICAL THEORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE: CURRENT TRAJECTORIES

We noted earlier the sometimes difficult relationship between political theory and the rest of political science. We return to this here, but more with a view to areas of cooperation. In addition to its interdisciplinary locations, political theory has a place in the standard contemporary line-up of sub-fields in political science, alongside comparative politics, international relations,

public policy, and the politics of one's own country. Here and there, methodology, public administration, political psychology, and public law might be added; and truly adventurous departments may stretch to political economy and environmental politics. All these sub-fields have a theoretical edge that potentially connects with the preoccupations of political theory. These connections confirm the importance of political theory to the rest of political science.

International relations has a well-defined sub-sub-field of international relations (IR) theory, and we have noted that this is defined largely in terms of the three grand positions of realism, constructivism, and liberalism. Confusingly, liberalism in IR is not quite the same as liberalism in political theory. In IR theory, liberalism refers to the idea that actors can co-operate and build international institutions for the sake of mutual gains; it is therefore linked to a relatively hopeful view of the international system. Realism, in contrast, assumes that states maximize security in an anarchy where violent conflict is an ever-present possibility. Constructivism points to the degree to which actors, interests, norms, and systems are social constructions that can change over time and place. Each of these provides plenty of scope for engagement with political theory—even if these possibilities are not always realized. Despite its differences, IR liberalism connects with the liberalism of political theory in their shared Lockean view of how governing arrangements can be established, and when it comes to specifying principles for the construction of just and legitimate international institutions. Realism is explicitly grounded in the political theory of Thomas Hobbes, interpreting the international system in Hobbesian “state of nature” terms. Thucydides has also been an important if contestable resource for realism (Monoson and Loriaux 1998). Constructivism has been represented (for example, by Price and Reus-Smit 1998) as consistent with Habermasian critical theory. As Scheuerman (this volume) points out, critical theory has reciprocated, in that it now sees the international system as the crucial testing ground for its democratic prescriptions. Normative theory is currently flourishing in international relations, and many of the resources for this are provided by political theory (Cochran 1999), with postmodernists, Rawlsian liberals, feminists, and critical theorists making particularly important contributions.⁸

⁸ See, for example, Pogge (2002), Lynch (1999), Connolly (1991), der Derian (2001), Elshtain (2003), Walker (1993), Rawls (1999), and Habermas (2001a, 2001b).

The connections between comparative politics and political theory are harder to summarize because many of the practitioners of the former are area specialists with only a limited interest in theory. Those comparativists who use either large-*n* quantitative studies or small-*n* comparative case studies are often more interested in simple explanatory theory, one source of which is rational choice theory. But there are also points of engagement with political theory as understood in this *Handbook*. The comparative study of social movements and their relationships with the state has drawn upon the idea of the public sphere in democratic political theory, and vice versa. Accounts of the role of the state in political development have drawn upon liberal constitutionalist political theory. More critical accounts of the state in developing societies have drawn upon Marxist theory. In the last two decades democratization has been an important theme in comparative politics, and this work ought to have benefited from a dialogue with democratic theory. Unfortunately this has not happened. Studies of democratization generally work with a minimalist account of democracy in terms of competitive elections, developed in the 1940s by Joseph Schumpeter (1942), ignoring the subsequent sixty years of democratic theory. Recent work on race and diaspora studies in a comparative context is perhaps a more promising site of connection, invoking Tocqueville (see also Bourdieu and Wacquant 1999; Hanchard 2003). And theorists working on multiculturalism and race have been especially attentive to comparative politics questions about the variety of governmental forms and their interaction with cultural difference (Carens 2000; Kymlicka 2001; Taylor 1994; Gilroy 2000).

Methodology might seem the sub-field least likely to engage with political theory, and if methodology is thought of in terms of quantitative techniques alone, that might well be true. However, methodology is also home to reflection on what particular sorts of methods can do. Here, political theorists are in an especially good position to mediate between the philosophy of social science on the one hand, and particular methods on the other. Taylor (1979) and Ball (1987) point to the inevitable moment of interpretation in the application of all social science methods, questioning the positivist self-image of many of those who deploy quantitative methods. The interdisciplinarity that characterizes so much political theory provides especially fruitful material for methodological reflection.

Public policy is at the “applied” end of political science, but its focus on the relationship between disciplinary knowledge and political practice invites contribution from political theory; and many political theorists see

themselves as clarifying the normative principles that underpin policy proposals. From Rawls and Dworkin onwards, work on principles of justice and equality has carried definite policy implications regarding taxation, public expenditure on health, the treatment of those with disabilities, and so on. While it has rarely been possible to translate the theories into specific recommendations (Dworkin's hypothetical insurance market and Amartya Sen's theory of capabilities are often said to be especially disappointing in this respect), they are undoubtedly directed at public policy. Normative reasoning applied to public policy largely defines the content of *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, though this reasoning involves moral philosophy as much as or more than political theory.⁹ Political theorists working on questions of democracy and representation have also drawn direct policy conclusions regarding the nature of electoral systems or the use of gender quotas to modify patterns of representation (Phillips 1995).

Policy evaluation and design are important parts of the public policy sub-field, and both require normative criteria to provide standards by which to evaluate actual or potential policies. Again, political theory is well placed to illuminate such criteria and how one might think about handling conflicts between them (for example, when efficiency and justice appear to point in different directions). It is also well placed to explore the discourse aspects of public policy, an aspect that has been an especial interest of the Theory, Policy, and Society group of the American Political Science Association. Among the linkages this group develops are those between deliberative democratic theory and policy analysis, between the logic of political argument and interventions by analysts and advocates in policy processes, and between interpretive philosophy of social science and policy evaluation (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003).

Cutting across all the sub-fields of political science in recent decades has been rational choice theory, grounded in microeconomic assumptions about the wellsprings of individual behavior. Indeed, to some of its practitioners, rational choice is what should truly be described as political theory. For these practitioners, rational choice theory is "positive" political theory, value free, and geared toward explanation, not prescription. This claim does not hold up: as explanatory theory, rational choice theory is increasingly regarded as a failure (Green and Shapiro 1994). But many believe that it is very useful nevertheless. Game theory, for example, can clarify what rationality *is* in

⁹ See the compilations of Cohen, Nagel, and Scanlon (1974*a*, 1974*b*, 1977); also Goodin (1982).

particular situations (Johnson 1991), thereby illuminating one of the perennial questions in political theory. And despite the frequent description of rational choice theory as value free, it has provided for plenty of normative theorizing among its practitioners. Arch-positivist Riker (1982*b*) deploys Arrow's social choice theory to argue that democracy is inherently unstable and meaningless in the outcomes it produces, and uses this to back a normative argument on behalf of a minimal liberal democracy that allows corrupt or incompetent rules to be voted out—but nothing more. The conclusions of rational choice theory are often bad news for democracy (Barry and Hardin 1982); but it is possible to reinterpret this edifice in terms of critical theory, as showing what *would* happen if everyone behaved according to microeconomic assumptions. The political challenge then becomes one of how to curb this destructive behavioral proclivity (Dryzek 1992). There are many other connections between rational choice theory and political theory, exploratory as well as critical; we only touch on them in this *Handbook* because they will be more extensively reviewed in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, also in this series.

Leading comparativist Bo Rothstein (2005) has expressed the worry that the empirical arm of the discipline has lost its moral compass. To use his running example, its “technically competent barbarians” would have no defense against lining up in support of a political force like Nazism, should that be expedient. Rothstein himself sees the remedy in political theory: “The good news is that, unlike other disciplines, I think we have the solution within our own field of research. This, I believe, lies in reconnecting the normative side of the discipline—that is, political philosophy—with the positive/empirical side” (2005, 10). Despite the likelihood of some resistance to this from both sides of the divide, the examples discussed above suggest that such connection (or reconnection) is indeed possible.

5 ORGANIZATION OF THE *HANDBOOK*

We turn now to the way we have organized this *Handbook*. Part II, “Contemporary Currents,” assesses the impact, and considers the likely future trajectory, of literature that proved especially influential in framing debate through

the last decades of the twentieth century and opening years of the twenty-first. The selection is not, of course, meant to sum up what political theory has been about over that period: if it did that, there would be little need for the remaining essays in the *Handbook*. We have included three figures—Rawls, Habermas, and Foucault—whose work has so shaped the field that it became possible for a time to label (although somewhat misleadingly) other political theorists by their adherence to one of the three. We have also included three thematic styles of theory—feminism, pluralism, and linguistic approaches—that have sought (successfully or not) to refocus debate in a different direction. The theorists and themes addressed in this section are ones that have particularly marked out this moment in political theory, and the chapters assess their continuing influence.

Part III, “The Legacy of the Past,” focuses on historical work in political thought. As James Farr notes in his chapter, the history of political thought has been a staple of university instruction since the end of the nineteenth century, long recognized as a branch of political theory. But the role and object of historical inquiry has been much debated in recent decades, and the idea that one should search the classical texts for answers to the perennial problems of political life has been subjected to especially searching critique. Some theorists have been happy to jettison any study of historical traditions, regarding it as a merely antiquarian exercise. But the greater attention now given to context—to what can and cannot be thought at any given period in history—has also enabled radically new readings of political thought. The essays in this section can give only a taste of the wealth of scholarship in this field, and have been selected with an eye to that continuing discussion about the legacy of the past and its relationship with the present. They include a meta-level discussion of the relationship between political theory and the discipline of history; a disciplinary history of the history of political thought; and essays on a number of historical traditions that have been subject to significant re-evaluation and reinterpretation in the recent literature.

Questions of context are spatial as well as temporal, for even the most abstract of political theories cannot transcend its location, and the issues with which theorists become preoccupied reflect the histories and concerns of the worlds in which they live. The chapters in Part IV, “Political Theory in the World,” make matters of location more explicit. They explore differences, misconceptions, and mutual influences between Western and non-Western political traditions, with the latter represented here by Confucianism and Islam, and look at how ideas of America on the one hand and Europe on the

other enter into and shape ideas of democracy, representation, and nation. This section should be understood as a gesture, but just that, towards decentering what has come to be known as Anglo-American theory. This *Handbook* of political theory is published in Oxford and written in the English language, but one modest objective, nonetheless, is to highlight the specificity of *all* work in political theory, and the way the questions addressed reflect particular histories and locations.

The chapters in Part V, “State and People,” combine historical analysis of the shifting understandings of state and people with normative explorations of democracy, constitutionalism, and representation. As the essays indicate, the last decades have been a time of very considerable innovation. For much of the twentieth century, democracy was conceptualized as a matter of universal suffrage (sometimes quaintly equated with one man one vote), competitive party elections, and the rule of law. The outstanding problems were not thought to be theoretical, but centered on how to spread this conception more widely; and much of the work on democracy (often comparative, or dealing with the conditions for democratization) was carried out by political scientists rather than theorists. This picture has since changed radically, with a complex of concerns about the nature and limits of constitutionalism, the exclusions practised under the name of democracy, and the possibilities of wider and deeper practices of popular control. As reflects the breadth of these debates, this is one of the largest sections in the *Handbook*.

Part VI, “Justice, Equality, and Freedom,” evokes the combination of concerns that runs through the work of John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, and the liberal egalitarian tradition: the idea, for example, that justice is a matter of treating people as equals rather than treating them equally; or that egalitarians must recognize individuals as responsible agents, accountable for their own choices. The chapters in this section reflect that legacy, but also problematize it by reference to arguments drawn from the feminist literature and work on recognition. They include essays on the relationship between equality and impartiality, and the relationship between treating people as equals and recognizing them as different; and address the questions about individual responsibility that became central to the literature on justice and equality through the last decades. The literature on historical injustice goes back further, but has drawn new sustenance from debates on reparations for slavery and the treatment of indigenous peoples.

Part VII, “Pluralism, Multiculturalism, and Nationalism,” reflects areas of debate that have proved particularly fruitful over the last thirty years. As noted earlier in our introduction, it also reflects explorations of the implications and/or limits of the liberal tradition. The literature on multiculturalism has its precursor in a sociological literature on cultural pluralism, but as normative political theory dates from the 1980s. Theoretical work on toleration or the right of nations to self-determination is not, of course, new. But the recent synthesis of liberalism with nationalism is more unexpected, as is the reframing of long-established liberal principles of toleration to take account of issues of identity as well as belief. This last point is part of what unites the chapters in this section. All engage with arguments that have been central to the liberal tradition, but in relation to the new questions that arise when people make claims on the basis of identity. The authors reach very different conclusions—including, at its most heretical, that the pursuit of justice may not be such a compelling concern.

Part VIII, “Claims in a Global Context,” takes this from the national to the global level. It explores the debates that have developed between seemingly universal discourses of secularism or human rights and more relativist emphases on cultural difference; examines the connection between multicultural and post-colonial theory; and considers the challenges globalization presents to current conceptions of justice. Although justice has been at the heart of recent debates in normative political theory, the dominant conceptions have been very state-centered—and often very Western state-centered. The chapters in this section consider what happens in the move from national to global—and what theoretical possibilities become available if the center of gravity shifts from the Western to non-Western world.

Part IX, “The Body Politic,” takes what has long been employed as a metaphor for the political community at its face (or bodily) value, and uses it to engage with new areas of theoretical debate. These include the way the body itself has been politicized in the theoretical literature, including in the literature on self-ownership; and the way the social “body” has been politicized, as in the discussion of crises and paranoia. A number of the chapters in this section begin with changes in the social world: the impact of global migration, for example, and the way this alters our understanding of the individual subject; the development of new medical technologies, and the dilemmas these present about organ transplants or genetic engineering; the developments in surveillance technology combined with radical changes in the relation between the sexes, and the challenge this poses to our understanding of the

relationship between public and private space. This reconceptualizing of the political space owes much to the influence of feminism, as do a number of the essays themselves.

We have argued in our introduction that political theory is something of a mongrel sub-discipline, made up of many traditions, approaches, and styles of thought, and increasingly characterized by its borrowing from feminist and critical theory, film theory, popular culture, mass media, behavioral science, and economics. These tendencies will be evident throughout the chapters in the *Handbook*, but are most directly addressed in Part X, “Testing the Boundaries.” Here, we include essays that set political theory in dialogue with work in cultural studies, political economy, social theory, and the environment. The current academy confronts two opposing trends. One draws the boundaries of each discipline ever more tightly, sometimes as part of a bid for higher status, sometimes in the (not totally implausible) belief that this is the route to deeper and more systematic knowledge. Another looks to the serendipitous inspirations that can come through cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary work; or more simply and modestly, realizes that there may be much to learn from other areas of study. It is hard to predict which of these will win out—and most likely, both will continue in uneasy combination for many years to come. The essays in this section reflect the importance we attach to the second trend.

All the *Handbooks* in this series end with what is perhaps unhappily termed the “Old and New” section. In this case, it provides the opportunity for two highly influential but very different political theorists—Arlene Saxonhouse and William Connolly—to reflect on their experiences and perceptions of theory as it has changed, developed, improved, and/or worsened in the course of their careers. Where other contributors were asked to weave their own distinctive take on a topic into essays that would also work as overviews of the sub-field, our last contributors were encouraged to write from a more personal angle.

6 CONCLUSION

Ours is not the first or only handbook of political theory. We believe this *Oxford Handbook* is distinctive in its exploration of political theory’s edges as well as its several cores, its global emphasis, and its contemplation of the

challenges that contemporary social and technological change present to the field. Political theory is a lively, pluralistic, and contested field, and we invite readers to construct their own summary interpretations and embark on their own imaginative theorizing by sampling the wide variety of options on the palette that follows.

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PART II

CONTEMPORARY
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CHAPTER 2

JUSTICE AFTER RAWLS

RICHARD J. ARNESON

IN the mid-twentieth century John Rawls single-handedly revived Anglo-American political philosophy, which had not seen significant progress since the development and elaboration of utilitarianism in the nineteenth century. Rawls reinvented the discipline by revising the social contract tradition of Locke, Rousseau, and Kant. A series of essays starting with “Justice as Fairness” in 1958 culminated in a monumental treatise, *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls 1999a [originally published 1973]). That theory of justice was in turn qualified and set in a new framework by an account of legitimate political authority to which Rawls gave a definitive formulation in his second book, *Political Liberalism* (Rawls 1996 [originally published 1993]). Rawls also produced an important monograph on justice in international relations, *The Law of Peoples* (Rawls 1999c). Rawls’s achievements continue to set the contemporary terms of debate on theories of social justice. This chapter comments on the present state of play in the political philosophy discussions that Rawls initiated and stimulated.

1 RAWLS'S THEORY OF JUSTICE IN A NUTSHELL

Rawls's theory consists in an egalitarian vision of justice, specified by two principles, and the original position, a method for comparing and justifying candidate principles of justice that is supposed to single out his proposed principles as uniquely reasonable. The vision is recognizably liberal in its striving to combine the values of equality and liberty in a single conception, and controversial both in the kind of equality that is espoused and in the particular freedoms that are given special priority. The principles are claimed to be ones that free and equal persons could accept as a fair basis for social cooperation.

The principles are as follows:

1. Each person has an equal claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme for all; and in this scheme the equal political liberties, and only those liberties, are to be guaranteed their fair value.
2. Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they are to be attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they are to the greatest advantage of the least advantaged members of society (quoted from Rawls 1996, Lecture 1).

The first principle is called the *equal liberty principle*. In discussion, the second is often divided into its first part, *fair equality of opportunity*, and its second part, the *difference principle*.

The equal basic liberties protected by the first principle are given by a list: "political liberty (the right to vote and to hold public office) and freedom of speech and assembly; liberty of conscience and freedom of thought; freedom of the person, which includes freedom from psychological oppression and physical assault and dismemberment (integrity of the person), the right to hold personal property and freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the concept of the rule of law" (Rawls 1999a, 53). Roughly, the idea is to protect civil liberties of the sort that might well be entrenched in a political constitution.

The protection accorded to the basic liberties is augmented by the further stipulation that the first principle has strict lexical priority over the second.

This means that one is not permitted to trade off basic liberties for gains in the other justice principle. In addition, fair equality of opportunity, the nondiscrimination principle, has strict lexical priority over the difference principle. The principles just stated make up Rawls's special conception of justice. This conception does not apply at all historical times, but only when economic growth produces a situation in which the basic liberties can be effectively exercised. Rawls's more general conception of justice holds that social and economic advantages must be arranged to be of greatest benefit to the least advantaged members of society.

The measure of individual benefits in Rawls's theory is the individual's holding of multi-purpose goods known as "primary social goods." In *A Theory of Justice* these goods are defined as those it is rational for a person to want more rather than less of, whatever else he wants. In later writings, primary social goods are defined as goods that any rational person would strive to have who gives priority to developing and exercising two moral powers, the capacity to adopt and pursue a conception of the good and the capacity to cooperate with others on fair terms (Rawls 1996, 106, 178). Primary social goods are held to consist mainly of "the basic rights and liberties covered by the first principle of justice, freedom of movement, and free choice of occupation protected by fair equality of opportunity of the first part of the second principle, and income and wealth and the social bases of self-respect" (Rawls 1996, 180).

According to Rawls, the primary subject of justice is the basic structure of society, the way that major institutions such as the political system, the economic system, and the family interact to shape people's life prospects. The principles of justice are intended to regulate the basic structure. The duties imposed by social justice on individuals are ancillary: Individuals have a duty to conform to the rules of just institutions, if they exist, and if they do not exist, to strive to some extent to bring them about.

Fair equality of opportunity may be contrasted with formal equality of opportunity or careers open to talents. The latter principle is satisfied if positions such as places in universities and desirable jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities (access to investment capital) are open to all who might wish to apply, positions being filled according to the relevant fitness of the candidates for the position in question. Formal equality of opportunity is violated if positions of advantage are passed out on any basis other than the relevant merits of the candidates. The more demanding fair equality of opportunity requires that institutions are arranged so that any individuals with the same

native talent and the same ambition have the same chances for competitive success—success in competitions for positions that confer above-average shares of primary social goods. A society in which fair equality of opportunity is satisfied is, in a sense, a perfect meritocracy.

Why accept Rawls's principles? Rawls offers two arguments. One appeals to the implications of applying these principles in a modern setting. To the extent that the principles imply policies and outcomes for individuals that match our reflective judgments about these matters, the principles will appear reasonable. A second form of argument, a novelty introduced by Rawls, is the original position construction. The idea is to refine the social contract tradition. Justice is conceived to be what persons would agree to under conditions for choosing principles to regulate the basic structure of society that are ideally fair. The original position argument exemplifies a fair proceduralist standard of justification: What is right is what people following an ideal procedure would accept as right.

The original position argument carries the social contract idea to a higher level of abstraction. The object of the agreement is to be basic principles for regulating social life not actual social arrangements. The agreement is conceived to be hypothetical not actual. Actual contracts reached by people in ordinary life reflect their bargaining strength and other contingencies. Rawls's notable innovation is to try to ensure that the agreement that defines principles of justice is fair by depriving the parties who make the agreement of any information that might corrupt or bias the choice of principles. In Rawls's phrase, the parties are to choose under a veil of ignorance. Rawls urges a thick veil, with the result that parties in the original position know no particular facts about themselves, not even their own aims and values, but only general facts such as social science provides. The parties are assumed to prefer more rather than fewer primary social goods and choose principles according to their expectation of the primary social goods they would get in a society run according to the principles chosen in the original position.

Rawls conjectures that, in the original position so specified, the parties as defined would choose a maximin rule of choice (choose the policy that will make the worst possible outcome as good as possible) and on this basis would favor his principles.

The original position argument as Rawls presents it is significantly shaped by his conviction that to render his view plausible the formidable opponent that must be defeated is utilitarianism. According to Rawls, utilitarianism, although wrong, has received impressive formulation as a genuine normative

theory of right conduct and institutions. A theory is a set of principles that specifies the facts relevant to social decision and that, once these relevant facts pertaining to any decision problem are known, determines what ought to be chosen in that decision problem without any further need for intuitive judgment. You cannot beat a theory except with a better theory, Rawls thinks. Rawls provides a partial theory, a theory of just institutions, that can stand as a rival to a utilitarian account. Rawls identifies utilitarianism with the view that one ought always to choose that action or policy that maximizes the aggregate (or average level) of informed desire satisfaction.

As Rawls sets up the original position argument, three arguments are prominent. One is that given the special circumstances of choice in the original position, it would be rational for the parties to choose to maximin and thus to adopt Rawls's principles. Another argument is that those in the individual position are choosing for a well-ordered society in which everyone accepts and complies with the principles chosen, so they cannot in the original position choose principles that they expect they might not be disposed to accept and follow in the society ruled by the principles chosen. A related argument or stipulation is that the parties are supposed to be choosing principles for a public conception of justice, so a choice of principles that could be successfully implemented only by being kept esoteric is ruled out.

Rawls adds to the original position argument a discussion of stability. He thinks his theory is only acceptable if it can be shown that in a society regulated by his principles of justice, people will embrace the principles and institutions satisfying their requirements and will be steadily motivated to comply with the principles and the institutions that realize them. Here in retrospect Rawls locates a pivotal mistake in *A Theory of Justice* (see Rawls 1996, "Introduction"). In later writings, culminating in *Political Liberalism* (1996), he maintains that he initially appealed to a comprehensive Kantian account of human autonomy and fundamental human aims to establish that people living under Rawlsian institutions will have good reason and sufficient motivation to comply with them. But he comes to believe this appeal was misguided. In any liberal society that sustains a clearly desirable freedom of speech, people will fan out into different and conflicting comprehensive views of morality and the good life, so any appeal to a narrow Kantian ideal of autonomy and the nature of persons is bound to be sectarian (Rawls 1996).

Political Liberalism affirms that a society that avoids sectarianism satisfies a liberal ideal of legitimacy: Basic political arrangements, the fundamental

constitution of society, are justified by considerations that all reasonable persons, whatever their comprehensive views, have good and sufficient reason to accept.

2 CRITICISMS AND ALTERNATIVE PATHS

From its first elaboration, Rawls's theory of justice has been scrutinized by an enormous amount of criticism. In my view, Rawls's theory has been broken on the rack of this critique. But the upshot is not a defeat for the theory of justice. New suggestions, not yet fully elaborated for the most part, point in a variety of promising, albeit opposed, directions.

2.1 Primary Social Goods and Sen's Critique

Rawls holds that just institutions distribute primary social goods fairly. Roughly, a fair distribution is identified with the distribution in which the worst off are as well off as possible according to the primary social goods measure. Amartya Sen objects that individuals born with different physical and psychological propensities will generally be unequally efficient transformers of resources such as primary social goods into whatever goals they might seek (Sen 1992). Consider two individuals with the same allotments of primary social goods. One is fit, hardy, and quick-witted; the other is lame, illness-prone, lacking in physical coordination, and slow-witted. In any terms that we care about, the condition of the two persons is unequal, but a primary social goods metric does not register the disparity. Sen proposes that we should look beyond the distribution of opportunities and income and other primary goods and see to what extent individuals are able to be and do with their primary goods allotments given their circumstances. The basis of interpersonal comparisons for a theory of justice should, according to Sen, be a measure of people's real freedom to achieve functionings they have reason to value.

A Rawlsian response is that the theory of justice assumes that all individuals are able to be fully contributing members of society throughout their

adult life. Problems of disability and chronic debilitating illness are assumed away. Moreover, for those within the normal range of native talents and propensities, it is reasonable to hold individuals responsible for taking account of the primary goods shares they can expect and fashioning a reasonable plan of life on this basis. As Rawls says, justice as fairness “does not look beyond the use which persons make of the rights and opportunities available to them in order to measure, much less to maximize, the satisfactions they achieve” (Rawls 1999a, 80).

The response does not meet the difficulty. Differences in native talents and trait potentials exist among all persons, including those within whatever range is deemed to be normal. These differences strike many of us as relevant to what justice demands, what we owe to one another. Moreover, one can grant that a person endowed with poor traits would be well advised not to form unrealistic ambitions and to tailor his plan of life to what he can achieve. Expecting people to make such adjustments in their plan of life leaves entirely open whether compensation is owed to individuals to mitigate the freedom-reducing effect of poor natural endowment.

Although there is something salutary and correct about Sen’s train of thought, it immediately runs into a puzzle. There are enormous numbers of capabilities to function, and they vary from the trivial to the momentously important. We need some way of ranking the significance of different freedoms if the capability approach is to yield a standard of interpersonal comparison (Arneson 1989; Nussbaum 1992). Viewed this way, carrying through Sen’s critique would have to involve elaborating a theory of human good.

2.2 The Priority of the Right over the Good

A core ambition of Rawls’s work on justice is to free the idea of what is right and just from the idea of what is good or advantageous for a person. This is a crucial part of the enterprise of constructing a theory that is a genuine alternative to utilitarianism. For the utilitarian, as Rawls correctly notes, the idea of what is good for a person is independent of moral notions; Robinson Crusoe alone on his island still has need of a notion of prudence, of what he needs to do to make his life go better rather than worse over the long haul. If we could get clear about what is really intrinsically good, the rest would be

easy—what is morally right is maximizing, efficiently promoting the good. In contrast, Rawls aims to construct an account of rights that people have, specified by principles of justice, that is substantially independent of any particular notions of what is good, which are always bound to be disputable. Rawls's paradigm case of a dispute about how to live is religious controversy, which must end in stalemate. Reasonable people will persist in disagreeing about such matters. To reach objective consensus on issues of social justice, we must bracket these disagreements about God and more generally about the good, and in fact the willingness to set aside controversial conceptions of good in order to attain shared agreement on rules of social cooperation is for Rawls a prime mark of reasonableness.

But if the requirements of justice are conceived as disconnected in this way from human good, we have to countenance the possibility that in a perfectly just society people lead avoidably squalid lives. Perhaps they are even condemned to such lives; Rawlsian justice is no guarantee that your life goes well or has a good chance of going well. Moreover, the squalor might be pointless, in the sense that it is not that the misery of some is needed to avoid worse misery for others. Furthermore, the numbers do not count: If my small right is inviolable, then it must be respected, no matter the cost in the quality of human lives and in the number of persons who suffer such losses.

To the extent that we have an adequate conception of human good, that singles out what is truly worth caring about and what makes a life really go better for the person who is living it, it makes sense to hold that what people in a society fundamentally owe each other is a fair distribution of human good.¹ An adequate conception will surely be pluralistic, recognizing that there are many distinct goods and valuable ways of life, and will not claim more than the possibility or rough and partial commensurability of good across lives.

Many substantive claims about human good, such as that the list of valuable elements in a human life includes loyal friendship, reciprocal love, healthy family ties, systematic knowledge, pleasure, meaningful work, and significant cultural and scientific achievement, seem to me to be pretty

¹ Raz (1986, part II), Nussbaum (1992, 1999, 2000), Arneson (1989, 2000), Sher (1997), and Hurka (1993) (among others) advance arguments on this theme. Ackerman (1980), Larmore (1987), and Barry (1995, part II) defend versions of liberal neutrality on controversial conceptions of the good. On this issue, Nussbaum's current view appears in the final chapter of Nussbaum (2004).

uncontroversial, part of commonsense lore. But what is widely accepted is still sometimes disputed. Thinking straight about how to live is difficult, and we make mistakes. Prejudice, ignorance, superstition, and unthinking acceptance of convention play roles in rendering ethical knowledge controversial. Hence it does not offend against human dignity and respect for persons to endorse the implementation by a society of controversial but (by our best lights) correct conceptions of human good. The liberal legitimacy norm that Rawls embraces should be put in question if it is read as denying this. It all depends on what we mean by “reasonably” in the norm that one should treat people only according to principles that no one could reasonably reject. If “reasonably” refers to the ideal use of practical reason, then one reasonably rejects only incorrect principles and accepts correct ones. The norm is then unproblematic, but it allows imposition of views that are controversial in the ordinary sense of being contested among normal reasonable people (who may be making cognitive errors). But if “reasonably” is used in a weaker sense, so that one could reasonably make errors in judgment, then the weaker the standard of reasonableness that is invoked, the stronger and more constraining is the idea that one should not impose on people in the name of principles that are controversial among weakly reasonable people (but for a defense of Rawls, see Dreben 2003).

Here one might object that I am just pounding the table and dogmatically insisting that we can know the good, a controversial claim for which I have presented no argument. But I am just insisting on symmetry. Skepticism about knowledge of human good is a possible option, but by parity of reasoning, the grounds for that skepticism will carry over to claims about what is morally right and just as well. Only a sleight of hand would make it look plausible that reasonable people, if left uncoerced, will forever disagree about what is good but that all men and women of good will, if they are reasonable, will agree on principles of right such as the difference principle.

Restoring substantial claims about the content of human good to the theory of what is right and just does not necessarily lead back to utilitarianism. A good-based theory of justice asserts that we should choose actions and institutional arrangements to maximize some function of individual well-being, but maximizing aggregate or average well-being is just one option. In particular, more egalitarian principles beckon. In fact, Rawls has initiated an exploration of broadly egalitarian principles that is still ongoing.

2.3 The Difference Principle, Maximin, and the Original Position

The difference principle says that given the constraints imposed by the equal liberty and fair equality of opportunity principles, the social and economic primary social goods of the least advantaged should be maximized. Rawls's general conception of justice holds more simply that the basic structure of society should maximize the level of advantage, calculated in terms of primary social good holdings, of the least advantaged.

On its face, these principles assert an extreme priority weighting.² The principles insist that no gain, no matter how large, and no matter how large the number of already better off people to whom the gain accrues, should be pursued at the cost of any loss, no matter how tiny, and no matter how small the number of worse off persons who would suffer the loss (provided the change leaves intact people's status as belonging to the better off or worse off group). Rawls himself points out that this is counterintuitive (Rawls 1999a, 135–6) but remains unfazed on the ground that it is empirically wildly unlikely that in any actual society we would be faced with such a choice. But if this response is deemed satisfactory, this must mean the principles are no longer being pitched as fundamental moral principles but rather as practical policy guides, rules of thumb for constitution-makers and law-makers.

The claim that the strict lexical priority that the difference principle accords to the worst off, although admittedly too strict, will never lead to mistakes in practice, merits close scrutiny. To the extent this is plausible, its plausibility is entirely an artifact of the fact that Rawls would have us compare the condition of people only in terms of their primary goods allotments. If a possible policy would produce a huge gain in dollars for many better off people, surely some of that gain can be siphoned off to those worse off. But if we instead believe that the theory of justice should attend to people's actual overall quality of life over the entire life course, then we do face conflicts in which very tiny benefits for a few can be purchased only at huge cost in other people's lives. We could devote huge resources to the education of the barely educable or to extraordinary medical care that only slightly raises the life

² This problem was first raised by Harsanyi (1975). A response that defends Rawls is in Freeman (2003, editor's introduction). A version of the original position idea appears in Harsanyi (1953), where it is used in an argument for utilitarianism. For discussion, see Roemer (1996, ch. 4; 2002); also Parfit (2004, 341–53).

expectancy of those with grave medical conditions, and so on. Some of us are very inefficient transformers of resources into an enhanced quality of life. The hard issue of how much priority to accord to the achievement of gains for the worse off must be faced.

The difference principle lies at the extreme end of a continuum of views that accord variously greater weight for achieving a gain of a given size for a person, depending on how badly off in absolute terms the person would be, absent receipt of this gain. At the other end lies utilitarianism, which accords no extra weight at all to achieving a gain for a person depending on the prior goodness or badness of her condition. The entire range between these end points corresponds to the prioritarian family of principles, according to which, the worse a person's lifetime condition, the morally more valuable it is to achieve a gain or avoid a loss for her. The distinction between valuing priority and valuing equality has been clarified in work by Derek Parfit (2000).

Counterintuitive or not, the difference principle and the broader maximin conception might be derivable by iron logic from undeniable premises. Rawls gestures at provision of this sort of support in his original position argument, but in the area in which Rawls is pointing I submit that no good argument is to be found (see the critical discussions cited in footnote 2). Suffice it to say that the innovation of the original position has not resonated in recent political philosophy in anything like the way that Rawls's powerful but controversial vision of justice as social democratic liberalism continues to shape the agenda of political philosophy for both proponents and opponents. In my view the underlying reason for the relative neglect of original position arguments is that the basic hunch that motivates the project is wrong. Recall that the idea of the original position is that the principles of justice are whatever would emerge from an ideally fair choice procedure for selecting principles of justice. The presupposition is that we have pretheoretic intuitions, which can be refined, concerning what are the fairest conditions for choosing basic moral principles. But why think this? Perhaps one should say that the fair set-up of a procedure for choosing principles of justice is whatever arrangement happens to produce the substantially best principles. We have commonsense beliefs about the conditions under which contracts and private deals are fairly negotiated, but there is no intuitive content to the idea of a fair procedure for choosing basic principles of social regulation. (If we knew that a particular person, Smith, was very wise and knew a lot about principles of justice and had thought more deeply about these matters than the rest of us, perhaps the "fairest" choice procedure would be, "Let Smith decide.")

This takes us back to a conflict of intuitions that needs to be clarified and perhaps resolved via theory. Some affirm equality: it is good if everyone has the same, or is treated the same, in some respect (Temkin 1993). Others affirm doing the best that can be done for the worst off. Priority weakens this strict maximin tilt in favor of the worst off. An unresolved Goldilocks issue arises here; how much priority arising from the badness of one's condition is too little, too much, or just enough? Another option worth mention is sufficientarianism: What matters morally and what justice requires is not that everyone has the same but that everyone has enough. Each should achieve, or be enabled to achieve, a threshold level of decent existence, the level being set by whatever we had better take to be the best standard of interpersonal comparison for a theory of justice (primary goods shares, or capabilities to function in valuable ways, or utility construed as pleasure or desire satisfaction, or well-being corresponding to achievement of the items on an objective list of goods, or whatever). Expressions of sufficientarian or quasi-sufficientarian opinion are common in recent political philosophy (Frankfurt 1987; Anderson 1999; D. Miller 2004; Nussbaum 2000), but the doctrines other than the difference principle mentioned in this paragraph need further elaboration and interpretation before we would be in a position definitively to gauge how compelling they are.

2.4 Nozick and Lockean Libertarianism

According to Rawls, the choice of economic systems—capitalist, socialist, or some other—need not reflect a fundamental moral commitment. At least, either a liberal capitalist or a liberal socialist regime could in principle implement the Rawlsian principles of egalitarian liberalism. Against this view Robert Nozick developed a powerful response of right-wing inspiration (Nozick 1974). His starting point is the idea that each person has the moral right to live as she chooses on any mutually agreed terms with others so long as she does not thereby harm nonconsenting other people in ways that violate their rights. These latter rights not to be harmed form a spare set. Each of us has the right not to be physically assaulted or menaced with the threat of physical assault, not to be imposed on by the actions of others in ways that cause physical harm to oneself or one's property, not to be defrauded, not to

suffer theft or robbery. Nozick finds antecedents for these ideas in the writings of John Locke, who does not fully commit to them.³ From this standpoint, the moral authority of the state to coerce people without their consent even just to maintain minimal public order appears problematic. The idea that society has the right and obligation to redistribute property to achieve a more fair distribution cannot find a place in Lockean natural rights theory. Property is owned by people, and the state, acting as agent of society, has no more right to take from some and give to others than a robber does.

The right of each person to act as she chooses has as its core a universal right of self-ownership: Each adult person is the full rightful owner of herself, possessing full property rights over her own person. The next question that arises here is how an individual may legitimately come to acquire rights to use or own particular pieces of the world. Without some such rights self-ownership would come to very little. The Lockean project is to specify how legitimate private ownership of property arises in a world in which objects are initially unowned, and what the terms and limits of such legitimate ownership are. The main stream of Lockean views defends the idea that private property ownership can be fully legitimate, given certain conditions, no matter how unequal the distribution of privately owned property. Left-wing Lockean demur (Steiner 1994). They try to defend the view that each person is the full rightful owner of herself but that the distribution of ownership of the world must be roughly equal.

Mainstream Lockean views concerning the legitimacy of private property ownership resonate strongly and positively with commonsense opinion in modern market societies, but the philosophical elaboration of these views is still a project that largely awaits completion. Nozick's arguments are sometimes brilliant but his views are sketchy. We are not yet in a good position definitively to compare Lockean versions of liberal justice with their more egalitarian rivals.

2.5 Desert, Responsibility, and Luck Egalitarianism

Surprisingly, Rawls rejects the platitude that justice is giving people what they deserve (Rawls 1999a). He argues against the idea that notions of desert belong in fundamental principles of justice (although, of course, norms of

³ See Locke (1980). See also the interpretation of Locke in Simmons (1992) and Waldron (1988, ch. 6) and developments of Lockean ideas in Simmons (2001).

desert might serve as means to implement justice goals). A notion of individual responsibility is implicit in Rawls's principles. The basic notion is that given a social context in which people's rights to access to primary social goods are assured, each person is responsible for deciding how to live, constructing a plan of life, and executing it. If one's choices have bad results and one has a poor quality of life, this fact does not trigger a valid moral claim to further compensation from others.

Some see problems in this picture (see Olsaretti, this volume). One line of objection holds that a sharper line needs to be drawn between what we owe to one another and what each individual must do for herself. What we owe to each other is compensation for unchosen and uncourted bad luck. Some bad events just befall people in ways they have no reasonable opportunity to avoid, as when a meteor strikes. Some bad events are such that one does have reasonable opportunity to avoid them. A paradigm case would be losses that issue from voluntarily undertaken high-stakes gambling. Social justice demands a differential response to bad luck, depending on how it arises. A complication here is that each person's initial genetic endowment of propensities to traits along with her early socialization is evidently a matter of unchosen and uncourted luck, good or bad. But my later, substantially voluntary choice to embrace bad values and make unwise decisions about how to live may simply express my initial unchosen bad luck in inherited traits and socialization experiences. Does justice then demand *some* compensation for courted bad luck traceable in part to uncourted earlier bad luck, paternalistic restriction of individual liberty to limit the harm to self that my lack of intelligence generates, or what? Ronald Dworkin has done the most to clarify these tangles and develop a coherent position concerning distributive justice on the basis of this line of thought (Dworkin 2000). Some sympathetic to this general line are trying to refine it (Roemer 1998). Others find the entire approach, labeled "luck egalitarianism" by critics, to be unpromising (Scanlon 1989; Fleurbaey 1995; Anderson 1999; Scheffler 2003). Luck egalitarianism is said to be too unforgiving to individuals who make bad choices. Its critics accuse it of exaggerating the significance of choice and of giving undue weight to the distribution-of-resources aspect of social justice.

A different but related line of thought finds that egalitarian principles of social justice inevitably must imply that individuals have moral duties to live their lives so that the principles are more rather than less fulfilled. How much

more? If we must live our lives in ways that maximize justice fulfillment, the demands of justice on the conduct of individual lives will be very stringent and likely counterintuitive. Rawls suggested that the principles of justice for the basic structure of society are stringently egalitarian but that individuals are free to live their lives as they choose so long as they abide by the rules of just institutions. G. A. Cohen finds this position to be unstable (Cohen 2000). If well-off persons accept the difference principle (which holds that inequalities that are not to the maximal benefit of the least advantaged are unacceptable), they cannot benefit in good conscience from hard bargaining. Instead of threatening to strike for higher wages, already well-paid medical doctors, committed to the difference principle, could agree to work extra hours for no extra pay, or voluntarily to embrace pay cuts, for example. A large question arises here concerning the degree to which a modern liberal theory of justice can or should be libertarian in the sense of embracing some close relative of the principles defended by J. S. Mill in *On Liberty*.

2.6 Civil Liberties, Diversity, Democracy, and More-than-formal Equality of Opportunity

Liberalism in normative political theory is more an attitude or stance toward politics than a specific set of doctrines. Liberalism is strongly associated with strong protection of freedom of speech and assembly and related liberties. One argument is good-based: If what I fundamentally want is to lead a life that achieves truly worthwhile and valuable goals, I will want not just to satisfy whatever preferences I now have, but to enjoy a sound education and a culture of free speech, which has some tendency to undermine my false beliefs and bad values. (Of course free speech can also cause a person to abandon true beliefs and good values; the liberal position involves a broad faith that the free use of reason by ordinary persons will tend over time to lead to improvement rather than corruption.) Rawls appeals to the interest that persons as such are assumed to have in developing and exercising their moral powers to adopt conceptions of the good and to cooperate with others on reasonable terms (Rawls 1996). These arguments have some force, but they are also in some tension with each other, and it is not clear that either one or both can be worked into a doctrine that picks out privileged liberties and justifies according them strict priority.

Civil liberties traditionally understood strike some as insufficient to resolve problems of diversity in contemporary society. Women, members of minority ethnic groups and supposed races, people with nonheterosexual sexual orientation, and others who experience themselves as unfairly pushed to the margins of society seek recognition of their differences and common humanity (see Markell and Squires, both in this volume).

Another question is the place of democratic political rights in liberal theory (Christiano 1996). Democratic rights are not central in the Lockean tradition. One might suppose that egalitarian liberals will hold democratic rights to be of mainly instrumental value in securing other more fundamental rights. An egalitarian might hold that whatever political arrangements are most likely to achieve a fair distribution of good quality lives or opportunities for good quality lives to people should be instituted and upheld.

Advocates of democratic equality (e.g. Anderson 1999; J. Cohen 2003) hold a sharply contrasting view. They hold that the moral equality and equal dignity of persons rightly interpreted require above all equal fundamental liberty for all persons and that prominent among these liberties is the right to participate on equal terms with other members of one's society in collectively setting the laws that coercively regulate all members' lives.⁴ In this perspective, the right to democracy can appear to be the right of rights, the crown jewel of individual rights.

A society can be more or less democratic along several dimensions of assessment. How democratic should society be? Rawls stakes out a demanding position in answer to this question. His final statement of his equal liberty principle states that the equal political liberties are to be guaranteed their "fair value." What he means is that any two citizens with equal political ability and equal ambition to influence political outcomes should have the same chances of influencing political outcomes. A kind of fair equality of opportunity is to operate in the political sphere that is close in spirit to the fair equality of opportunity that he holds should prevail in the competition for positions conferring economic and social advantages.

⁴ Another aspect of democratic equality is what we have called "diversity"—how society must be arranged, in order to assure equality of the appropriate sort between members of groups, for example, between men and women and between members of different ethnicities or supposed races. On the former division, see Okin (1989). On the latter, see discussions of the rights of minority peoples in democratic society, for example, Kymlicka (1989, 1995) and Barry (2001).

Rawlsian fair equality of opportunity is a strong, controversial doctrine. Rawls pushes to its logical limit an ideal that others either reject outright or hold should be constrained by conflicting values (Nozick 1974; Arneson 1999).

2.7 Global Justice

Do we owe more to fellow citizens than to distant needy strangers (Chatterjee 2004)? Should we embrace a two-tier theory of justice, which imposes demanding egalitarian requirements within each society but much less demanding requirements on members of one nation toward the members of other nations? A certain type of cosmopolitan view proposes a resounding “No” to both questions (Beitz 1979; Pogge 1989; Nagel 1991). This cosmopolitanism can take a right-wing form, which asserts that duties are minimal in both the national and the global context, and a left-wing form, which affirms strong duties within and across borders.

This issue can be regarded as a part of the morality of special ties (Miller 1998; Scheffler 2001). Many of us intuitively feel that we have especially strong moral obligations to those who are near and dear to us, to family members, friends, members of our community, and perhaps fellow citizens, but it is unclear to what extent a sound theory of justice will vindicate or repudiate these pretheoretical feelings. And what about putative special obligations to fellow members of our own social class, ethnic group, or racial lineage?⁵

A related issue arises if we imagine a society that is just internally by our lights, and faces the task of choosing a just international relations policy. Should the just foreign policy of such a society press for ideal justice everywhere or rather extend strong sincere toleration and respect to any political regime that meets a threshold standard of decency?

Rawls's book *The Law of Peoples* (Rawls 1999c) adopts a conservative and somewhat anti-cosmopolitan stance toward the issues just mentioned. But the doctrine of egalitarianism within national borders and minimal duties across borders may ultimately prove to be unstable under examination. The arguments that urge minimal duties toward outsiders, if found acceptable, may undermine the case for egalitarian arrangements among insiders, and

⁵ See the essays in McKim and McMahan (1997). Also Barry (2001) and Kymlicka (1995).

the arguments that urge egalitarian arrangements within borders, if found acceptable, may compel a similar egalitarianism across borders.

Thinking about global justice issues tends to unsettle one's prior convictions (see C. Brown, this volume). A reflective equilibrium among our justice beliefs may be hard to achieve, and at any rate not within sight, in the present state of theory. This claim applies not just to global justice beliefs but to all beliefs about the content of social justice. The pot that Rawls has stirred up is still bubbling.

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CHAPTER 3

POWER AFTER FOUCAULT

WENDY BROWN

THE English noun, power, derives from the Latin, *potere*, which stresses potentiality and means “to be able.” However, origins may be as disorienting as they are helpful in this case, especially in understanding how power has been reconceptualized by French critical thought in recent decades. In its emphasis on concerted agency, the Latin root obscures the significance of power’s dispersion, circulation, and microphysical mechanics, its often automatic rather than intentional workings, and its detailed imbrication with knowledge, language, and thought. Moreover, the etymological origin of power suggests the importance of power as a quality (an ability) which, however important, diverts appreciation of power as a relation and one that induces effects, especially in the making of human subjects and social orders. It is from power’s effects, including unintended ones, that many recent theories of power have insisted the presence of power be read, an insistence that underscores an incommensurability between what the putatively powerful desire or intend and what power does. The contemporary thesis that subjects are socially constructed by power comes hand in glove with the decoupling of power from familiar notions of agency as sovereignty: not only does the social construction of subjects constitute a limit

on the sovereignty of subject, but when power is understood to flow along discourses and course through populations, it ceases to appear as the property of individuals or institutions. Hence the “to be able” of power’s etymology does more than place important aspects of power in the shadows; it forthrightly misleads in its conjuration of an actor behind the action of power, “a doer behind the deed” in Nietzsche’s phrase (Nietzsche 1967, 45).

Many strains in contemporary cultural theory and especially in post-structuralism have contributed to the recent reconceptualizations of power suggested above. The past fifty years of Continental thought—not only in philosophy but also in structuralist and post-structuralist linguistics, anthropology, semiotics, literary theory, science studies, psychoanalysis, and historiography—have radically reconceived the operations, mechanics, logics, venues, and vehicles of power.¹ On the one hand, power has been discerned in relations among words, juxtapositions of images, discourses of scientific truth, micro-organizations of bodies and gestures, in social orchestrations of pain and pleasure, sickness, fear, health, and suffering. On the other hand, these discernments have undermined conventional formulations of power—those that equate power with rule, law, wealth, or violence. They have also undermined strong distinctions between power and knowledge, and between power and ideology: If power operates through norms, and not only through law and force, and if norms are borne by words, images, and the built environment, then popular discourses, market interpellations, and spatial organization are as much a vehicle for power as are troops, bosses, prime ministers, or police. Moreover, if power constructs human subjects and does not simply act upon them, if power brings human worlds into existence and does not simply contain or limit them, then power is above all generative and constantly exceeds itself—it is neither spatially bound nor temporally static. Power also exceeds and is distinguishable from intentions imputed to it; it is not, as convention would have it, simply about enactment of the will, though it may well be tactical, strategic,

¹ Some of the thinkers associated with this reconceptualization include Giorgio Agamben (1998, 1999, 2005), Talal Asad (1993), Roland Barthes (1972, 1977), Judith Butler (1997, 2004), Gilles Deleuze (1988, 1995), Paul De Man (1983, 1986), Jacques Derrida (1976, 1978), Jacques Donzelot (1997), Michel Foucault (2000), Stuart Hall (1991, 1997), Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (1996), Donna Haraway (1990, 1991), Jacques Lacan (2002), Bruno Latour (1993), Bruno Latour and Michel Serres (1995), Jean-François Lyotard (1984), Paul Rabinow (1997), Edward Said (1978), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1987, 1988), Gianni Vattimo (1988), and Hayden White (1987).

and logical. How to think strategy without human design? Tactics without perpetrators? Logics without aim?

Enter Michel Foucault.² Well-known for his insistence that power is “everywhere,” this insistence is not a claim that power equally and indiscriminately touches all elements of the social fabric or that power belongs equally to everyone. Rather, this formulation displaces one in which power emerges only in explicit scenes of domination or rule-giving. Instead, power is understood to construct and organize subjects in a variety of domains and discourses, including those ordinarily imagined to be free of power, for example science, sexual desire, or the arts. Attention is also shifted from questions about who holds power to questions about forms and operations of power, and Foucault is especially interested in those forms and operations that “categorize the individual, mark him by his own individuality, attach him to his own identity, impose a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others must recognize in him . . . a form of power which makes individuals subjects” (Foucault 1982, 212). In addition, this formulation displaces one in which domination is thought to inhere only in visible regimes of cruelty or injustice, emphasizing instead multi-faceted subjectification and subject production by social norms and practices.

These displacements are most easily grasped by reviewing Foucault’s critique of what he takes to be three conventional models of power: the sovereignty model, the commodity model, and the repressive model. These models are not radically distinct; not only are they interwoven with one another, they address different moments of power. Sovereignty primarily refers to power’s putative source, commodity refers to power’s movement, while repression concerns the nature of power’s action. The sovereignty model equates power with rule and law; the commodity model casts power as tangible and transferable, like wealth; and the repressive model assumes the action of power to be only negative, repressive, constraining. Foucault’s alternative to these understandings requires what he calls an “analytics” of power that centers on an appreciation of power’s productive, regulatory, and dispersed or capillary character—its irrigation of the social order as opposed to an imagined positioning of power as on top of, visibly stratifying, or forcibly containing its subject (Foucault 1980a, 88–107). In the

² For a more extended discussion of this point see “Power,” co-authored by Wendy Brown and Joan W. Scott, in *Critical Terms of Gender Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming).

following, Foucault's critique of each model of power is considered in further detail.

1 THE SOVEREIGNTY MODEL

Although Foucault's critique of sovereignty extends from the subject to the state, the sovereign model of power is the most common *political* notion of power; it casts the problem of power in terms of ruling and being ruled, or in Lenin's formulation, "who does what to whom." Power in this view is thought to be contained in sovereign individuals or institutions and to be exercised over others by these individuals and institutions. Not only monarchical rule but representative democracy as it appears in social contract theory from Hobbes to Rawls is premised upon the sovereign model of power. Power is equated with rule, and the making and enforcement of law is taken to be its sign. We are presumed to be sovereign subjects when we are self-legislating, which is to say that we are presumed to will and hence legislate for ourselves when another is not legislating for us. Thus, social contractarian formulations of popular sovereignty rely upon the mutually reinforcing conceits of individual sovereignty and state sovereignty, each of which, paradoxically, is taken to have the power to confer sovereignty on the other.

Foucault challenges the sovereign model of power first by challenging the *a priori* of sovereignty itself, insisting instead that the conditions of sovereignty or imagined sovereignty are themselves suffused with power. Thus, sovereignty is revealed as an effect or emblem of power rather than its source, a move that recasts sovereignty from a universal wellspring of state formation and individuality to a historically specific expression and dissimulation of power relations. At the same time, sovereignty is exposed as a fiction, neither the origin of power nor in control of the field of power's operation to the degree that the conventional model suggests. Second, Foucault argues, sovereign power is a small rather than governing feature of modern political life and governance; modern political thought's preoccupation with sovereign power has led it to overlook the range of subjectifying and often unavowed powers that coexist with legitimate forms of sovereignty (Foucault 1980a). Sovereignty, which defines political power as a

matter of rule, blinds us to the powers that organize modern polities and modern subjects.

2 THE COMMODITY MODEL

The commodity model of power is predominantly an *economic* understanding of power, although it has substantial relevance to conventional formulations of political domination. In the commodity model, power is thoroughly material and is a transferable or circulating good. Although Foucault does not resolutely hold Marx to this model (indeed, Marx's move to derive all social power from labor anticipates Foucault's insistence on the *productive* and *relational* character of power), the Marxist notion of labor power as extractable, commodifiable, and constituting the basis of capital and hence the power of capitalism, inevitably partakes of an understanding of power as a commodity. But so also does the idea of sovereignty rely on a view of power as commodifiable: The very possibility of being able to transfer sovereignty from one king to another, or to divest the king of sovereignty and distribute it to the people—the understanding of these acts *as* transfers or divestments—assumes the commodifiability of power. Thus, social contractarians draw on the commodity model of power both to theorize the legitimacy of the social contract and to articulate liberty in a liberal democratic frame. The commodity model of power also undergirds social analyses that treat some groups as having power and others as lacking it, analyses that treat powerlessness as the necessary corollary of power, or analyses that understand power as equivalent to privilege that can either be exercised or surrendered depending on the moral commitments of the subject in question.

Foucault challenges this formulation of power as an object, a transferable substance external to and hence potentially alienable from the subject who is said to hold it. He argues that power is constitutive of subjects, not simply wielded by them; that it operates in the form of relations among subjects, and is never merely held by them; that it “irrigates” society and is not an object within society; and that it travels along threads of discourse by which we are interpellated and which we also speak, thereby confounding distinctions

between subjects and objects of power, or between agents, vehicles, and targets of power (Foucault 1980a).

3 THE REPRESSIVE MODEL

The repressive model of power is the most common psychological notion of power, although like the commodity model, it is also part of what the sovereign model draws upon. What Foucault names the “repressive hypothesis” in *The History of Sexuality* identifies power inherently with repression or restriction, with “saying no” (Foucault 1978). The repressive hypothesis implies that the aim of institutional and especially state power is either containment of desire *tout court* (Freud) or containment of the natural passions and lawlessness of the body politic (Hobbes).

Foucault’s challenge to the repressive hypothesis is fourfold: (1) power is productive rather than simply repressive, that is, power *brings into being* meanings, subjects, and social orders—these are effects of power rather than its material or its a priori; (2) power and freedom are not opposites insofar as there is no subject, and hence no freedom, outside of power; (3) repressive models of power tacitly posit a human subject (or a human nature) untouched by power underneath power’s repressive action; and (4) repression itself, far from containing desires, proliferates them (Foucault 1978, part 2). It is the critique of the repressive hypothesis that allows Foucault to develop his formulations of specifically modern varieties of power that work to one side of the state. He is especially interested in what he names biopower, which regulates life rather working through the threat of death and orders and regulates mass populations and their behaviors in a way that no repressive apparatus could rival (Foucault 1978, part 5; Foucault 1979, part 3; Foucault 2004).

Together, the conventional models of power express a conviction about power’s tangible, empirical nature—its presence in a rule, an order, a person, or an institution. They also cast power as largely independent of truth and knowledge, and in that move, distinguish power from the mechanisms of its legitimation. While Foucault is careful not to equate power and knowledge, he does establish knowledge as a significant field of power, and truth as

inherently political. "Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power" (Foucault 1980*b*, 131).

It is in the power/knowledge relation, and the recognition of the extent to which power operates as a field or regime of truth, that the importance of Foucault's own formulation of the concept of discourse emerges. Different from mere language or speech, for Foucault, discourse embraces a relatively bounded field of terms, categories, and beliefs expressed through statements that are commonsensical within the discourse. As an ensemble of speech practices that carry values, classifications, and meanings, discourse simultaneously constitutes a truth about subjects, and constitutes subjects in terms of this truth regime. For Foucault, discourse never merely describes but rather, creates relationships and channels of authority through the articulation of norms. Insofar as discourse simultaneously constructs, positions, and represents subjects in terms of norms and deviations posited by the discourse, representation ceases to be merely representation but is importantly constitutive of subjects and the world in which they operate. Thus representation is never innocent of power, but is rather, a crucial field of power; this in turn unsettles the possibility of a distinction between "truth" and power, and hence unsettles the possibility of truth in a modern (objectivist) idiom. Another important implication of Foucault's understanding of the truth-and subject-constituting nature of discourse is that domination or oppression can no longer be conceived in terms of total or closed systems. Rather, Foucault's depiction of the unsystematic interplay of discourses that potentially converge as well as conflict with one another means that domination is never complete, never total, never fully saturating of the social order.

Foucault's critique of conventional models of power thus challenges models that account for social *systems* of rule and replaces them with an understanding of the multiple, infinitely detailed, and above all incomplete or haphazard content of particular regimes of truth governing and constituting subjects. His insistence on the relentlessly historical nature of particular formations of power, and even particular styles or "technologies" of power, replaces an image of power governing a social totality with an image of power suffusing the present with an array of historically freighted discourses that do not harmonize or resolve in a coherent, closed system. Foucault's formulation of discourse also poses a fundamental challenge to the Marxist and neo-Marxist view of power as material and of ideology as a distorted account of that materiality. Rather, if

discourses establish truth, and construct and position subjects in terms of that truth, then power is *inside* a discourse or truth regime rather than external to it. Discourse is not mere ideology, and ideology, if it remains a coherent concept at all (about which Foucault is dubious), is never “mere” (Foucault 1980*b*, 118). Truth is not underneath or outside representation; power is never fully tangible but, rather, is an effect of the norms issuing from particular orders of words and images, orders that are constructed as much by silences, blank spaces, and framing as by the words and images themselves.

4 GOVERNMENTALITY

Foucault’s critique of conventional models of power and his own formulation of power as productive and dispersed rather than repressive and concentrated paves the way for a reconsideration of modern governance itself, that is, of how individuals and populations are ordered and mobilized in mass society. Foucault’s particular interest pertains to what he dubs the “*omnes et singulatum*” (all and each) technique of modern government, its signature capacity simultaneously to gather and isolate, amass and distinguish (Foucault 1981). Modern political governance also involves a combination (but not a systemization) of micropowers and macropowers, that is, powers that operate on the body and psyche in local and often non-obvious fashion, and powers that may be more overt, centralized, and visible.

Foucault’s lectures on governance in the late 1970s integrate a set of working ideas that he had been developing for some years: the critique of sovereignty (state and individual), the decentering of the state and of capital as the organizing powers of modern history (and a correspondent decentering of state theory and political economy for mapping power), the elaboration of norms, regulation, and discipline as crucial vehicles of power, the development of analyses that illuminate the production of the modern subject rather than chart its repression, the imbrication of truth and power and the importance of “regimes of truth” or rationalities, and an appreciation of the imbrication (not the identity) of power and knowledge in organizing subjects and societies. But the governance studies—and in particular the theory of governmentality elaborated below—do not simply integrate these

concerns; rather, they are gathered into a project that moves from critiques of inadequate models and conceptualizations toward the development of a framework for apprehending the operations of modern political power and organization.

The questions of modern government, which, according to Foucault, “explode” in the sixteenth century, include “how to govern oneself, how to be governed, how to govern others, by whom the people will accept to be governed, and how to become the best possible governor” (Foucault 1991, 87). Government in this broad sense, therefore, includes but is not reducible to questions of rule, legitimacy, or state institutions; it is not only a formally political matter but is as applicable to self, family, workplace, or asylum as to public life and the state. Government involves, in Foucault’s famous phrase, “the conduct of conduct,” the directing and channeling of the behavior of the body individual, the body social, and the body politic by means other than force or even explicit rule (Gordon 1991, 5). Whether conducted on oneself by oneself or on a social body by a combination of political, economic, and social powers, government operates through (and molds) the capacity of the governed body to regulate its own behavior and, in this regard, paradoxically presupposes a degree of freedom on the part of the governed. At variance from exercises of domination or force, government in Foucault’s locution is perhaps best grasped as regularized orchestration, something suggested by the musical allusion in the phrase, “the conduct of conduct.”

But does governing require a conductor or conductors? Governmentality, Foucault’s neologism that explicitly hybridizes government and rationality, is designed to capture the uniquely modern combination of governance by institutions, knowledges, and disciplinary practices, and to accent the dispersed rather than centralized or concentrated nature of modern political governance. The neologism captures both the phenomenon of governance by particular rationalities and grasps governing itself as involving a rationality. As Foucault elaborates it, governmentality has four crucial features. First, it involves the harnessing and organizing of energies in any body—individual, mass, national, or transnational—that might otherwise be anarchic, self-destructive, or simply unproductive. And not only energies but needs, capacities, and desires are corralled, harnessed, ordered, managed, and directed by governmentality. This is part of what distinguishes it from classical conceptions of rule or domination in which subjects are presumed to be bossed by power rather than fashioned, integrated, and activated by it. Second, as the conduct of conduct, governmentality has a vast range of points

of operation and application, from individuals to mass populations, and from particular parts of the body and psyche to appetites and ethics, work or citizenship practices. Thus, for example, discourses of health, consumerism, or safety are as or more important than discourses of rights in governing the contemporary liberal democratic subject. Third, far from being restricted to rule, law, or other kinds of visible and accountable power, governmentality works through a range of invisible and non-accountable social powers. One of Foucault's best examples here is pastoral power, a form that migrates from church to state and infiltrates workplaces as well. Pastoral power orders and controls its subjects by promoting their well-being through detailed knowledge and regulation of their behavior—simultaneous individualization and massification and a high degree of moralization of crime, sin, or failure. Fourth and related, governmentality both employs *and* infiltrates a number of discourses ordinarily conceived as unrelated to political power, governance, or the state. These include scientific discourses (including medicine, criminology, pedagogy, psychology, psychiatry, and demography), religious discourses, and popular discourses. Governmentality, therefore, draws upon without unifying, centralizing, or rendering systematic or even consistent, a range of powers and knowledges dispersed across modern societies.

Within the problematic of government and governmentality, Foucault's interest in the state is largely limited to the way in which it is "governmentalized" today. Governmentalization refers to the internal reconfiguration of the state by the project of administration and its links to external knowledges, discourses, and institutions that govern outside the rubric and purview of the state. The "governmentalization" of the state connects "the constitutional, fiscal, organizational, and judicial powers of the state . . . with endeavors to manage the economic life, the health and habits of the population, the civility of the masses, and so forth" (Rose 1999, 18). If governmentality in general includes the organization and deployment of space, time, intelligibility, thought, bodies, and technologies to produce governable subjects, the governmentalization of the state both incorporates these tactical concerns into state operations and articulates with them in other, non-state domains.

Foucault's decentering of the state in formulating modern governmentality corresponds to a contrast he establishes between governing and the state. While Foucault acknowledges that the state may be "no more than a composite reality and a mythicized abstraction," Foucault takes the state to signify powers of containment and negation, a signification that does not capture the more complex and diffuse ways that modern citizens are produced,

positioned, classified, organized, and above all, mobilized by an array of governing sites and capacities (Foucault 1991, 103; Mitchell 1991). Government, as Foucault uses it, also stands in contrast to rule; with the end of monarchy and the dissolution of the homology between family and polity in modernity, rule ceases to be the dominant modality of governance. However, Foucault is not arguing that governmentality chronologically supersedes sovereignty and rule. In his own words, “we need to see things not in terms of the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society and the subsequent replacement of a disciplinary society by a society of government; in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty–discipline–government, which has as its primary target the population and its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security” (Foucault 1991, 102).

5 THEORIZING POWER AFTER FOUCAULT

While he did not set out to do so, Foucault has transformed the political theoretical landscape of power to a degree that rivals the Marx–Nietzsche–Weber effect a century earlier. Foucault’s infamous insistence that “we must cut off the king’s head in political theory,” the guillotine for which is provided not only by his theorization of power but by his genealogies of non-sovereign and non-juridical modes of political power, opens a fantastic range of institutions, practices, knowledges, and identities to political theoretical inquiry (Foucault 1980*b*, 121). By simultaneously considering the production, mobilization, representation, and subjectification of the modern subject, he has threaded together what are conventionally distributed across economic, sociological, and political perspectives on power, and has reconceived both the location and action of power itself. Nor is this just a matter of discerning power in new places: Foucault’s genealogies of the knowledge/power relations in sexuality, punishment, and other forms of subject production have also attuned us to the *circuitries* of power and governmentality between, for example, the state and the social, the scientific and the political, or the carceral, the pedagogic, and the medical (Rose 1999; Barry, Rose, and Osborne 1996; Burchell, Gordon, and Miller 1991; Dumm 1996).