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On political philosophy

Normativity: A survey

As I established in the last chapter, the fluid and dynamic nature of politics as social physics is a result of the tension between actual and possible power relations—that is, between the ways our world is and the various ways it could be. The tension between “actual” and “possible” here is to be understood not at the level of modal metaphysics, but at the level of human beliefs, desires, and actions. What matters is not so much whether certain states of affairs are possible *per se* but rather whether human beings *believe* they are possible, whether they desire them to be actual, whether they will take action to make them actual, and so forth. It is precisely this dimension that makes human power relations a kind of social physics: what happens in the human world is not a result of immutable physical laws but of the unpredictable interplay of the actual and the possible as expressed through human beliefs, desires, and actions.

The realm of “what ought to be,” which I have been calling the “normative” realm, cuts a wide swath. It is concerned not only with how the world ought to be writ large, but with a host of more limited questions—for example: How ought we to live? How ought we to act? What kinds of people ought we to be? What sorts of things and actions and states of affairs ought we to promote and protect? Although there is an implicit consensus among people in regard to at least some of these questions—for example, most everyone is agreed that one ought not to kill innocent people—this seldom entails any automatic correspondence with human social reality. No matter how many people believe that murder is wrong and desire that it not take place, innocent people continue to be killed every day. It is precisely this kind of conflict or disparity that makes our existence inexorably *political* and that, in turn, requires a holistic analysis of the battle between what is and what ought to be. This, I have suggested, is both the source of political philosophy as well as the purpose for doing it.

I argued previously that we cannot make absolute distinctions among political theories based upon the degree to which they “emphasize” one pole or another in their analyses. It follows from my definition that all political philosophy is more or less “normative” and more or less “descriptive.” If this is our only basis of comparison, however, we are left with nothing but a range of theories that differ only in degree but not in kind. A better route, I think, is to take a closer look at the nature of normativity within these theories. As I just suggested, after all, normativity is a complicated concept that inevitably means different things within different theoretical contexts. My goal here is not to provide a detailed analysis of the normative but to introduce some preliminary concepts that will better enable us to distinguish among political theories.

Within normative ethics, the scope of which is generally limited to individual human actions, the fundamental ethical question (“what ought to be”) is often cashed out in terms of means and ends. In order to understand this distinction, it behooves us to begin with a basic model of human action. Here the action theory of Donald Davidson is particularly helpful. Like many other theorists before him,¹ Davidson regards actions as a species of events. What distinguishes human actions from ordinary events, according to Davidson, is *intentionality*. Thus an event *x* is an action just in case there is a true description of it under which it is something someone does intentionally (i.e., for a reason).² Whenever an agent acts for a reason, moreover, she can be characterized as “(a) having some sort of pro attitude [e.g., a desire, wanting, urge, preference, etc.] toward actions of a specific kind, and (b) believing . . . that [her] actions are of that kind.”³

On this model, for example, my making a sandwich begins with my having a reason for making a sandwich—that is, my desire to make a sandwich coupled with my belief that combining bread, cheese, vegetables, and mustard in a certain manner will fulfill my desire. Considered in this way, human actions can be seen as teleological—that is, they have a specific and intended end for the sake of which they are performed. An action itself, by extension, is a means taken in order to obtain a desired end, and this because the actor believes that acting in that way is *likely* to bring about the desired outcome. This suggests that an action can be divided, as it were, into at least three components: intended ends, means, and actual ends (or consequences).

At an extremely high level of generality, Western moral philosophy can be divided into two theoretical schools. The first, which is known as consequentialism, holds that the moral rightness or wrongness of an action depends solely on the consequences of that action. The second, which is known as nonconsequentialism, includes all moral theories that deny that the moral rightness or wrongness of an action depends solely on the consequences of that action. The debate between these two camps is nearly as old as Western

philosophy itself. For example, whereas the hedonism of the Cyrenaic and Epicurean schools affirmed a kind of primitive consequentialism according to which an action is virtuous to the extent that it promotes pleasure or happiness, Aristotle argued that an action is virtuous to the extent that the action itself expresses one or more virtues, where the virtues are understood as dispositions to act, which collectively constitute a particular kind of character—namely, that of the aretaic exemplar or “prudent man.”⁴

The Greek concept of the “virtuous” should not be confused with the more modern concept of “morally right.” For Aristippus and Aristotle alike, the fundamental basis of moral evaluation is the character of the actor rather than the principles or norms that motivate her action. As Aristotle says, “Virtue then is a settled disposition of the mind determining the choice of actions and emotions, consisting essentially in the observance of the mean relative to us, this being determined by principle, that is, as the prudent man would determine it.”⁵ For example, if courage is a virtue, as it is for Aristotle, then a courageous act is one that, *ceteris paribus*, a courageous person would perform.⁶ Crucially, Aristotle held that an action could still be regarded as virtuous even if it failed to achieve its end.⁷ For example, it is virtuous to attempt to save a life even if one fails in that attempt.

Although the concept of virtue remained important in the moral philosophy of early Christianity,⁸ what mattered most were the absolute prescriptions handed down by God (for example, the Ten Commandments). According to this view, which is often referred to as the “divine command theory” of morality, actions are deemed right or wrong inasmuch as they uphold or violate God’s commandments.⁹ Though it remained influential throughout the Middle Ages¹⁰ and is still defended by certain contemporary philosophers,¹¹ strict divine command theory was gradually rejected by the schoolmen who recognized that absolute moral prescriptions produce dilemmas that cannot be resolved by recourse to scripture alone. The case-based moral reasoning of scholastic philosophy (casuistry) evolved in part to solve these sorts of dilemmas.¹²

Medieval casuistry may be understood as having revived the Aristotelian distinction between means and ends in order to devise principles of practical reasoning. A famous example is the so-called doctrine of double effect, which relies on a distinction between the underlying intentions of a voluntary action and its foreseeable consequences.¹³ According to the doctrine, it is sometimes permissible for an agent to bring about some outcome as an unintended but foreseen consequence of an action, where the outcome in question would be impermissible as an intended aim. The point is to provide criteria for judging the moral permissibility of actions that will foreseeably bring about multiple consequences—specifically, a good consequence that is intended and (at least) one bad consequence that is foreseen but unintended. Strictly speaking, it forbids the intentional performance of morally impermissible

actions in order to achieve morally good ends. At the same time, it allows for the performance of actions that produce both permissible and impermissible consequences, provided that (1) the former are intended and the latter are merely foreseen, and (2) the overall aim is morally permissible.

Casuistry arose in part out of medieval natural law theory, which, as I noted above, is itself a product of the recuperation of Roman jurisprudence and Aristotelian philosophy in West. The most well-known theory was articulated by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae*.¹⁴ For Aquinas, following Aristotle, human reason is structured in such a way as to naturally and immediately apprehend “its proper act and end” (i.e., the good).¹⁵ Aquinas calls this “ordering of reason” (*ordo rationis*) the natural law. Among other things, the natural law provides an ordered set of basic values from which are derived true principles or propositions about what is and is not to be done (the most basic of which is “good is to be done and evil is to be avoided”).¹⁶ As rational creatures, human beings recognize the good vis-à-vis the natural law and are generally inclined toward it.¹⁷ At the same time, however, human beings are free to act or not act in accordance with the natural law.¹⁸

Aquinas holds that certain actions are *malum in se*, which means, among other things, that humans beings ought not to perform them irrespective of intentions or consequences. At the same time, Aquinas, like the casuists, acknowledges that the commission of certain bad actions may be morally permissible depending on the circumstances. For example, killing, though evil in itself, may be morally permissible in cases of self-defense.¹⁹ In all cases, however, an action is regarded as good first and foremost because it conforms to the principles of natural law.²⁰ Intentions and consequences, though not entirely without importance, are always secondary considerations.

Abelard was one of the first moral philosophers to argue that normative evaluation should focus principally on the intentions of agents rather than on their characters or their actions.²¹ Although Abelard does not deny that certain actions are intrinsically wrong insofar as they violate God’s will, what matters is whether an individual actor *believes* that what he or she is doing is in accordance with God’s will.²² Acting on the basis of incorrect beliefs about what one ought to do is not the same thing as knowing what one ought not to do and doing it anyway. For Abelard, the latter is sinful. The former, on the other hand, is not sinful even though it leads to evil consequences. There is no sin except against conscience, and ignorance itself is not a sin.²³ Therefore, as long as one believed in good faith that what one was doing was right, one has not sinned.

What is interesting about Abelard’s ethics is not just that it situates moral culpability on the side of intention but that it emphasizes the importance of “acting according to principle.” The principle in question, simply put, is that one ought to act according to the good-faith dictates of one’s conscience. An action is judged right in accordance as it follows this principles and bad in

accordance as it does the opposite. As such, it is reasonable to claim Abelard as one of the first “deontological” moral philosophers. “Deontology,” after all, means something like “the science of duties,” and for Abelard the duty to follow one’s conscience is paramount. Though he might agree with Aquinas that the good is (mostly) self-evident to rational persons, Abelard seems much more attuned to the reality of moral conflict in ordinary human experience. The problem is not that people fail to recognize the good, but that they are often unsure how best to actualize the good in concrete moral situations. Abelard’s response, simply enough, is “always let your conscience be your guide.”

Several centuries later, Immanuel Kant formulated what has come to be regarded as the deontological moral theory *par excellence*, one that is grounded in the pivotal concepts of practical reason and autonomy.²⁴ In a broad sense, Kant’s conceptualization of human agency may be understood in terms of a struggle. Like his medieval predecessors, Kant recognizes that human beings are a part of nature. As animals, we are subject to a dizzying array of instincts, impulses, and desires. At the same time, however, we are *rational*, which for Kant involves the ability to act according to certain principles. Thus rationality often seems to compete with natural inclinations. On the one hand, human beings are compelled to act by the force of inclination; on the other hand we are capable of overcoming this compulsion so as to act on the basis of independent principles.

Man’s ability to act rationally, as opposed to instinctively, presupposes a capacity to assess or analyze the world of objects—in a word, to *think*. According to Kant:

Now man really finds in himself a faculty which distinguishes him from all other things and even from himself insofar as he is affected by objects. That faculty is reason, which as pure spontaneity is elevated even above understanding. For although the latter is spontaneous and does not, like sense, merely contain representations that arise only when one is affected by things (and is therefore passive), yet understanding can by its activity no other concepts than those which merely serve to bring sensuous representations [intuitions] under rules and unite them in one consciousness . . . Reason, on the other hand, shows such pure spontaneity that it goes far beyond anything that sensibility can offer and shows its highest occupation in distinguishing the world of sense from the world of understanding, thereby prescribing limits to the understanding itself.²⁵

Reason, the final component of thought, is born out of man’s desire, as it were, to produce a holistic account of the world of objects independently of sense experience—to posit a theoretical explanation which does not rely on any preceding causal explanation. Whereas understanding is thought in relation to something else—namely, sense experience—reason is thought *in*

itself. Kant further distinguishes between two forms of reason: theoretical and practical. Through theoretical reason, we arrive at certain facts about the world independently of sense experience. In a general sense, theoretical reason merely specifies what *is* the case. Practical reason, in contrast, is the faculty by which we act according to principles. “[A] rational being has the power to act according to his conception of laws, that is, according to principles, and thereby he has a will. Since the derivation of actions from laws requires reason, the will is nothing but practical reason.”²⁶ Thus, through practical reason we arrive at certain ideas regarding how we *ought* to act. These ideas do not rely on sense experience. They are not grounded in particular needs, desires, or natural inclinations. Rather, they are generated in deference to universal law as such. In this way, practical reason is the backbone of our moral experience.

Practical reason enables us to think in terms of what *ought* to be the case. On Kant’s view, however, “ought” always implies “can.”²⁷ In other words, our capacity to act morally—to act as we ought to act within the limits of practical reason—implies that we are free to act. This leads Kant to distinguish between two types of action which, in the interest of clarity, I shall refer to as inclined action and rational action, respectively. Inclined action is determined in accordance with certain sensual impulses. For instance, when one is hungry—that is, when one desires food—one is inclined to eat. Thus if we ask someone “Why did you eat?” her response will most likely be “Because I was hungry.” Her will was therefore determined by something outside of herself—namely, the desire to eat. Human beings are also motivated by a desire for happiness, which Kant defines as “a rational being’s consciousness of the agreeableness of life which without interruption accompanies his whole existence.”²⁸ When the desire for happiness determines our actions, we act according to the “principle of self-love.”

As we have seen, human beings *qua* rational agents do not merely abide by laws of nature or animal inclinations, but rather act with laws in mind. We are capable of stepping outside the realm of sensual impulses in order to deliberate through an appeal to our practical reason. The resulting rational action may be influenced by inclinations, but it is ultimately determined by a principle that is derived from practical reason. Any principle according to which I rationally act is called a maxim, as distinct from an imperative, which is a principle according to which I *ought* to act. Kant delineates between at least two types of imperatives. A hypothetical imperative is a principle according to which I ought to act in order to achieve a particular subjective end.²⁹ If my end is to do well on an exam, for instance, I *ought* to study for it. Because studying helps me to achieve my end, it is *good*, albeit it in a hypothetical sense. A categorical imperative, in contrast, “declares an action to be of itself objectively necessary without reference to any purpose, i.e., without any end.”³⁰ In other words, a categorical imperative is a universal law that applies to all rational beings, irrespective of their own interests. A

categorical imperative demands that we do what ought to be done as such, not as conduces to some particular goal.

Insofar as human beings are capable of acting independently of inclinations—that is, in accordance with law as constructed from our practical reason—we are autonomous. A rational autonomous agent determines what it will do based upon a reason provided by itself. It is able to do so, in turn, because it is free from natural causality—that is, it is capable of acting independently of any efficient cause such as the desire for happiness or any other natural inclination. Therefore, freedom is “the property that the will has of being a law to itself.”³¹ We are free because we give ourselves the law by which we abide—and this law is determined by practical reason. “Ought” implies “can”, then, only insofar as we can *choose* to act according to our own reason rather than being *caused* to act by something outside of ourselves. If I am not able to perform any other action save X, it makes no sense to suggest that I *ought* to perform X. The proposition “I ought to do X” presupposes that I could do otherwise.

Human action is determined by an imperative which is necessarily derived from practical reason. Moral action, however, is determined by an imperative which is categorical—that is, which is not reducible to any particular subjective end. It is thereby founded on a law which applies to all rational beings insofar as they are rational (capable of realizing the law through practical reason) and free (capable of independently formulating the dictates of the law as such). In order for an action to be moral and rational, its maxim must be willed as though it were a universal law which applies to all rational beings. This, in the most fundamental sense, is the “only” categorical imperative.

With respect to this categorical imperative, however, Kant inquires, “Is it a necessary law for all rational beings always to judge their actions according to such maxims as they can themselves will that such should serve as universal laws? If there is such a law, then it must be connected (completely *a priori*) with the concept of the will of a rational being in general.”³² Any free action implies a purpose—that is, an end. One’s end determines how one acts. If my end is to do well on an exam, for instance, I will act in a manner conducive to that end (e.g., I will study for four hours, I will get plenty of rest prior to the exam, etc.). Kant is asking what should be considered the proper end, specifically, of *moral* action. We know, first of all, that this end cannot be subjective. That is, it cannot be an end which pertains to the gratification of a *particular* desire. Moreover, because it does not conduce to any subjective desire, it is derived from reason alone. Thus, it is categorical—binding on all rational beings.

Kant concludes that a rational autonomous being is an end in itself, because such a being possesses value irrespective of its capacity to satisfy some relative end. “Now I say that man, and in general every rational being, exists as an end in himself and not merely as a means to be arbitrarily

used by this or that will. He must in all his actions, whether directed to himself or to other rational beings, always be regarded at the same time as an end.”³³ Thus, when one wills morally, one wills to be rational and free, just because these are goods in themselves. Persons, moreover, are deserving of being treated as rational and free and thus of having absolute worth in and of themselves. Upon this notion Kant constructs a “supreme practical principle” that substantiates the categorical imperative in a practical sense: always treat rational beings as ends in themselves and never as means.

In sum, moral action involves acting on laws that are categorical—that is, which do not conduce to any particular *subjective* end. Insofar as all actions imply an end, moreover, a moral action must conduce to an *objective* end—that is, an end in itself. Finally, because human nature as such is rational and free, all human beings are to be regarded as ends in themselves. It is easy to see here why Kantian moral philosophy is regarded as the hallmark of nonconsequentialism. For Kant, an action is morally right insofar as it is voluntarily performed on the basis of a categorical moral principle. This remains true even if the action in question leads to unsavory consequences.

Furthermore, Kant does not believe that particular actions are intrinsically right or wrong insofar as they are virtuous/vicious (in the Aristotelian sense) or good/evil (in the Thomistic sense). Though Kant does not ignore concepts of virtue and value, he regards them as secondary to what is required by moral principle (i.e., the right). In other words, something is good or valuable for Kant insofar as it is right for a rational, autonomous being to pursue it and not the other way around. To this extent Kant, like Abelard, acknowledges the importance of intention in morally evaluating actions, though he is not quite as lenient. For Abelard, an action is morally permissible so long as the actor *believes* in good faith that she is acting according to a moral principle (i.e., God’s law). For Kant, generally speaking, the belief must also be *true*.

Although there are arguably as many consequentialist theories as there are nonconsequentialist theories,³⁴ the differences among the former are not necessarily as weighty as those among the latter. We are therefore within our rights to cite just one example of consequentialism—namely, utilitarianism, which claims that a given action is right in proportion as it tends to promote “utility” (where “utility” is usually defined in terms of happiness, pleasure, the satisfaction of desires, or some other end that is regarded as intrinsically good) and wrong as it tends to promote the opposite.³⁵ For many utilitarian theories, neither the action itself nor the intentions of the actor are significant. This implies, *inter alia*, that (a) no action is wrong in itself and (b) an action that leads to bad consequences is morally wrong irrespective of the agent’s intentions, whether good or bad.

The example of J.S. Mill is worth noting here in brief detail. In Chapter 4 of *Utilitarianism*, Mill claims that “questions about ends are . . . questions about what things are desirable.”³⁶ In other words, questions about things that are intrinsically (i.e., noninstrumentally) good are questions about what

things are worthy of being desired for their own sake. He goes on to provide the following argument:

The only proof capable of being given that an object is visible is that people actually see it. The only proof that a sound is audible is that people hear it; and so of the other sources of our experience. In like manner, I apprehend, the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable is that people do actually desire it. If the end of the utilitarian doctrine proposes to itself were not, in theory and in practice, acknowledged to be an end, nothing could ever convince any person that it was so. No reason can be given that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness. This, however, being a fact, we have not only all the proof which the case admits of, but all which it is possible to require, that happiness is a good, that each person's happiness is a good to that person, and the general happiness, therefore, a good to the aggregate of all persons.³⁷

For Mill, happiness is defined, at the highest level of generality, as pleasure and the absence of pain.³⁸ Having shown that happiness is desired as an end by (at least some) human beings, he proceeds to argue that happiness is the only thing that human beings desire for their own sake and will as ends, which in turn implies that happiness alone is intrinsically good.³⁹

An important objection to this theory, which Mill himself discusses, claims that "to suppose that life has . . . no higher end than pleasure—no better and nobler object of desire and pursuit . . . [is] utterly mean and groveling . . . a doctrine worthy only of swine."⁴⁰ In other words, if the hedonistic theory of value is true, it would seem to follow that it is better to be a contented swine than a discontented Socrates or Shakespeare or any other example of an excellent human being.⁴¹ The typical "Epicurean" response to this objection, as Mill notes, is that "a beast's pleasures do not satisfy a human being's conception of happiness" because "[h]uman beings have faculties more elevated than animal appetites and . . . do not regard anything as happiness which does not include their gratification."⁴² Mill himself takes a somewhat different approach:

[U]tilitarian writers in general have placed the superiority of mental over bodily pleasures chiefly in the greater permanency, safety, uncostliness, etc., of the former—that is, in their circumstantial advantages rather than in their intrinsic nature . . . but they might have taken the other and, as it may be called, higher ground with entire consistency. It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognize that some kinds of pleasure are more valuable and more desirable than others. It would be absurd that, while in estimating all other things quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasure should be supposed to depend on quantity alone.⁴³

He goes on to argue that a pleasure is qualitatively “higher” than another pleasure of equal quantity insofar as “all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference” to the former over the latter.⁴⁴ Because we would prefer, on balance, to be dissatisfied human beings than satisfied pigs, it follows that the “higher pleasures” particular to human beings are more valuable than the “lower pleasures,” the experience of which we share (if only analogously) with beasts.⁴⁵

Here Mill is not simply defending hedonism as such but distinguishing his own theory from those of earlier utilitarians such as Bentham for whom the “intensity and duration” of pleasure was all that mattered. Like all early utilitarians, Mill believes that an action is morally right in proportion as it tends to promote happiness and wrong as it tends to promote the opposite. The key difference is that, for Mill, what matters is not *how much* happiness is promoted so much as *what kind*. Performing a piano concerto and giving a massage are both, *ceteris paribus*, moral actions insofar as they promote pleasure. Mill would argue, however, that the former is a morally superior action (again, *ceteris paribus*) insofar as it promotes a higher pleasure.

Mill’s understanding of pleasure is analogous to Aristotle’s conception of *eudaimonia*, at least insofar as (1) they both form the basis of the good life, and (2) they are the only things which can be counted as intrinsically good. This becomes especially clear if we accept the “intellectualist” interpretation of Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, according to which *eudaimonia* consists in the “higher pleasure” of contemplation. Aristotle and Mill would also agree that the good life is the most pleasant life. Although Aristotle does not regard *hedon* as the fundamental criterion of value, he nonetheless claims that excellent activity is pleasurable by definition and, by extension, that a life of excellent activity is a pleasant life. Similarly, because Mill regards pleasure as the only thing which is intrinsically good, he would naturally conclude that the good life will be a pleasant life—that is, one in which pleasures are maximized. Lastly, both Aristotle and Mill derive their respective conceptions of the good from the function or nature of human beings. Aristotle argues that the good of human beings involves acting in accordance with our *ergon*, which is to be rational. Similarly, Mill contends that the good of human beings involves the experience of “higher pleasures,” which are in turn products of uniquely human activities.

As we have already noted, however, Aristotle is no consequentialist. Neither is he a hedonist. After all, although pleasure qualifies as a particular good for Aristotle, it does not satisfy the formal criteria for the highest good because other goods could be added to it. Furthermore, the highest good for Aristotle is not a matter of having certain kinds of experiences but rather in cultivating a certain kind of character or living a certain kind of life. A truly happy person, a *eudaimon*, is someone who pursues excellence in all fields of rational human endeavor. Generally speaking, Mill is not concerned with human character or with happiness considered over the course of an entire

human life. To the extent that he is concerned, the qualifying distinction between higher and lower pleasures would seem to suggest that a life consisting in the pursuit and acquisition of a *single* higher pleasure would qualify as good.

Mill's utilitarianism is, of course, not the only utilitarianism, nor indeed is utilitarianism the only form of consequentialism. What the foregoing example shows, in any case, is that for consequentialists moral evaluation tends to be teleological. That is, it begins with a theory of the good (i.e., an account of intrinsically valuable and desirable ends) and proceeds to define the rightness or wrongness of actions principally (if not solely) in terms of the good as defined within said theory. For nonconsequentialists, in contrast, the ends of actions do not provide sufficient grounds for moral evaluation and in some cases are altogether irrelevant.

An alternative taxonomy

When we consider political theories in terms of their basic normative commitments, the differences among them become clear. Thus, for example, political theories that affirm nonconsequentialist accounts of normativity are generally concerned with the rights, liberties, and welfare of individuals over and above the various ends toward which power relations are directed. They ask whether and to what extent such relations are justified vis-à-vis principles of justice, which are in turn justified according to a conception of the good or the right. Consequentialist theories, in contrast, generally hold that power relations are justified to the extent that they bring about certain beneficial ends for society as a whole—even if this requires, in some cases, means that violate individual rights or are otherwise harmful to the good of individual persons.

Many modern political theories take it for granted that rights and liberties are valuable. The fundamental question, then, is whether political power exists for the sake of these rights and liberties, or whether they exist for the sake of political power. As we have already seen, Aristotle believes that freedom is only instrumentally good insofar as it is a precondition for the cultivation of civic virtue. The laws of the *polis* do not exist to maximize or even (strictly speaking) to protect the freedom of individuals but rather to cultivate virtue within the *polis* as a whole. (Hegel, as we shall see, takes a somewhat similar view regarding the ultimate purpose and justification of the state.) Liberals from Hobbes to Rawls tend to take the opposite view, that is, that political power is only instrumentally good insofar as it is a precondition for the protection and maximization of individual rights and liberties—which, generally speaking, is what many liberals mean by “justice.”

At the theoretical level, therefore, we can distinguish between what I will call *teleological political philosophy*, on the one hand, and *deontojuridical*

political philosophy, on the other.⁴⁶ The former includes those theories that hold that political power relations are justified in proportion as they tend to promote some particular end or set of ends and unjustified as they tend to promote the opposite. The latter includes those theories that hold that political power relations are justified to the extent that they are necessitated by, or at least conform to, certain moral principles, duties, or obligations, and unjustified to the extent that they do the opposite.

Deontojuridical political philosophy obviously encompasses a wide range of theories that emphasize natural law and natural rights. In Thomistic natural law theory, for example, human law—and, by extension, the political institutions that legislate and execute it—is only justified to the extent that it conforms to the natural law. For John Finnis and other neo-Thomists, human beings possess inviolable natural rights that follow from the basic goods of the natural law. According to this account, all natural rights correspond to obligations: if I have a right to X, where X is always a basic good prescribed by the natural law, then everyone else is obliged to provide me with X or at least to refrain from denying me X. Thus, for example, if life itself is a basic good, it follows all human beings have a natural right to life. This, in turn, means that everyone else is obliged to protect human life, or at least to refrain, *ceteris paribus*, from deliberately taking human life. Political relations are justified to the extent that they promote and protect natural rights and, by extension, the basic goods of the natural law.

Other deontojuridical political philosophies do not rely on a naturalistic conception of intrinsic goodness. For Kant, as we have seen, what makes actions pious to moral evaluation is that they are voluntary and rational. An action is right to the extent that it conforms to categorical moral principles that in turn are derived from an account of rational, autonomous agency. Thus X is intrinsically good just in case it is right to value X (where “it is right to value X” just means that one ought to value X). Furthermore, it is right to value X just in case X is the sort of thing that a rational autonomous agent would, *ceteris paribus*, value. To discover what a rational autonomous agent would value, in turn, we need only consult the categorical imperative. Can the valuing of X be prescribed as a universally applicable moral law? If so, then X is intrinsically valuable. If not, then X is at best instrumentally valuable, and at worst “dis-valuable” (that is, “bad”).

It is easy to see how this kind of moral theory—variously describable as “moral rationalism,” “moral nonnaturalism,” “moral nonrealism,” and so forth—translates into a conception of rights. If something is required or forbidden by the universal moral law, it is something to which I am entitled or, contrariwise, from which I ought to be protected. Because the universal moral law forbids murder, it follows that people have a moral duty or obligation to refrain from murdering others. This obligation, in turn, implies a corresponding right to “not be murdered” or, more simply, a right to live.

Because such rights are regarded as inviolable, as in the case of natural law theory, it follows that political relations are justified to the extent that they promote or protect these rights.

Although deontojuridical political philosophies may differ with respect to the theoretical foundations of moral rights, they all regard political relations as, in some sense, subservient to morality. Thus the social contract tradition, which we will examine at greater length later on, generally holds that political relations are justified to the extent that they are necessary for, or at least maximally conducive to, the protection and promotion of moral rights. This is not to say that deontojuridical political philosophy lacks teleological components. For example, a liberal like Rawls would clearly agree that political institutions are, or at least ought to be, directed toward specific goals. Rawls would deny, however, that success in these goals, not to speak of the goals themselves, is the ultimate criterion by which political institutions are to be judged. Rather, such goals are justified only to the extent that they conform to the principles of justice. (They are not, in other words, good in themselves.)

Teleological political philosophy holds that political relations are justified to the extent that they promote certain ends and unjustified to the extent that they do the opposite. Machiavelli's political theory, as we have seen, may be regarded as teleological in this sense, at least insofar as it regards the acquisition and maintenance of power as an end in itself irrespective of other moral considerations. For Machiavelli, there can be no further justification of power beyond the possession of power itself. The prince's rule (and, by extension, the means he takes to acquire and maintain it) is "justified" to the extent that it successfully achieves its end. In theory, it is not constrained by the natural law, the "rights" of the subjects, nor any other extenuating factors.

Another example is Plato's *Republic*, wherein the rule of the philosopher-kings is justified solely in terms of the end, which, according to Socrates, they alone are in a position to achieve. The constitution and laws of the ideal *polis* are the means by which this end, which is variously described as justice or the common good, is attained. As such, what liberals would refer to as personal liberty or individual freedom is severely circumscribed in the *polis*; the good of the individual is rendered subordinate to the good of the many. Aristotle, as we have seen, takes a similar view. For him, too, political power is ultimately justified by its end, which is nothing less than the cultivation of virtue among the citizens of the entire *polis*.

It is worth noting here that the deontojuridical/teleological distinction can be applied both to the theoretical and the strategic aspects of political philosophy. In certain schools of revolutionary Marxism, for example, any political action that is conducive to the abolition of capitalism and/or the protection of the worker's state is *prima facie* justified even if it involves

violence and repression. Here we might cite as an example the pre-Bolshevik Russian radical Sergei Nechayev:

The revolutionary despises all doctrinarism and has rejected the mundane sciences leaving them to future generations. He knows only one science, the science of destruction. To this end, and this end alone, he will study mechanics, physics, chemistry and perhaps medicine [. . .] His sole and constant object is the immediate destruction of this vile order.⁴⁷

Nechayev's extreme consequentialism is mirrored—albeit with considerably less ostentation—in the writings of Vladimir Lenin. As we noted previously, May regards Leninism as a “strategic political philosophy” in part because it involves “a unitary analysis that aims towards a single goal.”⁴⁸ For Lenin, circumstances are always to be assessed and solutions prescribed with a mind to achieving this goal. This overarching emphasis on ends over and above means leads Lenin to conclude that even repressive strategies may be acceptable: “[W]e must temporarily make use of the instruments, resources, and methods of the state *against* the exploiters.”⁴⁹ Similar sentiments have been expressed by countless revolutionaries for whom the phrase “by any means necessary” is virtually a dogma: never questioned but always assumed.

Other philosophers, in contrast, have argued vociferously that political praxis cannot afford to ignore moral evaluation of means. As James Guillaume, a colleague of Bakunin, once remarked, “How could one want an equalitarian and free society to issue from authoritarian organization? It is impossible.”⁵⁰ The idea here, simply stated, is that ends must be ethically consistent with means. The social democratic tradition in socialism as well as all forms of nonrevolutionary liberalism are motivated by precisely this concern, the assumption being that political activity carried out *within* a legitimate system of law—such as peacefully petitioning the government for redress of grievances—is less likely to involve the violation of universal moral principles. We will say more about this in the next chapter.

Just as deontojuridical political philosophy is often concerned to some degree with ends, at least some forms of teleological political philosophy are very much concerned with rights and principles. The philosophy of J.S. Mill is particularly illustrative here. As a utilitarian, Mill is committed to the idea that the overarching goal of political relations is the “greatest good for the greatest number.” At the same time, Mill acknowledges that this goal is unachievable without a conception of justice that places certain limitations on the activity of government. For Mill, justice entails a host of individual rights and liberties that must be protected and promoted in order for society to progress. Even authoritarian political philosophies tend to acknowledge that citizens are to be granted certain rights that in turn imply obligations on the part of the state. The difference in both cases is that the state (and, by extension, the ends for which the state exists) is causally and conceptually prior to rights and obligations.

Deontological concepts are acknowledged and affirmed only insofar they are necessary for (or at least conducive to) the achievement of these ends.

In addition to focusing on the ways in which political philosophies evaluate various kinds of power relations, we do well to examine how they regard *themselves in relation* to said power relations. As we saw in our discussion of May, certain political theories are characterized by an abstract method of analysis that divorces itself from the any and all historical situations, including the historical situation in which it arises. (This is one of the features of what he calls “formal” political philosophy.) The content of such theories, not surprisingly, tends to be “decontextualized”—that is, it does not refer to any concrete political institutions, phenomena, or events but to general or universal concepts that allegedly obtain irrespective of context. Their central claims are not contingent upon historical circumstances; they do not change in form or substance in response to changes in the “real world.” To this extent, such theories are best described as *transcendental*.

Perhaps the most fitting example here is Kant. As Benjamin Franks notes, the bedrock of Kantian moral and political philosophy is “the dispassionate, objective citizen, abstract ‘Man.’”⁵¹ The Kantian subject is not a real person living in actual circumstances but a concept, one which attempts to encompass the salient characteristics of human beings *qua* moral agents at the highest possible level of generality. By analyzing this a-historical, abstract “Man,” Kant is able to generate universal principles that apply to all human beings irrespective of their particular circumstances. John Rawls utilizes a very similar strategy in his *Theory of Justice*. Instead of discussing actual people, Rawls imagines a group of hypothetical “ideally rational agents” who must decide, from behind the “veil of ignorance,” what principles of justice shall govern society. The purpose of the veil of ignorance is precisely to separate Rawls’s hypothetical humans from any and all contexts, the idea being that the universal or the ideal is transhistorical and metacontextual by definition.

This is not to say that transcendental political philosophy bears no actual relation to the circumstances in which it arises. Kantian philosophy could not possibly have originated in sixth-century Athens, for example, if for no other reason than that it relies upon a model of human subjectivity that was quite foreign to the Greeks. Likewise Rawls’s *Theory of Justice* makes numerous references to representative democracy, constitutions, and other concepts which are quite commonplace for twentieth-century readers but would have been utterly incomprehensible to, say, the theology faculty of the University of Paris in AD 1220. All of this is quite obvious. The point, however, is that for transcendental political philosophers like Kant and Rawls the most fundamental claims of their respective theories do not depend on any historical contingencies. If Rawls’s account of human nature is accurate, for example, it would hold just as true of sixth-century philosophers and thirteenth-century theologians as it does of twentieth-century Harvard professors. The fact that these philosophers and theologians thought of

themselves in a very different manner is irrelevant; from the standpoint of transcendental political philosophy, they were simply mistaken or naïve or both.

Other political theories, which belong to what I call *historical political philosophy*, are much more self-reflexive; they not only acknowledge their entrenchment within concrete historical circumstances but recognize the extent to which these circumstances shape and are shaped by their theoretical commitments. May identifies this self-reflexivity with the strategic political philosophy of Marxism but we can find it much earlier in the work of Machiavelli or even in the “mirror of princes” books to which Machiavelli’s *The Prince* is indebted. Unlike Kant or Rawls, Machiavelli is not interested in providing an abstract, universal theory of justice. In point of fact, he is not concerned with anything that could reasonably be called “abstract” or “universal.” On the contrary, his philosophy is rooted squarely in the political and social landscape of sixteenth-century Italy. Its descriptive claims no less than its prescriptive content are virtually meaningless outside this context. An intelligent student of Kant, in contrast, could hypothetically comprehend *The Critique of Practical Reason* without any knowledge of the political situation of eighteenth-century Europe.

Marxism, too, is a philosophy which is predicated on historical awareness. It not only arose within a particular historical context but is avowedly self-conscious of its place within that context as well as of the extent to which changes in context necessitate changes in theoretical and practical positions. This is not to say that historical political philosophy avoids the introduction of abstract concepts. Hegel, who is arguably the first genuine philosopher to combine philosophical analysis with historical analysis, provides a theory replete with universal claims and concepts far more abstruse than anything Kant ever devised. By introducing historicity into philosophy, however, Hegel engendered a certain theoretical fluidity that allowed philosophy to remain dynamic and future-oriented.

Ultimately certain schools of Marxism, especially those influenced by Marx’s collaborator Friedrich Engels, developed a scientific theory of history that was at least as abstract and totalizing as the Kantian/Rawlsian theories of human nature. The basic idea was that human history operated according to scientific laws which, once discovered, allowed philosophers to make pronouncements about what would or would not take place in the future. In effect, this transformed the otherwise historical political philosophy of the early Marx and even that of Vladimir Lenin into the transcendental political philosophy of orthodox dialectical materialism. (I call the latter transcendental, again, not because it divested itself of historical considerations but because it came to emphasize abstract, universal laws over and above concrete possibilities for intervention).

Historical political philosophy tends, as a rule, to rely more heavily on descriptive analysis than transcendental political philosophy. (By “descriptive analysis” here, I do not mean “analysis of what is the case” *simpliciter*, but

rather analysis of what is the case historically. Thus the historical political philosopher is less concerned with providing a general account of human nature than with the concrete historical circumstances that give rise to human *natures*.) To this extent, it often gravitates more closely to the “is pole” than does transcendental political philosophy, even when the latter relies on robust metaphysical accounts of “what is the case.” The point, in any event, is that the transcendental/historical distinction pertains chiefly to the *descriptive* aspects of political philosophies, whereas the deontojuridical/teleological distinction pertains chiefly to their *normative aspects*. Because political philosophy is, as we said, a holistic discourse that includes both aspects, a given political theory can be described as both transcendental and deontojuridical, say, or as both teleological and historical. The taxonomy I am proposing is thus biaxial:

Figure 2.1 An Alternative Political-Theoretical Taxonomy

In this schematization, Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, and all other pre-Machiavellian thinkers would appear above the horizontal axis (because transcendental) and the vast majority of them would appear to the right of the vertical axis (because teleological). Upon entering the era of political modernity, most of the classical and modern liberals—for example, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Rawls, and so forth—would appear in the upper left-hand corner, though a few, such as Bentham and Mill, would appear in the upper right-hand corner. Machiavelli would appear in the lower right-hand corner, as would Hegel, Marx, Lenin, and a large portion of their progeny. The lower left-hand corner would be populated by all sorts of interesting people, including several German idealists and, possibly, Hannah Arendt.

Here we arrive at a possible weakness in the taxonomy. Where would the anarchism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries appear? What about poststructuralist political theory? Many would argue that both of these theoretical schools are, like Marxism, best described as historical rather than transcendental in nature and, indeed, this is how I characterize them later on. But insofar as poststructuralism is characterized in part by

its trenchant critique of both deontojuridical and teleological normative schemes, it is not at all clear on which side of the vertical axis it should appear. The same is true, I would suggest, of anarchism, albeit for a different reason. Anarchism *does* evaluate political (and all other) power relations in terms of conformity with basic moral principles, but it *also* evaluates them in terms of their conduciveness to particular ends. This is because the distinctively anarchist normative framework—prefiguration—demands a unity of means and ends, theory and practice, and so forth, that does not allow hard-and-fast distinctions between what must be protected in the present and what must be achieved in the future.

What this actually suggests, in my view, is not a weakness in the taxonomy—which applies beautifully to political theory from antiquity through modernity—but a strong affinity between classical anarchism and poststructuralism. Neither fits comfortably within the broad framework of modern and premodern political theory because both have gone beyond the modern; they are, in a word, *postmodern*. In the next part of the book, our goal is to make this point explicit by examining the conceptual foundations of political modernity and demonstrating that anarchism, though frequently thought of as a distinctively modern form of political theory, actually prefigures poststructuralism in its critique of modernity.

On political modernity

If you've ever taken a "Western Civilization" course in high school or college, you've very probably heard some variation on the following story: one morning, somewhere between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, Europeans walked out into the sunshine only to find that the medieval world they once knew had completely disappeared, that society as a whole had undergone a profound and total transformation, that suddenly and all at once everything had changed—become, in a word, "modern." (An uncannily similar story alleges that the classical world spontaneously became "medieval" when Emperor Romulus Augustulus abdicated the throne to the Scirian chieftain Odoacer on September 4, 476, an event typically identified as the formal end of the Roman Empire.)

Such stories are, of course, completely spurious. There is no decisive moment at which the classical world became medieval or the medieval world became modern. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that a new form of society had come into being in Europe and North America by the onset of the First World War in 1914. As one moves back in time from that year, several of that society's most distinguishing characteristics begin to fall away in rapid succession—for example, technological advancement and industrial mass production. Others do not. One would have to travel a good four or five hundred years into the past to witness the more or less complete disappearance of "secularization" and even further for the disintegration

of large urban centers. Certain more nebulous, though no less archetypal, features of modernity such as “rationalism” would not seem to vanish at all, but only to undergo various kinds of changes. Even in the so-called Dark Ages, after all, our hypothetical time-traveler might casually bump into Eriugena or Alcuin or countless others who bear scattered marks of rationalism.

The point, in any case, is that modernity, considered as an all-encompassing historical “moment,” is largely mythical. As such, it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of “modernization”—a process of social, political, cultural, and economic transformation constituted by intersecting and mutually irreducible forces—that gradually transformed Western civilization over many centuries. The question, of course, is what these forces are supposed to be. Anthony Giddens attempts an answer when he claims that modernity “is a shorthand term for modern society or industrial civilization . . . associated with (1) a certain set of attitudes towards the world, the idea of the world as an open transformation by human intervention; (2) a complex of economic institutions, especially industrial production and a market economy; (3) a certain range of political institutions, including the nation-state and mass democracy.”⁵² He goes on to suggest that in virtue of these characteristics modernity is “vastly more dynamic than any previous type of social order . . . a society—more technically, a complex of institutions—which unlike any preceding cultures lives in the future rather than the past.”⁵³

The problem with this answer is that it is rather too vague. For example, what exactly does Giddens take to be characteristically modern “attitudes”? He mentions “the idea of the world as an open transformation by human intervention,” but whether such an idea is indeed modern depends largely on what he means by “open transformation by human intervention.” Couldn’t one argue, for example, that a similar idea prevailed among the Romans of the imperial period? Clearly the emperors believed that they were capable of “intervening” in the world in order to remake it in the image and likeness of Rome (and this is precisely what they did, at least for a time).

It is true that the origins of industrial production can be traced with great precision to the end of the eighteenth century, but what about the so-called market economy? Again, one could reasonably argue that “market economies” existed under various descriptions in the Italian city-states of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the urban centers of medieval Europe, or even in the Roman and Byzantine Empires. Without further qualification as to the meaning of the term “market economy,” it is unclear why such economies should be regarded as peculiarly “modern” institutions. The same is true of “nation-states”—which could refer to the system of sovereign polities devised in 1648 by the treaties of Münster and Osnabrück or to the rise of postfeudal absolute monarchies even earlier—and “mass democracy,” which has arguably been practiced in all sorts of Western and non-Western cultures at various points throughout history.

As Lawrence Cahoon notes, “Everyone admits that Europe and North America developed a new, powerful technique for the study of nature, as well

as new machine technologies and modes of industrial production that have led to an unprecedented rise in material living standards.”⁵⁴ Such developments, however, are not exhaustive of modernity, which is “generally characterized as well by other traits, such as capitalism, a largely secular culture, liberal democracy, individualism, rationalism, humanism.”⁵⁵ He adds by way of summary that:

The positive self-image modern Western culture has given to itself, a picture born in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, is of a civilization founded on scientific knowledge of the world and rational knowledge of value, which places the highest premium on individual human life and freedom, and believes that such freedom and rationality will lead to social progress through self-controlled work, creating a better material, intellectual, and political life for all.⁵⁶

In the realm of philosophy, Kant epitomizes this “positive self-image” when he characterizes the Enlightenment as a transition from uncritical acceptance of tradition and superstition (which he calls “immature”) to the “spirit of freedom,” the capacity of individual human beings to “use [their] understanding without guidance from another.”⁵⁷ Gone is the medieval dream of Aristotelian order, replaced by “a world of ultimately contingent correlations to be patiently mapped by empirical correlations.”⁵⁸

The “distinctive assumptions” of Enlightenment thought, according to Philip Pettit, can be roughly described as follows:

1. There is a reality independent of human knowledge of which we human beings are part.
2. Reason and method, particularly as exemplified in science, offer us the proper way to explore that reality and our relationship to it.
3. In this exploration, traditional preconceptions—in particular, traditional evaluative preconceptions—should be suspended and the facts allowed to speak for themselves.⁵⁹

These assumptions, which Pettit claims continue to characterize “analytical philosophy” in the present day, bring us a bit closer to understanding philosophical modernity. Nonetheless, it is somewhat difficult to distinguish them as stated from the various assumptions that undergird classical Aristotelianism, the school of thought that Enlightenment thinking allegedly superseded. Aristotle, too, affirmed the existence of a thought-dependent reality and advocated the use of reason and methodology—particularly of an empirical, protoscientific sort—to “explore that reality and our relationship to it.” Pettit may offer us an accurate image of philosophical modernity, but that image is a clouded one that blurs into premodernity along its interstices.

In all events, even if modernity ought to be defined in terms of a set of “traits” (or, as I have called them, “forces”), the historical collision of which

constitutes the uniqueness of modern civilization, it is not clear that any one of these traits or forces, considered by itself, can be unproblematically regarded as unique in human history. Cahoon agrees, adding that our inability to separate the distinct components of modernity from the whole (and, by extension, to regard some of these components as essential to modernity, or at least more important than others) makes it virtually impossible to locate the precise “historical parameters” of modernity.⁶⁰ Depending upon which traits or components are emphasized, the origins of modernity can be traced back as early as the scholastic Renaissance of the twelfth century or as late as the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth.

As Cahoon rightly points out, “The primary question for philosophers is not, *When did modernity begin?* but: *What is the nature, the destiny, and the validity of this new way of life?*”⁶¹ The aim of the present inquiry is even more limited. I am not interested in analyzing modernity as such, but only those aspects of modernity that may be properly called “political.” Moreover, it is not possible to provide an adequate analysis of political modernity without examining certain aspects of modernity as such that are not conventionally regarded as “political.” For example, one cannot effectively analyze liberalism without addressing the various metaphysical claims or presuppositions upon which liberalism is founded. At the same time, to provide an exhaustive investigation of every single political theory that is properly termed “modern” far exceeds the scope of this volume. Consequently, certain recourse to broad strokes is necessary, which, I hope, will not diminish the rigor of our investigation.

The two major theoretical schools of political modernity may be identified, at the highest level of generality, as liberalism and socialism. That said, it is extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, to provide a uniform and all-encompassing definition of either school, given the immense diversity that has existed within each over the course of the past three hundred years. While some claim that liberalism is a fixed, comprehensive, self-contained, and internally consistent system of ideas,⁶² others claim that there is no such thing as Liberalism (with a capital *L*) but only *liberalisms*—a variety of distinct and sometimes mutually exclusive doctrines that nonetheless bear some “family resemblance” to one another.⁶³ Still others claim that liberalism as a political theory must be distinguished from liberalism as a political tradition or ideology.⁶⁴ One finds a similar range of opinions with respect to socialism.⁶⁵

The liberal political tradition is often described in terms of a set of features including, but not limited to, opposition to political, religious, and economic despotism; representative democracy; limitation and separation of powers (i.e., republicanism); religious tolerance and the *de jure* separation of church and state; legal due process and equal protection under the law; equality of basic rights and opportunities; and the protection of personal and economic freedom.⁶⁶ Liberal practices and institutions, in turn, are seen as protecting and/or promoting certain central values (e.g., freedom,

equality, progress, etc.) that are derived from or otherwise related to various descriptive assumptions about human beings.

As it turns out, this picture of liberalism as a tradition is not so much inaccurate as it is vacuous. John Locke and John Rawls are both identified as liberals, in part because both attach enormous value to individual rights and liberties. At the same time, there are considerable differences between Locke and Rawls that are not reducible to a disagreement over the quantity and quality of rights and liberties that accrue to individuals. In point of fact, Locke's understanding of what "rights" and "liberties" *are* is very different from Rawls's understanding of these concepts, which explains in part why Locke and Rawls end up articulating such different theories. But can we reasonably refer to Lockean theory and Rawlsian theory as "liberal" merely because they both employ the same kinds of *words* in reference to different *concepts*? To do so would, in effect, define "liberalism" solely in *de dictu* terms.

The obvious answer to this question is "no." Just as it would be false to claim, for example, that Christianity and Hinduism are both "monotheistic" merely because both religions employ the word "God," it would be equally false to call political theory X and political theory Y "liberal" merely because both employ the word "rights." What matters in political philosophy are the *concepts* to which such words refer and, more importantly, how these concepts function within theories. Given the historical chasm separating Locke from Rawls, it is not surprising that they would use some of the same terms in different ways. After all, concepts can evolve and change over time without transforming into entirely distinct concepts, and, as concepts change, so, too, does their function within particular theories. The question is whether Locke's conception of "rights," say, remains similar enough to Rawls's conception of rights that we know they are referring to *roughly* the same thing.

In light of this question, it is best for our purposes to think of political modernity (and of modern political theories) in the same terms we characterized modernity in general—that is, as a confluence of disparate forces rather than as a unified totality. There are, it seems, far too many differences among particular liberal and socialist thinkers (and modern liberal-democratic and socialist organizations, parties, polities, etc.) to argue for the existence of any sort of totalized "Liberal" or "Socialist" political system. We shall therefore attempt to identify the more or less distinctive elements that constitute these two theoretical schools. In all cases, these elements are not to be regarded as absolute definitional properties as much as spectra or trajectories along which liberal theories and socialist theories may be located and differentially analyzed. For purposes of the present inquiry I shall focus on four such trajectories, to wit: (a) the nature of human beings, both in themselves and in relation to society and the world at large; (b) morality, including both axiology and normativity; (c) political power relations; and (d) economic power relations. Chapter 3 deals with liberalism, Chapter 4 with socialism.