

# A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy

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# A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy

2nd Edition

Volume I

*Edited by*

Robert E. Goodin,

Philip Pettit

*and*

Thomas Pogge

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## Preface to the First Edition

This *Companion* – like the series of *Blackwell Companions to Philosophy* more generally – has come about through the initiative of Stephan Chambers and Alyn Shipton who, together with Richard Beatty, have been sources of sound advice and encouragement. We should record, first and foremost, our debt – and the profession's – to them.

In commissioning pieces for the present volume, our first priority has of course always been academic excellence. But excellence takes many forms. Within that broad constraint, we were always also striving for a good blend of younger and more established scholars, representing a fair mix of disciplinary affiliations, national origins and intellectual styles. We are pleased with our contributors' handiwork; each, in his or her own very different way, has made a strong statement of how to do political philosophy in that particular mode. We would also like to think that, without any heavy-handed attempt on our part at imposing uniformity on what is by its nature a disparate academic community, our contributors have managed among themselves to produce a genuinely coherent synopsis of the 'state of play' in contemporary political philosophy worldwide.

This *Companion* owes something of its character and stance to the simultaneous development of the *Journal of Political Philosophy*. It, too, is published by Blackwell and edited from Canberra by a team which is strongly represented in the *Companion*: Robert Goodin and Chandran Kukathas are the Editors of the *Journal*; its Associate Editors include Geoffrey Brennan, Tom Campbell, Barry Hindess, Philip Pettit, Andrew Reeve and Jeremy Waldron. We hope that one of the many purposes the *Companion* might serve is as something of an indication of where the *Journal* is coming from and where it is heading.

The editing of this *Companion* (and that new *Journal*) was made much easier by the many political philosophers who are now based in Canberra. Joining long-time denizens of the Australian National University like John Passmore, Eugene Kamenka, Robert Brown and Richard Sylvan, and well-established ones like Philip Pettit, Geoffrey Brennan and Knud Haakonssen, are a spate of fairly recent arrivals including Robert Goodin from Essex, Tom Campbell from Glasgow, Peter Self from the LSE, Barry Hindess and David West from Liverpool and, on an Adjunct Professor basis, Brian Barry from the LSE and Carole Pateman from UCLA. Many other *Companion* contributors (among them, Russell Hardin, Alan Ryan, Gerald Dworkin and Alan Hamlin) are frequent visitors to the ANU.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The form of a reference book precludes authors of individual chapters from acknowledging assistance, as several would have wished. Editors operate under no such constraint. And there is much assistance to be acknowledged. Valuable suggestions regarding the shape of the book as a whole (including possible topics and contributors) have come from Russell Hardin, Chandran Kukathas and John Passmore, as well as from our Blackwell editors. Peter Singer, as editor of a sister volume, provided useful advice on the perils and pitfalls of such an enterprise. Canberra-based contributors benefited from comments of colleagues at a pair of one-day workshops (focusing primarily on Parts I and II of the *Companion*) held at the Australian National University in September 1991.

**Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit**

*Canberra, Australia*

May 1992

## Preface to the Second Edition

The second edition of the *Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, prepared over a dozen years after the first, has been thoroughly revamped in order to take account of recent developments in the subject. Most of the entries from the first edition have been rewritten by the original hands, with a few being supplemented by other authors where the original was no longer available; a few have been penned afresh by new hands; and a range of extra entries have been added. Where there were just over forty chapters in the original work, there are nearly sixty in this.

Some of the new entries are ones that, in hindsight, we might well have included in the first edition. We decided in the light of feedback from readers, and our own sense of things, that these would be useful additions and would help enhance the coverage of the *Companion*. Other new entries were prompted by new developments in political theory, and indeed by changes in the political world itself. The most striking examples here are the number of new entries related to issues of international relations and global justice. These did not have the salience in the early 1990s that they have assumed in recent years.

Despite all these changes – these improvements, as we believe – our hope is that the book retains its character and will continue to find favour with readers. We are pleased that the *Journal of Political Philosophy*, too, has done so well. Launched simultaneously with the first edition of the *Companion*, the *JPP* has firmly established itself as one of the leading journals in the field.

We who sign off on this later preface are now three, not two. Thomas Pogge was an obvious addition for the editorial team, in view of his knowledge of issues in international political theory and given his temporary presence and continuing association with the Australian National University; the ANU remains Robert Goodin's base and for Philip Pettit it is a home away from home, where he is a regular visitor.

The second edition would not have been undertaken without the encouragement and prompting of Nick Bellorini and the support of Kelvin Matthews at Blackwell's. And it certainly would not have materialized without the willingness of our authors, old and new, to devote themselves to a hard task, often under heavy pressures of time. We owe them all a large debt of gratitude.

**Robert E. Goodin, Philip Pettit and Thomas Pogge**

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# Introduction

A ‘companion’ is not a dictionary or an encyclopedia or a literature review. Unlike a dictionary, it is not primarily intended to provide an explication or a history of technical concepts; it is meant to offer substantive commentary on the work pursued in the relevant field of study. Unlike an encyclopedia, it is not committed to the systematic perspective of the official record; it is designed to be a practical guide for someone who wants to find their way through the relevant field. And unlike a literature review, it is not directed only at professionals in the area; it is also written with a view to those who come fresh and unseasoned to the topics discussed.

So much for the distinctive viewpoint of a companion. What now of the terrain on which it is trained? What is encompassed in *Contemporary Political Philosophy*?

Instead of *philosophy* we might well have said ‘theory’, for political theory is often taken to coincide with what we have in mind as political philosophy. If we have chosen the word ‘philosophy’, that is to mark, unambiguously, the fact that our interest is in normative thinking. Political theory sometimes connotes empirical as well as normative thought: thought that bears primarily on how to explain rather than on how to evaluate; another *Companion* takes those topics as its focus (Bottomore and Outhwaite, 1993; Outhwaite, 2003). Political philosophy, in contrast, is unequivocally concerned with matters of evaluation.

But though our interest is in normative or evaluative thought, we should stress that we take a broad view about the range of issues that are normatively relevant to political philosophy. Thus we suppose that questions about what can feasibly be achieved in a certain area are just as central to normative concerns as questions about what is desirable in that area. We understand political philosophy in such a way that it does not belong to the narrow coterie of those who would just contemplate or analyse the values they treasure. It should come as no surprise that we look to a range of disciplines in charting contributions to political philosophy. We look, not just to philosophy – analytical and continental – but also to economics, history, law, political science and sociology.

What does it mean to say that our concern is with *political* philosophy? Moral philosophy – if you like, ethics – is concerned with normative thinking about how in general various agents, individual or collective, should behave. So what is the concern of political philosophy? Primarily, it is a concern to identify the sorts of



political institutions that we should have, at least given the background sort of culture or society that we enjoy. To take the view that we should have certain political institutions will imply that if such institutions are in place, then, other things being equal, agents should not act so as to undermine them. But in general the connections between moral and political philosophy are quite weak. Thus, our political philosophy may not tell us how agents should behave in the imperfect world where the ideal institutions are lacking or where the ideal institutions are abused by those who run them. It may not give us much guidance on issues related to what used to be described as the problem of political obligation.

But if political philosophy is concerned with which political institutions we ought to have, what institutions count as political? On a narrow construal, political institutions would mean the institutions associated with political process such as the voting system, the parliamentary system, the system for choosing the executive, and so on: the sorts of things surveyed in the parallel *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Institutions* (Bogdanor, 1987). On a broader construal, political institutions would include not just those procedural devices but also any substantive institutions associated, as we might say, with the political product: any institutions that can be affected by those who assume power under the political process. Political institutions in this sense would include the major legal and economic and even cultural institutions, in addition to the arrangements of government. We understand political institutions in this broader way, as indeed do most political philosophers. Political philosophy, as we conceive of it, is not just interested in the routines that govern politics but also in the various systems which politics may be used to shape. It is concerned with all the institutions that constitute what John Rawls (1971, sec. 2) describes as the 'basic structure' of a society. And it is also concerned with the supranational institutions that assume increasing importance with growing international influences through trade, investment, travel, culture imports, and ecological and epidemiological externalities.

Finally, what is connoted by our focus on *contemporary* political philosophy? Within the analytical tradition of thought, as that affects both philosophy and other disciplines, political philosophy has become an active and central area of research in the past three or four decades; it had enjoyed a similar status in the nineteenth century but had slipped to the margins for much of the twentieth. In directing the *Companion* to contemporary political philosophy, we mean to focus on this recent work. (For other anthologies and surveys, see for example: Quinton, 1967; Ionescu, 1980; Hamlin and Pettit, 1989; Miller, 1990; Held, 1991; Goodin and Pettit, 1997; Kymlicka, 2002; Williams and Clayton, 2004; Swift, 2006.) In many cases discussion of recent work requires some commentary on earlier literature, but here we do only as much of that as strictly necessary to understand the contemporary scene and anyone wanting full background ought to look elsewhere (for example, to Miller, 1987; Cahn, 1996; Simon, 2002; Cahn 2004).

Within non-analytical traditions, in particular, it is not so clear what is to count as contemporary; but here too our general focus has been on work in the last two or three decades. Often, however, non-analytical thought is intimately tied up with figures from the past – history has a different presence here – and we have been happy in these cases to have our contributors give more attention to such figures. For example, it would be impossible to understand the French wave of deconstructionist thought without some

## INTRODUCTION

understanding of Nietzsche, for deconstructionists focus on this nineteenth-century German thinker as if he were a prophet of their perspective.

Because it is a companion to contemporary political philosophy, and not a reference work of a more standard kind, we have decided to organize the material in an unusual manner. The book is divided into three broad sections, with long discussions in the first section of the contributions of different disciplines to the subject area; somewhat shorter discussions, in the second section, of the major ideologies which have cast their shadow across the territory; and shorter treatments still, in the final section, of various topics of special interest.

The distinctive and exciting thing about contemporary political philosophy is that it has involved the work of practitioners in a variety of disciplines, or at least the use of work done by people in a variety of disciplines. Rawls in analytical philosophy, Habermas in continental philosophy, Sen in economics, Dworkin in law, Skinner in history, Barry in political science: all of these are names that would figure in any account of what is happening in contemporary political philosophy. But while the researchers involved in different disciplines focus on questions that are treated across an interdisciplinary front, and while most of them maintain a working knowledge of what is happening in disciplines besides their own, the disciplinary dispersion of the subject does create many problems.

It is with these problems in mind that we decided to open the *Companion* with a section devoted to long introductions to the contributions made by each of these relevant disciplines to contemporary political philosophy. Each article is meant to familiarize the reader with the sorts of issues in political philosophy that have particularly concerned those in the discipline in question and with the techniques and models developed in an attempt to cope with them. We hope that the articles will serve as a whole to enable the relative newcomer to look at the different avenues on which political philosophy is pursued, and that it will make it possible for the relative expert in any one discipline to get a picture of what is happening elsewhere.

It is a striking feature of political philosophy, hardly surprising in virtue of the practical relevance of the subject, that apart from divisions on disciplinary lines, it also displays divisions on ideological dimensions. In selecting the ideologies to be covered in the second section, we tried to identify those principled world-views that have a substantial impact in contemporary public life as well as an impact on philosophical thinking.

Environmentalism figures in Part III, rather than here, on the grounds that it does not really represent complete world-views, at least for most of those espousing them. Racism, sexism and ageism do not figure, on the grounds that they hardly count as principled ways of thinking about things. And republicanism is relegated to Part III, because while the rediscovery of republican thought has influenced a number of theorists, it has not had a substantial impact on public life. Yet other ideologies – like monarchism and fascism – are omitted on the grounds that, whatever impact they once had on public life, they would seem to play only a marginal role in the contemporary world.

The ideologies we do include are of such importance, both as social movements and as traditions of thinking, that someone unacquainted with any one of them would be seriously compromised in their ability to understand what is happening in

contemporary political philosophy. And since our interest in them is essentially as systems of ideas, we organize discussions of them along the lines of their theoretical self-descriptions rather than in terms of their institutional instantiations: ‘Marxism’ rather than ‘communism’, ‘socialism’ rather than ‘social democracy’, and so on.

We believe that Parts I and II cover much of the ground that is relevant to contemporary political philosophy, and enable us to see that ground from different angles. But there are a number of important topics that receive too little attention in those sections: usually they are topics which it would be impossible to deal with adequately in the course of an overview treatment of a discipline or an ideology. Part III identifies a range of such topics and includes shorter discussions of them. The *Companion* would not approach the ideal of being a more or less complete guide to contemporary political philosophy unless it gave this level of attention to the matters involved.

How to use these volumes? We hope that readers will find the different articles more or less self-sufficient discussions of the subjects they treat. The treatment in each case is distinctive, reflecting the viewpoint of the author. But in no case is the treatment idiosyncratic: in no case does it warp the topics covered to fit with the angle taken. We would like to believe that the volumes represent an attractive way of getting a perspective on contemporary political philosophy and an accessible way of getting into particular areas of interest.

But these volumes are not just an integrated set of introductions to different aspects of contemporary political philosophy. They should also serve as a useful reference work. Here we think that the index is of primary importance. We have designed the index to cover the concepts that someone looking for a reference work in political philosophy would be likely to want to explore. We think that in the articles which the volumes contain there is material sufficient to elucidate those concepts, and often to elucidate them from different angles: from the viewpoint, now of this discipline, now of that; in the context, now of one ideology, now of another; with the focus, now of a contextualized treatment, now of a specialized discussion. The index is designed to enable someone to access relevant material easily and to use the volumes effectively as a work of reference.

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# Volume I



# Part I

## Disciplinary Contributions





# Chapter 1

## Analytical Philosophy

PHILIP PETTIT

### Introduction

Analytical philosophy is philosophy in the mainstream tradition of the Enlightenment. Specifically, it is philosophy pursued in the manner of Hume and Kant, Bentham and Frege, Mill and Russell. What binds analytical figures together is that they endorse, or at least take seriously, the distinctive assumptions of the Enlightenment. These assumptions go, roughly, 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.

With these assumptions in place, analytical philosophers see their job in one of two ways. They see themselves as pursuing the Enlightenment project of methodical investigation, carving out areas of philosophical inquiry and methods of philosophical argument; or they see themselves as methodologically charting the pursuit of that project elsewhere, providing a perspective on the nature of scientific and other approaches to knowledge. Either way the key word is ‘method’. In this focus on method, and in their broader affiliations, analytical philosophers distinguish themselves from the counter-Enlightenment or continental tradition. They take their distance from more or less Romantic figures like Rousseau, Herder, Hegel and the early Marx, and from disciplinary approaches – say, in sociology or anthropology – that are heavily influenced by such thinkers. They distance themselves equally from philosophers of a more sceptical and anti-systematic cast like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and from the many later thinkers, philosophical and non-philosophical, who identify with them. And, finally, they reject styles of philosophical thought that are distinctively shaped by certain traditions of religious, cultural or political commitment.

Sometimes analytical philosophy is demarcated geographically as the style of philosophy pursued, in the main, among English-speaking philosophers, or at least among English-speaking philosophers in the twentieth century. My account fits loosely with this geographical criterion. Most English-speaking philosophy is methodologically driven or methodologically focused in the Enlightenment manner, while much but by no means all continental thinking is not; one striking exception, for example, is Jürgen Habermas, who has exercised an enormous influence in analytical circles. For ease of reference, however, I will focus on writers in the English-speaking tradition.

My concern here is with the contribution that analytical philosophers, in particular recent analytical philosophers, have made to political philosophy: that is, to normative thinking about the sorts of institutions that we ought politically to try and establish. It will be convenient to discuss this contribution in two different phases. First, I will offer an overview of the history of analytical political philosophy in recent decades. And then I will look at the legacy of assumptions, often assumptions unnoticed and unannounced, that analytical philosophers have tended to intrude, for good or ill, into political thinking.

## **Analytical Political Philosophy: the History**

### *The long silence*

One of the most striking features of analytical philosophy is that its major practitioners have often neglected politics in their active agenda of research and publication. Political philosophy was a focus of analytical concern and activity in nineteenth-century Britain, when the main figures were Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and Henry Sidgwick. These thinkers established a broad utilitarian consensus, according to which the yardstick in assessing political institutions – in assessing institutions that are politically variable – is the happiness of the people affected by those institutions, in particular the happiness of the people who live under the institutions. They all acknowledged other values, in particular the value of liberty, but they argued that such values were important only for their effect on happiness.

But the utilitarian bustle of the nineteenth century soon died down. From late in the century to about the 1950s political philosophy ceased to be an area of active exploration. There was lots done on the history of the subject and of course this often reflected a more or less widely accepted set of assumptions. But there was little or nothing of significance published in political philosophy itself. Peter Laslett summed up the situation in 1956 when he wrote: ‘For the moment, anyway, political philosophy is dead’ (Laslett, 1956, p. vii).

This all changed within a decade of Laslett’s pronouncement. In 1959 Stanley Benn and Richard Peters published *Social Principles and the Democratic State*, in 1961 H. L. A. Hart published *The Concept of Law* and in 1965 Brian Barry published *Political Argument*. Benn and Peters argued, in a fashion that would have cheered many of their nineteenth-century forebears, that most of the principles we find attractive in politics reflect a utilitarian disposition. The books by Hart and Barry were considerably more

revolutionary. Each used techniques associated with current analytical philosophy to resume the sort of discussion of grand themes that had been the hallmark of the nineteenth century. And each developed a novel perspective on the matters that it treated. Hart used contemporary techniques to defend a positivist view of law against the view that law was the command of the sovereign; that view had been defended by the nineteenth-century utilitarian jurist John Austin. Barry used such techniques to try, among other things, to make a pluralism about values intellectually respectable; this pluralism was directly opposed to the utilitarian tradition in which everything had been reduced to the value of utility.

Why had there been such a silence in political philosophy through the first half of the twentieth century? A number of factors may have made a contribution. There were methodological reasons why political philosophy may not have seemed to be an attractive area to analytical philosophers during that period. But there was also a substantive reason why it should have failed to engage them. I will look at the methodological reasons first and then at the substantive consideration.

Analytical philosophy became methodologically more and more self-conscious in the early part of the century, with the development of formal logic in the work of Frege and Russell. Two propositions emerged as orthodoxy and were incorporated into the logical positivist picture of the world that swept the tradition in the 1920s and 1930s (Ayer, 1936). One of these propositions was that evaluative or normative assertions did not serve, or at least did not serve primarily, to essay a belief as to how things are; their main job was to express emotion or approval/disapproval, much in the manner of an exclamation like 'Wow!' or 'Ugh!' The other proposition was that among assertions that do express belief, there is a fairly exact divide between empirical claims that are vulnerable to evidential checks and analytical or *a priori* claims, such as mathematical propositions, that are true in virtue of the meaning of their terms.

These two propositions would have given pause to any analytical philosophers bent on doing political philosophy. They would have suggested that since philosophy is not an empirical discipline, and since there are few *a priori* truths on offer in the political arena, its only task in politics can be to explicate the feelings or emotions we are disposed to express in our normative political judgements. But that job may not have seemed very promising to many philosophers. If you are possessed of the Enlightenment urge to advance the frontiers of knowledge, or to map the advances that occur elsewhere, then trying to articulate non-cognitive feelings may look like small beer. The best-known logical positivist tract on political philosophy is T. D. Weldon's *The Vocabulary of Politics*, published in 1953, and while it left room for this task of articulation, its main contribution was to pour cold water on the aspiration of political philosophy to say something important.

The propositions dividing the factual from the evaluative and the *a priori* from the empirical did not bulk large in the critique of logical positivism, and of theoretical philosophy generally, which was developed by Ludwig Wittgenstein from the 1930s through to the 1950s. But the propositions still retained a place in this post-positivist variety of analytical philosophy and, in any case, the Wittgensteinian development introduced extra methodological reasons why political philosophy should not have seemed a promising area of research. The development brought strains of counter-Enlightenment thought into analytical philosophy, emphasizing that the job of the

philosopher is to dispel the false images of reality that theorizing can generate – images like that of logical positivism – and to restore us to the ease and quiet of unexamined language use. If philosophy is cast in this therapeutic role then, once again, it is not obvious why political philosophy should be an attractive research area. Whatever the problems in politics, they do not look like problems of the sort that any kind of therapy could resolve.

Some figures who are associated loosely with the later Wittgenstein, in particular J. L. Austin and Gilbert Ryle, did not embrace his therapeutic view of philosophy. But these thinkers also nurtured a picture of philosophy in which political philosophy would not have been represented as a fetching or challenging activity. Both of them thought of the main task of philosophy as charting and systematizing distinctions and habits of thought that are marked in ordinary language but that are often overlooked in crude theorizing, in particular theorizing about mind and its relation to the world. This conceptualization of the task of philosophy does as badly as the Wittgensteinian by political philosophy. It leaves political philosophy, at best, in a marginal position.

We can see, then, that there were methodological reasons why political philosophy may have come off the analytical research agenda in the first half of this century. But, as Brian Barry (1990) has argued, such reasons may not be sufficient to explain why it disappeared so dramatically. Consistently with thinking that normative judgements express feeling, one may believe that there is still an important task for reason in sorting out the different commitments that can be consistently made. The point would have been clear to most philosophers from the influential work of C. L. Stevenson (1944) or R. M. Hare (1952) in ethics. Again, consistently with thinking that the main job of philosophy is to carry forward the sort of programme described by Wittgenstein or Ryle or Austin, one may believe that a subsidiary job is to sort out the commitments that can rationally be sustained. So is there any other reason why political philosophy should have been neglected by analytical thinkers in the first half of the century?

Apart from methodological considerations, there is a substantive reason why the subject may not have engaged the best minds in this period. There was probably little puzzlement in the minds of Western philosophers in the early part of the century as to what are the rational commitments in regard to political values. Continental refugees like Popper may have felt that they had something to establish, for they would have had a greater sense of the attractions of totalitarian government; Popper was one of the very few analytical philosophers to contribute, however historically and indirectly, to political theory (Popper, 1945; 1957). But the majority of analytical philosophers lived in a world where such values as liberty and equality and democracy held unchallenged sway. There were debates, of course, about the best means, socialist or otherwise, of advancing those values. But such debates would have seemed to most analytical philosophers to belong to the empirical social sciences. Hence those philosophers may not have seen any issues worth pursuing in the realm of political philosophy itself.

One qualification. There would have been an issue, it is true, as to how unquestioned values like liberty and equality should be weighted against each other. But many would have seen that question as theoretically irresolvable and intellectually uninteresting. And of those who found it resolvable most would have adopted the utilitarian view that the different values involved all reflect different aspects of utility, however that is to be

understood, in which case the question becomes equally uninteresting. Brian Barry (1990, p. xxxv) suggests that utilitarianism was the prevalent attitude over the period and that this made the enterprise of political philosophy look unfetching. Under utilitarianism exact political prescription depends entirely on facts about circumstances and so it lies beyond the particular expertise of the philosopher.

If these observations on the political silence of analytical philosophy are correct, then analytical philosophers in the mid-century would have been inhibited from tackling political matters by two factors. They had a sense, on the one side, that there was little useful work to be done on questions specifically related to values and, on the other, that questions related to facts were properly left to empirical disciplines. With these considerations in mind, we can understand why a book like Barry's *Political Argument* should have made such an impact when it appeared in 1965.

Barry rejected utilitarianism in favour of a value pluralism; here he was influenced by Isaiah Berlin's 1958 lecture on 'Two Concepts of Liberty' (Barry, 1990, p. xxiv). But he introduced the apparatus of indifference curves from economics to show that there is still interesting intellectual work to be done, even if you are a pluralist about values: even if you acknowledge different values, like liberty and equality and democracy, and believe that they do not resolve into a single value like the utilitarian's notion of happiness. There is work to be done in looking at the different possible trade-offs between the values involved and at their different institutional implications. This feature of Barry's work meant that he showed the way beyond the inhibition about discussing values.

He also showed the way beyond the inhibition about trespassing on empirical disciplines. Barry may have maintained a traditional notion of the demarcation between philosophy and the empirical disciplines. But, if he did, he still had no hesitation about advocating a union between philosophy and, for example, an economic way of modelling political problems, when considering how to match various packages of values with social institutions. His programme for pursuing this task was conceived in 'the marriage of two modern techniques: analytical philosophy and analytical politics' (Barry, 1965, p. 290).

Barry's book is reasonably identified as marking the end of the long political silence of analytical philosophy. While Hart's *Concept of Law* had also made a great impact, and while it retains the status of a classic, it was easily seen as a contribution to jurisprudence rather than philosophy and it did not open up new ways of thinking about politics. But Barry's book was itself superseded less than a decade later when John Rawls published *A Theory of Justice* in 1971. Barry (1990, p. lxix) generously acknowledges the fact. '*Political Argument* belongs to the pre-Rawlsian world while the world we live in is post-Rawlsian . . . *A Theory of Justice* is the watershed that divides the past from the present.'

### *A Theory of Justice*

Rawls's book resembles Barry's in two salient respects. Like Barry, he is a pluralist about values but finds this no obstacle to the intellectual discussion of how the different values that are relevant in politics ought to be weighted against each other; the point is discussed below. And, like Barry, he is happy about contaminating pure philosophical

analysis with materials from the empirical disciplines in developing a picture of how to institutionalize his preferred package of values and in considering whether the institutions recommended are likely to be stable. Rawls does not acknowledge the clear distinction that logical positivists postulated between the empirical and the *a priori*. He writes, more or less consciously, in the tradition associated with the work of his Harvard colleague, W. V. O. Quine. For Quine (1960), all claims are vulnerable to experience, though some claims may be relatively costly to revise, and therefore relatively deeply entrenched in our web of belief: if you like, relatively *a priori*. This pragmatic attitude may explain how Rawls can comfortably import material from economics and psychology and other disciplines into his discussion.

So much for continuities between Rawls and Barry. The largest methodological break between the two writers comes in their different views of what the intellectual discussion of values involves. In Barry, the project is one of looking at principles that are actually endorsed in political life – specifically, in the politics of Britain, the USA and some similar countries from 1945 (Barry, 1965, p. xvii) – and then exploring the different possibilities of trade-offs between the values involved. In Rawls, the project gets to be much more engaged, in the way in which nineteenth-century utilitarianism had been engaged. He is interested, not in the different beliefs we actually hold about what is politically right, but in what beliefs we ought to hold about what is politically right.

Rawls restricts himself to the question of what makes for justice, of what makes for the proper political balancing of competing claims and interests (Rawls, 1971, pp. 3–6); he believes that justice in this sense, justice as fairness, is the main right-making feature of political institutions (Rawls, 1971, pp. 3–4). But Rawls is not interested just in distinguishing different, internally coherent conceptions of justice and in looking at what they institutionally require, as Barry is interested in different packages of values and their institutional requirements. He is concerned, in the first place, with what is the appropriate conception of justice to have and what, therefore, are the right institutions to establish.

The aspiration to identify the appropriate conception of justice is tempered in Rawls's later work, where he explicates his aim as one of identifying the appropriate conception for people who share the commitments 'latent in the public political culture of a democratic society' (Rawls, 1988, p. 252). But whether or not it is tempered in this way, the aspiration raises a question of method. How is the political philosopher to identify the appropriate conception of justice? It is significant that Rawls's first publication, 'Outline of a decision procedure for ethics' (1951), offers an answer to this question to which he remains broadly faithful in his later work. The method he proposes, in the language of *A Theory of Justice*, is the method of reflective equilibrium (Rawls, 1971, pp. 46–53).

Consider a discipline like logic or linguistics. To develop a logic, in the sense in which logic is supposed to explicate deductive or inductive habits of reasoning, is to identify principles such that conforming to those principles leads to inferences that are intuitively valid: valid on reflective consideration, if not at first sight. Again, to develop a theory of grammar is to find principles that fit in a similar fashion with our intuitions of grammaticality as distinct from validity. Rawls's proposal is that to develop a political theory, in particular a theory of justice, is to identify general principles such that