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THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

CONTEXTUAL POLITICAL ANALYSIS

Edited by

ROBERT E. GOODIN

and

CHARLES TILLY

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CHAPTER 2

WHY AND HOW PHILOSOPHY MATTERS

PHILIP PETTIT

In order to introduce the question of why and how philosophy matters to politics, I begin with a short discussion of the nature of philosophy in general and the prospect for a philosophy of politics. Then I look at a range of questions that are central to the philosophy of politics, seeking to emphasize their importance in any scheme of thought and the variations possible in response to them. The questions covered bear on the nature of persons, the possibilities for personal relationships, the people and the state, and the role of political values.

1 From Philosophy to Politics

Philosophy is an attempt to think explicitly and rationally about matters on which one cannot help but have implicit commitments (Pettit 2004). To talk or think about questions in any domain, or just to act on the basis of beliefs about those matters, will always be to work with certain presuppositions; in the nature of the case not everything can ever be spelled out explicitly. And to do philosophy in that domain

will be to try and lift out the most general presuppositions operative, to examine them properly, and if necessary to revise or replace them. Where philosophy goes, one's presuppositions will always have gone already. And how one's presuppositions have gone may not be how one will wish to go on reflection. Philosophy involves the unmasking of presuppositions and, if needed, the remaking of them.

Consider the manner in which we treat one another as responsible for this or that action and the presupposition, built into that mode of treatment, that we are or can be free in a way in which inanimate processes or non-human animals cannot be. We treat people as responsible and free so far as we entertain attitudes of resentment or gratification towards them, for example (Strawson 1982). But we never treat the weather or the dog that way; or if we do, then we won't long defend the stance: we will admit it's silly or have to suffer some considerable embarrassment. But is the presupposition about the responsibility and freedom of people defensible? What exactly should it be seen as involving? And can we really believe in it, given what science tells us about our own mundane construction? These are typical philosophical questions (Pettit 2001*c*, chs. 1–4).

What is true of philosophy in general is true of philosophy in the domain of politics. No matter what our involvement in politics, whether it be that of the politician or political scientist or the regular member of a political public, we invariably think and talk and act on the basis of a plethora of presuppositions: a layer of assumption that sustains the beliefs and desires we form, the evaluations we make, and the initiatives we adopt. And the role of a philosophy of politics is to try and spell out those presuppositions or prejudgments, to hold them up to the light of critical reflection, and to make up our minds on whether or not they should be maintained.

What body of information or theory will be deployed in the exercise of reflecting critically on those presuppositions? There is no limit to what may be introduced as a basis for critique so that it is bound to be a variable from culture to culture. The more robust findings of science, as in the sorts of findings that make a belief in free will seem initially puzzling, provide an obvious basis of critique in our age and culture. The same goes for more established observations that are accepted as a matter of common sense. And for some of us the same may go for theses of an avowedly religious or ideological provenance. As there are scientific and common sense philosophies of free will—or philosophies that claim to be both at once—so there can be a Christian or Islamic philosophy too.

Consistently with this general view of philosophical reasoning, we can distinguish five or six domains of inquiry.

- *The philosophy of reason* explicates and examines the presuppositions we make as to what follows from what when we reason on any topic whatsoever, whether of the kind related to deductive or inductive logic, epistemology, or the philosophy and methodology of science.

- *The philosophy of nature* studies the presuppositions that govern our thought about the natural world, including assumptions about space and time, about events, processes, and substances, and about relations of causation, possibility, and necessity.
- *The philosophy of mind* targets the presuppositions encoded in our "folk psychology," to do with belief and desire and action, intentionality and rationality, reasoning and free will, consciousness and personhood, and the like.
- *The philosophy of society* deals with presuppositions about the nature of conventions, norms, and laws, about the possibility of joint intention, communal life, and group agency, and about the character of the citizenry, democracy, and the state.
- *The philosophy of value* starts from the presuppositions we make in aesthetic, ethical, and political discussion about the meaning of goodness and obligation in general, the role of more substantive values—autonomy, welfare, respect, liberty, etc.—in relation to those categories, and the ideal shape of normative argument.

As this categorization suggests, the philosophy of politics spreads across a number of these areas. The presuppositions we make in politics that are likely to attract philosophical attention will figure mainly in the domains of the philosophy of society and the philosophy of value. But presuppositions about what follows from what, about what is involved in causal relations, and about the nature of minds and persons are also wont to make an appearance, so that the philosophy of politics can take us right across the spectrum of philosophical concern.

There are a number of reasons why the philosophy of politics, understood in this manner, is inevitably going to vary over time, making it more unlikely that there will ever be a philosophy of politics for all time. It will vary, first of all, to the extent that formations like the citizenry and the state have changed dramatically in the course of history, depending on size and prosperity and the mode of organization of populations as well on their institutional and other technologies. It will vary, secondly, so far as different bases of critique are activated at different times in the attempt to examine current presuppositions. And it will vary, thirdly, as a result of the fact that previous explications of crucial ideas will have fed back into political life and become part of the philosophy of politics that is given institutional and ideological prominence in a society.

But though the philosophy of politics is likely to vary greatly from time to time, that is no reason for making a sharp divide between studying the philosophies of the past and attempting to work out a philosophy for one's own time. The nature of the enterprise is hard to appreciate without a good sense of the different forms it has taken in figures as varied in location as Aristotle and Cicero, Machiavelli and Harrington, Hobbes and Bentham, Locke and Montesquieu, and Rousseau. But even more important, it may well turn out that there are ideas to be wrested from

the study of the past, perhaps ideas common to a range of past figures, that have become hard to identify in reflection on one's own place and tradition. Some of those ideas may be worth trying to resuscitate. I have myself been arguing in common with a number of others, for example, that one finds a republican idea of freedom as non-domination present in a variety of past contexts, that the idea disappeared under local, ideological pressure in the early nineteenth century, and that there is every reason to try and rework it for the contemporary world (Pettit 1997*b*; Skinner 1998; Richardson 2002; Viroli 2002; Maynor 2003).

These remarks are sufficient, I hope, to introduce my understanding of what philosophy is and of how it promises in general to connect with issues of politics. In the remaining sections I hope to identify a range of issues that I think philosophers can usefully address in the political realm, pointing to variations in the way quite central presuppositions can be explicated or recast.

There are four broad areas where we work with presuppositions that are of the first importance for the stance we adopt in politics, whether this be as a participant—at whatever level—or as a scientific observer. I now proceed to look over those areas, indicating where I think that much turns on how precisely we interpret relevant presuppositions and how far we endorse or revise them. The areas in question involve the nature of persons; the possibilities for personal relationships; the nature of the people and the state; and the role of political values.

2 The Nature of Persons

Perhaps the most basic level at which we are bound to make certain philosophically interesting presuppositions in political life and political science—henceforth I shall simply say, politics—is in connection with the nature of human beings and the sort of relationships of which they are capable. Those presuppositions have become matters of explicit attention and formulation within social and political thought and two very different images have emerged. These images represent rival philosophies of person, and of personal relationships, and are right at the heart of many current disputes in politics. They can be associated, on the one side, with decision theory or rational choice theory and, on the other, with what is best described as discourse theory—I once referred to it as inference theory (Pettit 1993, ch. 5). I proceed now to offer a characterization of these two pictures of the person and I then go on in the next section to look at the significance of the different images for the nature of human relationships.

2.1 The Decision-theoretic Image

The dominant image of the human subject in contemporary social and political thought, certainly in thought of a more or less economistic cast, is the picture of agency projected in decision theory, particularly decision theory in the broad tradition of Bayes (Eells 1982, ch. 1). This picture depicts the human agent as a locus at which two different sorts of states interact in the production of decision and action. On the one hand, there are the agent's credences or degrees of belief, and on the other his or her utilities or degrees of preference. These are defined over different states of the world—possible ways the world may be—and correspond to how the agent takes and wants the world to be.

The Bayesian picture makes three claims about these credences and utilities. First, any agent who satisfies certain conditions of rationality, intuitively understood, can be represented as acting on the basis of a well-behaved credence function: a function that evolves under new evidence in such a way—to take the standard version of Bayesianism—that the unconditional credence given to any event in the wake of finding that evidence is the same as the credence that used to be given to the event conditional on the appearance of the evidence; the function evolves so as to satisfy what is known as conditionalization. Second, any agent who satisfies intuitive conditions of rationality can be represented as having such a credence function and such a utility function that for any option involving different possible outcomes the agent will attach a degree of utility to that option—a degree of expected utility—which reflects the utility of each possible outcome and the credence given to its coming about in the event of the option being chosen; different Bayesian theories tell different stories about the exact way this is defined. And, third, as between different options with different degrees of expected utility, any agent of that intuitively rational kind will prefer the option with the highest degree of expected utility and choose accordingly; the agent will maximize expected utility.

The Bayesian image of the human agent is rather formally and artificially constructed but the basic elements correspond fairly well to aspects of our make-up that are recognized in common sense; in this way it represents an explication of presuppositions we make in our ordinary dealings with one another, political and non-political. Utility functions correspond to goal-seeking states of desire, probability functions to fact-construing states of belief, and the idea of acting so as to maximize expected utility is a formal version of acting so as to pursue one's desired goals according to one's beliefs about the facts.

There are some striking gulfs between folk psychology and decision theory. For example, folk psychology depicts us as forming judgments as well as forming degrees of preference and credence, where judgments are on–off commitments; we don't judge in degrees, though we may judge that a scenario has this or that degree of probability. And folk psychology also depicts us as forming degrees of preference for different ways the world may be, on the basis of judgments as to the

properties of those scenarios (Pettit 1991). But nevertheless there is a fairly good fit between common sense and the basic thrust of decision theory.

This fit is so good, indeed, that much of what is assumed about human agents in the broad reach of social and political thought, particularly in more analytical traditions, sits well with essentially a decision-theoretic image. People are depicted as moved essentially by their preferences or utility functions, being guided towards the satisfaction of those preferences by the nature of their beliefs. They are preference-driven, credence-directed centers of rational agency. That assumption is often made more substantial, of course, so far as the driving preferences are taken to be essentially self-regarding in character, but this is a dispensable aspect of the standard package.

2.2 The Discourse-theoretic Image

But if decision theory gives a picture of human psychology that picks out many elements already recognized about human agents in common sense—beliefs, desires, actions, and so on—there is one broad aspect of human peformance that it overlooks. Human beings may be decision-theoretic subjects who act on the basis of beliefs and desires that can be modeled, however approximately, in certain credence and utility functions. But they are not just that (Pettit 1993, ch. 5). They are, more specifically, decision-theoretic subjects whose beliefs and desires evolve under the influence of reasoning or discourse, in particular discourse with one another (Habermas 1984, 1989).

Like many non-human animals, we human beings form beliefs and desires and act so as to satisfy our desires according to our beliefs, or at least we do so under intuitively favorable conditions and within intuitively feasible constraints; this is what gives application to the decision-theoretic image. But unlike non-human animals, we also give intentional expression to the ways things present themselves as being in the light of our beliefs and our desires. We don't just have the ability to believe that p; we can assert that p: we can use a voluntary sign, in Locke's phrase, to represent how things present themselves as being, given that belief (Locke 1975, bk. 3, ch. 2). We don't just have the desire that q; we can assert that the prospect that q is attractive or desirable or whatever: we can use a voluntary sign to represent how things present themselves as being, given that desire. We can express our beliefs in regular, content-specifying sentences and we can express our desires in sentences that predicate attraction or desirability or something similar of the contents desired.

The fact that we are articulate believers and desirers in this sense means that we can do something that marks us off very sharply from mute animals. All agents of the kind modelled in decision theory will have reasons to believe and to desire

those things that it is rational for them to believe and desire according to the theory. Thus if an agent has a very high credence in "q" conditionally on "p", and comes to give full credence to "p", then he or she has reason to give a very high credence to "q". Or if the agent gives full credence to the claim that there are two options available—to A or not to A—and assigns a higher expected utility to A-ing, then the agent will have reason to A rather than not to A. But that agents have such theoretical or practical reasons for believing and desiring things does not mean that they can articulate or see the reasons they have for making such responses, recognizing them as reasons. The states in virtue of which they have reasons may operate within them without their having any beliefs—any credences—to the effect that there are such and such reasons available or, equivalently, to the effect that it is right or appropriate or rational for them to believe that q, or to A. Thus the agents may be unable to form beliefs about what reasons they have and what it is right, therefore, for them to believe or desire; they may lack the normative concepts required.

This is likely to change, however, if the agents are articulate in the relevant domains. Articulate agents who have the reasons illustrated will be able to give expression to those reasons as such. They will be able to say to themselves in the first case: "p, and if p, very probably q"—assuming, for convenience, that this is the way to express such credences. They will find themselves disposed in virtue of having the beliefs thereby expressed to believe and say that it is very probable that q. And they will thereby put themselves in a position to register that the fact, as they believe it to be, that p and that if p, very probably q, is a reason for believing that it is very probable that q; it makes it right or appropriate or rational, as decision theory implies, to believe that q.

Although it is sketchy, this line of thought should prove generally persuasive; the controversy comes in the details of how it is to be filled out. Assuming that it is correct, it means that articulate subjects will be able to see as such the reason that they have—and had all along—for giving a high credence to "q": viz., that p and that if p, very probably q. And on a similar basis they will be able to see that the inconsistency of two propositions gives them reason not to believe both, that the perceptual evidence that something is the case gives them reason, though perhaps only defeasible reason, to believe that it is indeed the case, and so on.

By a parallel train of reasoning, articulate agents will also be able in this sense to see the reason that they have in a practical case, not just to have that reason in the fashion of mute animals. They will be able to say: there are two options, to A or not to A and it is more attractive to A, assuming that "attractive" expresses higher utility. And saying this, they will be able to register that that fact, so expressed, makes it right or appropriate or rational for them, at least in the decision-theoretic sense, to A. Not only indeed will they be able to think about their options and related outcomes in terms of how far they are attractive. They will also be able to think about them in terms of how far they are consistent, for example, with other

things they desire; about how far they represent scenarios that, going on past experience, deliver the goods that they promise to deliver and do not go stale in the mouth (Milgram 1997); about how far perhaps they have properties that serve for them as indices or determinants of what is attractive (Pettit 1991); and so on. In short, they will in some sense be able to consider the options and outcomes for how "desirable" they are, where "desirable" determines what they ought to be attracted by but not necessarily what in fact attracts them: weakness of will or such a pathology may always strike (Smith 1994).

The possibility of forming higher-order beliefs about the reasons they have for holding by various attitudes or for performing various actions should enable people to achieve a higher degree of rationality, even in the decision-theoretic sense. Suppose I find myself prompted by perception to take it to be the case that p, where I already take it to be the case that r. While my psychology may serve me well in this process, it may also fail; it may lead me to believe that p, where "p" is inconsistent with "r". But imagine that in the course of forming the perceptual belief I raise the question of what I should believe at the higher-order level about the candidate fact that p and the other candidates facts I already believe. If I do that then I will put myself in a position, assuming my psychology is working well, to notice that "p" and "r" are inconsistent, and so my belief-forming process will be forced to satisfy the extra check of being squared with this higher-order belief—a crucial one, as it turns out—before settling down.

In this example, I search out a higher-order belief that is relevant to my fact-construing processes and that imposes a further constraint on where they lead. But the higher-order belief sought and formed in the example could equally have had an impact on my goal-seeking processes; it would presumably have inhibited the simultaneous attempt, for example, to act so as to make it the case both that p and that r.

The enterprise of seeking out higher-order beliefs with a view to imposing further checks on one's fact-construing and goal-seeking processes—with a view to promoting one's own rationality—is what we naturally describe as reasoning or deliberation. Not only do we human beings show ourselves to be rational agents, as we seek goals, construe facts, and perform actions in the fashion mapped by decision theory. We also often deliberate about what goals we should seek, about how we should construe the facts in the light of which we seek them, and about how therefore we should go about that pursuit: about what opportunities we should exploit, what means we should adopt, and so on. We do this when we try to ensure that we will form suitably constraining higher-order beliefs about the connections between candidate goals and candidate facts.

That we are creatures of this deliberative kind, however, should not be taken to suggest that we are relentlessly reflective. When I draw on deliberation in full explicit mode, I will certainly ask after the higher-order connections that obtain between candidate facts and candidate goals. But I may be subject to deliberative

control without always explicitly deliberating in this sense. Suppose that without explicit deliberation I tend to go where such deliberation would lead me and that if I do not—if my habits take me in intuitively the wrong direction—then the "red lights" generally go on and I am triggered to engage deliberative pilot. Under such a regime, deliberation will "virtually" control the evolution of my beliefs and desires; it will ride herd on the process, being there as a factor that intervenes only on a need-to-act basis (Pettit 2001*c*, ch.2). I will be in deliberative control of what I do but I may not be particularly reflective in the way I conduct my mental life.

3 The Possibilities for Personal Relationships

The two images of human subjects can be usefully summarised as follows.

- Under the decision-theoretic image human beings:
  have degrees of credence that update suitably under new evidence;
  have degrees of utility for different ways the world may be; and
  act so as to maximize expected utility—more colloquially, act so as to satisfy their desires according to their beliefs.
- Under the discourse-theoretic image human beings:
  can articulate the things they believe and desire;
  can see as such the reasons they have for those attitudes; and
  can be moved by the reasons to improve their performance.

The distinction between these images of human beings is of sharp significance for our view of the relationships that people may form. The decision-theoretic picture suggests that all relationships must ultimately involve a sort of attitudinal manipulation, whether with purpose benign or malign. The discourse-theoretic picture holds out the possibility of a sort of relationship in which others can relate to one in a co-reasoning fashion that is as unmanipulative as reasoning with oneself.

3.1 Decision-theoretic Adaptation

Suppose that we think of human beings in purely decision-theoretic terms, without supposing any ability to reason. They will act perfectly rationally under this image,

forming beliefs and desires and intentions in a rational manner and acting rationally in the light of those attitudes. And as part of that rational performance they may act so as to influence one another on the basis of beliefs they form about the attitudes and capacities of others; thus they may act so as to obstruct or intimidate or channel the responses of others, shaping the real or apparent environment in which others have to act. But they may also do more. Having access to linguistic resources, they may intentionally reveal their states of belief and desire and intention to one another—and make it manifest that they are doing this—giving others the opportunity to form beliefs about those attitudes: say, about their beliefs or desires or intentions, including conditional desires or intentions to the effect "I am disposed, should you do such and such, to reply by doing so and so." And so human beings in the decision-theoretic image may also pursue another sort of influence. They may reveal their attitudes to one another with the purpose, perhaps manifest to all, of getting others to change their beliefs in response to seeing what they perceive or believe—the message is "I perceive or believe that p, and I'm in a position to know"—or of coercing others with the prospect of penalties, coaxing them with the prospect of rewards, and thereby securing personally or mutually attractive patterns of accommodation.

Under the decision-theoretic picture, then, it is clear that people can relate to one another in a range of ways. They can shape the parametric environment of others, real or apparent, expecting others to form beliefs about that environment and adjust to it. They can shape the strategic environment of others, real or apparent, letting others discern opportunities for usefully adapting to them or enabling others to create opportunities for reciprocal accommodation. And they can shape the evidential environment of others, real or apparent, by letting others form beliefs about what they perceive or believe, in a situation where others are likely to be evidentially affected by that.

For all this variety of relationship, however, there is one common theme in the decision-theoretic picture of possibilities. That is that since human beings, under this picture, do not have any beliefs about reasons for forming attitudes, or performing actions, they cannot have beliefs about giving one another reasons for responding in those ways and, to anticipate the next section, they cannot set out to reason with one another. Thus they have to think of what they do in making overtures to one another in different, purely causal terms. This implies that they can only conceive of the interactions surveyed, and they can only intend those interactions as means of causally affecting one another; in particular, as means of affecting one another that happen to appeal to them, in virtue of their own particular preferences. Putting the lesson in a word, they have to think of what they attempt, and of what others attempt in their regard, as a variety of attitudinal and behavioral manipulation: an attempt to engineer and tune, to their own satisfaction, the way that others are. The exercise may be welcomed by the manipulated as well as the manipulating but it still remains manipulation: a sort of

tampering, one-way or two-way, that cannot be recommended or embraced as something supported by mutually endorsed reason.

3.2 Discourse-theoretic Co-reasoning

With this point made, we can see why the discourse-theoretic image of human beings opens up the possibility of a different sort of relationship between human beings. The fact that we human beings reason or deliberate means that not only can we be moved by goal-seeking and fact-construing states—by the belief that p or the desire that q—in the manner of unreasoning, if rational, animals. We can also reflect on the fact, as we believe it to be, that p, asking if this is indeed something we should believe. And we can reflect on the goal we seek, that q, asking if this is indeed something that we should pursue. We will interrogate the fact believed in the light of other facts that we believe, or other facts that perceptions and the like incline us to believe, or other facts that we are in a position to inform ourselves about; a pressing question, for example, will be whether or not it is consistent with them. We may interrogate the goal on a similar basis, since the facts we believe determine what it makes sense for us to pursue. Or we may interrogate it in the light of other goals that also appeal to us; in this case, as in the case of belief, a pressing question will be whether or not it is consistent with such rival aims.

Nor is this all. Apart from drawing on deliberation to interrogate the facts we take to be the case, and the goals we seek, we can ask after what actions or other responses we ought to adopt in virtue of those facts and goals. Not only can we ask after whether they give us a reliable position at which to stand; we can ask after where they would lead us, whether in espousing further facts or goals, or in resorting to action. We may be rationally led in the manner of non-human animals, for example, to perform a given action as a result of taking the facts to be thus and so and treating such and such as a goal. But we can also reason or deliberate our way to that action—we can reinforce our rational inclination with a deliberative endorsement—by arguing that the facts, as we take them to be, are thus and so, the goals such and such, and that this makes one or another option the course of action to take; it provides support for that response.

But if we are reasoning creatures in this sense, and if we are aware in common of being such creatures—we are each aware of our reasoning capacities, each aware that we are each aware, and so on—then the relational possibility that suddenly opens up is that we can reason together: that we can relate as co-reasoners. This process is going to involve an exercise in which I collaborate with you, or you with me, or each of us with the other, in exploring the respective reasons we have for holding by this or that attitude, or acting in this or that manner (Pettit 2001*c*, ch. 4; Pettit and Smith 2004).

That I explore your reasons with you for thinking or wanting or doing something—that I behave as a co-reasoner—is going to mean, intuitively, that

- I communicate my own beliefs about those reasons to you;
- I do so openly and honestly, not hiding anything about myself or the world;
- I do so as fully and fairly as your reasoning appears to require;
- I am open to your taking a different view and to your persuading me of it;
- I allow you go where by your judgment the reasons lead.

That I explore your reasons with you, in other words, means that I relate to you in much the way that you relate to yourself when you reason as to what you ought to think or want or do. I am a presence in your mental life of a kind that ought to be wholly welcome, since it serves to advance the epistemic ends that you yourself pursue whenever you try to reason in that way. And this is something that we are both in a position to see. More generally, we are all able to recognize that ratiocinative shaping is something each of has reason to welcome, that each of us is able to recognize that we all recognize this, and so on in the usual hierarchy of common awareness. We are all able to recognize that it is a shared ideal.

This ratiocinative shaping of one another that people can pursue under the discourse-theoretic image of human beings is quite different from the parametric or strategic or evidential shaping possible under the bare decision-theoretic picture. Those forms of shaping remain possible, of course, but they stand in contrast to this newer mode of influence. Where they have to be seen as a merely causal kind of manipulation, ratiocinative shaping can be seen as something quite novel: as a form of relationship that everyone has reason to welcome, and that everyone can believe as a matter of common awareness that everyone has reason to welcome. It may be possible under the rival image for people to achieve a level of mutual accommodation that everyone welcomes and that everyone can believe as a matter of common awareness that everyone welcomes. But it will not be possible for them to believe as a matter of common awareness that everyone has a reason to welcome this, given that they have no beliefs about reasons. And so it will not be possible for them to hail it as an ideal, let alone to hail it as an ideal in common with others.

I should stress that the co-reasoning relationships envisaged here are perfectly consistent with the decision-theoretic image of how human beings are motivated. What becomes possible under the discourse-theoretic image is a new sort of option, not a new sort of motivation. The resort to co-reasoning—the resort to an exercise in which I put my self-interest offline and become a servant of my partner's interests—may make perfect sense in terms of the sorts of motives, even perhaps self-interested motives, that decision theory recognizes.

3.3 The Upshot

The two images of the human person and the associated pictures of potential relationships support quite different views of politics. Let people be cast in the bare decision-theoretic mould, and we will be forced to think of all human life, and politics in particular, as a matter of manipulating one another to more or less mutually beneficial effect. It will be natural to prioritize the notion of human welfare, then, however that is conceptualized; to think of human beings as potential beneficiaries on this front; and to envisage institutional political design as a matter of finding the most benign possible form of treatment. Let people be cast in the discourse-theoretical mould, however, and we are immediately directed to the ideal under which they are treated as co-reasoners: in effect, they are treated with what can count intuitively as respect (Darwall 1977). It will be much more natural on this account, not to focus on human welfare alone, as if people were just the passive objects of treatment, but to pay attention rather to how they can be incorporated into arrangements where they are able to assume their full status as ratiocinative agents and interlocutors.

4 The People and the State

Politics is not just a matter of individual persons and their relationships, of course, but also of the collective formations that we posit when we speak of the people or citizenry, the state, and the system—as we shall assume, the democratic system—that establishes the relationship between them. Whenever we speak of government, and of the ideals of government, we have to put in place certain presuppositions about the nature of these entities. And political philosophies vary insofar as they offer quite different accounts of how to regiment or recast those presuppositions.

The main issue that I see in this area is how to think of the people for, depending on how this issue is resolved, the state and democracy will naturally be understood in one or another fashion. There are two distinctively different ways in which the notion of the people can be taken, and has been taken, and it may be useful to set these out briefly and then to comment on how they connect with variant understandings of the nature of the state and the nature of democracy.

4.1 The People as a Corporate Body

I describe the first model of the people as solidarist in character; it represents the people—or more accurately, the citizenry that comprises the full-status members of the polity—as a corporate body. The best way of approaching this model is to imagine how any corporate body of individuals might form and what it would require of its members. With the abstract possibility sketched, we can then look at the history of thinking about the people or citizenry as a body of just that kind.

Suppose that a collection of people jointly intend to promote a certain set of purposes in common, however the notion of joint intention is analyzed (see Tuomela 1995; Bratman 1999; Velleman 2000; Gilbert 2001; Miller 2001). Suppose in addition that they jointly intend, implicitly or explicitly, that the actions which are taken on behalf of the collectivity in support of those ends should be directed by one and the same set of canonical, collectively endorsed judgments—say, at a first approximation, the set of judgments supported by majority voting or by some such procedure (Hobbes 1994, ch. 5, §§ 15–17). And suppose, finally, that when any of them acts on behalf of the collectivity—when they act in a representative role, in the group's name—they allow their actions to be guided, not by their own particular beliefs, but by the canonical judgments.

When conditions of this kind are fulfilled, it is perfectly reasonable to say that the collectivity constitutes a corporate agent (Pettit 2001*b*, 2003). The collectivity will have a set of judgments and a set of purposes—something like a system of belief and desire—that is distinct from the systems of belief and desire that its members individually instantiate; if you like, it will have a single vision by which it operates (Rovane 1997). And when individual members act in its name, they will act on the basis of that system of judgment and purpose, not in expression of their own particular attitudes. The entity in question may be an ad hoc organization of activists, a parish council, the editorial board of a journal, or whatever. And of course it may be part of an organizationally complex entity, like a company or church or university: an entity that is itself articulated out of many corporate sub-agents, each designed to have a province of action of its own.

Why suggest, as I did above, that majority voting will only indicate at a first approximation the sort of thing required for enabling a group to establish canonical judgments? Because majority voting may produce an inconsistent set of judgments for the group to endorse, even if everyone voting is individually consistent (Pettit 2001*c*, ch. 5). Suppose, to take a simple illustration, that there are three members in the group, A, B, and C, and that they have to make judgments on whether p, whether q, and, at the same or a later time, whether p and q. A and B may vote that p, C against; B and C that q, A against; and A and C that not p-and-q, with only B opposing. Majority voting in such a case would lead to the group holding that p, that q, and that not p-and-q, and would disable it as an agent; after all, inconsistency in

judgment means, at some margin, paralysis in decision. The problem here is quite general. A recent impossibility theorem shows that there is no way of reliably generating consistent group judgments over a set of connected issues out of individually consistent judgments; at least not, to put the conditions roughly, if the method used treats all issues independently and all individuals even-handedly (List and Pettit 2002, 2005; Dietrich 2003; Pauly and Van Hees 2003).

The possibility that the judgments endorsed by the group may come apart on any issue from the judgments endorsed by individuals raises a question as to how far they may be allowed to drift away from individual judgments, and yet count as the judgments of the group that those individuals comprise. The line I take is that however the judgments are made, they will count as the group's judgments so far as this answers to the joint intention of the members on the matter. This can even make room for the position defended, notoriously, by Hobbes (1994). He argued that when a sovereign speaks for a people, with each of its members acquiescing in this arrangement, then that sovereign's judgments just are the judgments of the people; and this, even when the sovereign is a single man or woman, as in Hobbes's preferred monarchy, who may pay no attention to what other individuals think.

The possibility of a corporate agent of roughly this kind came to be identified in medieval legal theory, as the idea of the corporation was developed in order to cope with the realities of guilds, universities, cities, and the like (Coleman 1974; Canning 1980). And, unsurprisingly, this idea of the corporation was applied quite early on to the political citizenry. Fourteenth-century scholars like Bartolus of Sassoferrato and Baldus de Ubaldis (Canning 1983) used it to characterize the citizenries of a number of Italian city-states in their own time. They argued that de facto if not strictly *de jure*—as a matter of conventional if not statutory law—these cities had the status of corporations in their relationships with their own residents, with outsiders, with bodies like guilds and universities, and with the great powers represented by Church and Empire.

This medieval tradition of representing the people was very influential, according to recent scholarship (Skinner 2002), in shaping the emergence of the notion of the people in early modern political theory. The high point of its influence was probably in the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1973). He argued that the people are indeed a corporate body and that in matters of legislation, if not administration, it has to represent itself, coming together in assembly and forming its intentions and judgments—the general will—as a group agent. His way of thinking may still have a certain influence on contemporary thought, as in communitarian and related models of political participation that one finds in writers as diverse as Hannah Arendt (1958), Michael Sandel (1996), and Jed Rubenfeld (2001). It may even be part of the common sense of democracy as an ideal of popular sovereignty: an ideal of government in which the pre-formed will of the quasi-corporate people is imposed via referendum or representation.

4.2 The People as a Mere Aggregate

But a more recent tradition of thinking asserts that it makes no sense to posit group agents proper. There are only agents of an individual kind and the idea of group attitudes or group actions, even the attitudes or actions of an organised corporate body, is mere metaphor (Quinton 1975, 17); there are only singular agents, no plural ones. We can describe the view as 'singularism'(Gilbert 1989, 12).

Singularism had a powerful impact in the nineteenth century, partly in reaction to the Romantic excesses to which those who hailed group agencies were prone. The line was that groups count as agents "only by figment, and for the sake of brevity of discussion" (Austin 1869, 364). That line survived into twentieth century social and political thought, particularly in English-speaking countries. It was briefly interrupted by the enthusiasm for legal persons—akin to the corporate entities of medieval thought—that was sparked by translations of the German medieval historian, Otto Gierke (Hager 1989; Runciman 1997). And it was never fully embraced by leftist thought. But it undoubtedly achieved the status of an orthodoxy. The apogee of the approach may have come with the famous remark of Margaret Thatcher: "There is no such thing as society."

The rise of singularism, as might be expected, had an enormous influence on thinking about the citizenry. It naturally led political thought from the Rousseauvian, solidarist extreme to the very opposite end of the spectrum: to a view under which there are citizens but not in any distinct sense a citizenry; there are persons but not in any distinct sense a people. Under the solidarist view, the individuals who constitute the citizenry have relationships with one another of such a kind that they constitute a group agent, establishing a single system of belief and desire. Under the singularist alternative, there are no particular relationships, or none of any particular importance, that individuals in the same citizenry have to bear to one another. The only distinctive relationships they have with one another will be contractual liaisons together with those relationships that make them subjects of the same political system and the same government. For all that belonging to the same citizenry requires, people may relate to one another in just about any fashion; they may be as heterogeneous and disconnected as the set of individuals who live at the same latitude.

But won't the individuals represented by government be united in virtue of that representation, as Hobbes (1994) had envisaged? Not so far as they each think of government as representing them—representing them at the same time that it represents others—in their individual capacity. Given that they each think of government in this way, there will be no question of their jointly intending, as in the Hobbesian picture, that the government's judgments count as their judgments. They will see the government, as they might see an attorney they commission in a class action, as an independent entity that acts in representation of their individual purposes or interests according to its own judgments.

4.3 The State and Democracy

In the history of political philosophy, solidarism and singularism have been very prominent doctrines and have suggested very different pictures of the nature of the state and the nature of democracy. Under solidarism the people are going to be or constitute the state—*l'État, c'est nous!*—and democracy is going to be the ideal whereby the people as a corporation freely forms and enacts its will; the people is autonomous or self-determining, whatever the mode in which it determines its decisions. Under singularism the state is going to be an entity—in practice, a corporate entity—distinct from the people, and democracy is going to be an ideal under which the state is forced to be sensitive in a suitable measure to the individual will of each; this sensitivity will be achieved via regular elections in which different candidates and parties compete on equal terms to attract the votes of citizens and win a term in office (Shumpeter 1984).

Neither image of the state or democracy has an irrefutable claim to the allegiance of citizens. Whether one goes for the decision-theoretic or discourse-theoretic picture of persons and their relationships, the coercive, non-contractual aspect of the state—even the democratic state—raises a serious question about its normative status. Proponents of the solidarist people and state have argued, like Rousseau, that citizens share individually in the identity of the people and state—it represents their general, corporate will—and that this makes it possible for the state to respect individual freedom; but few go along. Proponents of the singularist people have argued, for example like Buchanan and Tullock (1962), that a suitably constitutional democratic state can be represented as an arrangement that would have been chosen by everyone, had there been a moment of constitutional choice; but again, not many have been won over.

Where then to go? Do we have to see the state as a brute force in our lives—even if it is a force, as most will think, for overall good? Or can we find a basis for thinking of it as an entity that is fully coherent—or would be fully coherent, if reformed in this or that manner—with our nature as human beings and our best relational possibilities? Starting from the discourse-theoretic image of the human being, political philosophers in the broadly deliberative tradition of democratic thought have begun to argue that such a basis may yet prove to be available (see e.g. Bohman and Rehg 1997; Elster 1998).

The best version of the guiding idea in this approach, as I take it, holds that the people or the citizenry should be seen as something more than an aggregate entity but something less than a corporate one. It should be seen as a community in which common ideas get established in the course of discussing public affairs and achieve the status of what John Rawls describes as public reasons (Rawls 1993, 1999, 2001). These, roughly, are considerations that are openly acknowledged as relevant to public decision-making on all sides—this, perhaps, as an inevitable byproduct of public debate (Habermas 1984, 1989; 1996)—even if they are weighted differently

and taken to support different judgments and policies. What should democratic institutions be designed to achieve, then, for such an ideationally, if not judgmentally, unified people?

One line would be that they should impose such electoral and constitutional constraints as will force the state, first, to recognize the need to justify its decisions on the basis of those shared ideas and, second, to make room for impartially adjudicated, effective contestation as to how far the justifications work (Pettit 2000). Democracy on this account would not empower any imagined corporate will. Nor would it be of its essence to ensure sensitivity to the individual wills or preferences—perhaps the self-seeking wills—of individuals. Rather it should serve to empower the reasons and concerns that everyone in the community is disposed to recognize as relevant to public business, however differently they may weigh them. Those considerations will not often serve to determine concrete issues of policy uniquely, but they will rule out a variety of policy alternatives—they will make them unthinkable—and they can determine procedures whereby remaining questions are to be settled.

This line of thought points us towards a third model of democracy, on a par with the earlier two. I think that the three models identify attractive aspects of a political constitution and that the ideal of a full democracy should incorporate all those dimensions. I mention the models here, however, not with a view to arguing that point, but just to illustrate the different directions in which background, often unexamined presuppositions may take us in political design.

5 The Role of Values

The discussion so far should illustrate the wide range of issues on which we invariably make presuppositions when we think about political matters. Furthermore, it should display the implications of construing those presuppositions, now in this way, now in that. The exercise of showing how philosophy has an unavoidable presence in political life and thought might be continued indefinitely across further and further questions, but there is space to comment only on the sorts of presuppositions about matters of value that also have an impact in politics.

Any theory of value, any explication of the presuppositions we make in this area, will have to underwrite a number of different stories. First, a metaphysical account of what sort of entities give rise to the human experience of value; I shall assume here that the experience of value reflects human practices and sentiments in some way, rather than directing us to a domain of transcendent claims. Second,

a semantic story as to how those practices and sentiments are reflected in judgments and statements of value; on this matter I shall assume that they report how the world presents itself in the light of those practices and sentiments, in particular those that we expect one another to share. And third, an epistemological account of how it is that we become aware of values, conceptualise them, and resolve disputes. Here I think that while we may be attuned to values in a quasi-intuitive way—in virtue of our practice- and sentiment-bound responses—the confirmation of a value judgment always involves recourse to implicit or explicit generalization (Jackson, Pettit, and Smith 2000; Pettit 2001*a*). If we can speak of a method for arguing about matters of value, it probably corresponds to what John Rawls (1971) describes as that of seeking a reflective equilibrium between our judgments of particular cases and our more general principles and assumptions.

I just mention these positions in meta-ethics because, while political philosophers need to adopt one or another view about the issues involved, it is not clear how great a political difference will be made by adopting one or another theory. But there is a further meta-ethical issue that does arise in politics and that generates significant debate. This is the question about how value or goodness relates to rightness: say, the rightness of doing this or that action, or of instituting this or that arrangement (Scheffler 1988; Pettit 1997*a*). Consequentialism holds that for any neutral value or values that people contemplate in common, the right option among any set of alternatives on which they bear is that option or option-set that does as well as possible—and so at least as well as any other—in promoting the realization of the value or values. Non-consequentialism holds that this need not be the case: that whether an option is the right alternative for an individual or people or state may depend, not on how far it promotes the relevant values—or not just on that—but on how far it exemplifies them: on how far espousing that alternative bears witness, as it were, to those values. Thus whereas pacifists in the consequentialist camp might think that the cause of peace justifies occasionally going to war, pacifists of the non-consequentialist persuasion may not; they may argue that it is wrong not to exemplify peace, even if the resort to violence would make for more peace overall. And whereas liberals in the consequentialist camp might think that the cause of freedom will occasionally require repression—say, the repression of a fascist group—liberals of a non-consequentialist stamp may not be willing to agree.

It is very important, I think, for political philosophers to be clear about this issue, since the decision on how to resolve it—the decision on how to interpret the widely shared presupposition that rightness is distinct from but connected with goodness—will impact on what one thinks is required to justify a constitution or policy. Go consequentialist and the question will be whether the constitution or policy produces or promotes the goods—however those goods are counted. Go non-consequentialist and one may think that it is equally, even perhaps uniquely, important that the goods be instantiated and exemplified in the state's performance, at whatever cost to overall promotion.

My own preference is for the consequentialist line—all the more so, in matters of politics (Pettit 2001*b*)—but I won't try to defend it here. One conciliatory remark worth making is that provided they agree on what the relevant political values are, consequentialists and non-consequentialists will often converge in practice on concrete issues. Thus even consequentialists may be willing to admit that since war tends to lead to war by lowering resistance to arms and by activating a desire for revenge, the chance of war bringing peace is usually so slim that there is no live debate among pacifists. And consequentialists may take a similar line on the issue about freedom, invoking the common wisdom that the state will almost always represent a sharper threat to freedom than any group it might repress, so that it is never sensible to allow it to have resort to repressive measures.

This takes us finally to the question of what values—what goods—are relevant in politics. Here it is important, straight off, to distinguish between the values that argue for designing a political system in one way or another—call these, designer values—and the values that participants within the political system may invoke in the attempt to persuade other participants, and ultimately government, to go in one or another direction; call these, participant values. There is a bad tradition in political philosophy of failing to make this distinction and of assuming the stance of a super-legislator in dictating both the constitution and the policies of the ideal state (Walzer 1981). But no one of a democratic stamp—in almost any variant on the democratic ideal—can reflectively endorse this.

Suppose I invoke certain designer values to argue for the third model of democracy distinguished earlier, in which the important point is to empower people's shared ideas about the polity; a plausible base for supporting that model, as indicated, might be that it is the only feasible way in which the state can give recognition to people as co-reasoners, treating them with what we naturally regard as respect. I am hardly going to go on and argue in the same designer voice that the policies adopted within such a polity ought to take this or that form. I will surely recognize that when I begin to argue about policies—as of course I may naturally want to do—I move to the role of participant, and that in this second role I have to think of myself as constrained in a different way by the ideas valorized in the community to which I belong. The designer values on the basis of which I recommend the democratic regime envisaged will have to have a resonance in the culture for which I am designing the regime, if it is to have any chance of gaining roots there. But the participant values I invoke will have to figure explicitly or implicitly in the society—they may of course be subject to various interpretations—or purport to extrapolate from values that figure there.

What values are candidates for figuring in the designer and participant arguments of philosophers? There is no hope of documenting these here, let alone of doing them proper justice. Suffice it to mention that they will include the usual gamut of considerations invoked under tags like "justice," "equality," "freedom,"

and "welfare." One of the most important jobs that philosophy does for politics is to provide different versions in which these ideals can be cast, generating well-tested, well-honed terms for political debate. Philosophy is well-known for its contributions on this front, however, and I hope that that may justify having concentrated here on other areas where it makes and is required to make a contribution.

There is no possibility of a rich and vibrant politics without a full repertoire of values being engaged in people's debates, and for that reason it is important that philosophy is there to explicate such values and to provide a framework for political life and political science. But equally, and perhaps less obviously, there is no possibility of a rich and vibrant politics without a shared image of human beings, without an ideal of the relationships to which human beings may aspire, and without a model of how they come together to form a people and a state. Philosophy matters to politics because it is the discipline in which the views we take for granted on these issues get to be explicated and explored. The philosophically unexamined life is not worth living, so we are told. It may equally be that the philosophically unexamined politics is not worth practicing.

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