



0 Chapter 2 – Social Progress... A Compass

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5 **Abstract:**

6 This chapter sets out the main normative dimensions that should be used in assessing whether societies have made social progress and whether a given set of proposals is likely to bring social progress. Some of these dimensions are values, while others of them are principles, which bear upon how values should or should not be realized or distributed. Recognizing a multiplicity of values and principles is important not only to be respectful of the variety of people's views about what matters but also because it is difficult to reduce the list of dimensions that ultimately matter to a shorter one in a way that is both non-controversial and perspicuous. In setting out a compass for social progress, it is better to include too many dimensions than to leave out values or principles of importance. At the close of the chapter, we describe how such a multidimensional compass can be usefully specified for application to specific practical issues at the local, national, or global levels and then brought to bear in guiding practice or judging current achievements.

7 **Summary:**

- 8 This chapter sets out the main normative dimensions that should be used in assessing whether societies have made social progress and whether a given set of proposals is likely to bring progress. We identify dimensions that are of basic or non-derivative importance. Some of these dimensions are values, which bear in the first instance on the evaluation of states of affairs, and others are principles, which bear in the first instance on guiding action. Recognizing a multiplicity of values and principles is important not only to being respectful of the variety of reasonable views about what matters but also because it is difficult to reduce the list of dimensions that ultimately matter to a shorter one in a way that reflects all aspects of the phenomena in question. Any approach taken must also comport with respecting the equal moral standing of all persons.
- 9 In section 3 we discuss the most important basic values. We introduce and critically compare different notions of well-being (happiness, functionings and capabilities, preference based) and of freedom. We describe how non-alienation has a role in realizing important freedoms. In the context of social relations we point to the important value of esteem and we argue that solidarity as a shared set of attitudes and dispositions is not only instrumental as the motivational basis for redistributive arrangements but should be seen as a basic value on its own. We also show how cultural goods and the environment have an intrinsic value that goes beyond their importance for human well-being.
- 10 In section 4 we turn to the principles that are most relevant for the evaluation of social progress. While distinguishing between different branches of justice, we spend most attention on social justice. We argue that respect for basic rights is the most uncontroversial principle of social justice. While libertarians argue that justice consists in respecting people's rights and not more than that, we also describe different distributive principles that go beyond respect for basic rights: equality of opportunity, (luck) egalitarianism, prioritarianism, and maximin. We discuss the distributive implications of utilitarianism and the potential of other maximization approaches. Finally we argue that even if a society were perfectly just, it might still have to rely in cases of urgent need on the beneficence and generosity of individuals.
- 11 The values and principles introduced can be used to assess the social progress of a variety of different entities that embrace different sets of agents. How individuals fare is relevant to the social progress of each of them. In section 5 we discuss the various entities whose social progress can aptly be promoted or assessed, such as civil society groups and nations, and extensions to future generations and of non-human animals, as well as—with regard to justice—to global human society.

- 12 In section 6 we also consider roughly the same set of entities, now regarded as agents that might or might not act as they should. The set of agents includes political and non-political collectives as well as individuals. Attending to this variety of agents reveals the need to attend to additional principles that are not uncontroversially derivable from the foregoing. We start with principles that are especially applicable to governments: the rule of law, accountability and transparency, rights of political participation and democracy. We then turn to principles of special significance for civil society (toleration and respect for pluralism, ability to exit) and for the global world (the boundaries of global justice). We finally discuss the obligations for individuals in their informal relationships, and the ethical principles calling on individuals to cultivate a cooperative and altruistic ethos.
- 13 Since our charge was to generate a compass useful in a wide variety of domains, our analysis remains deliberately rather abstract. In the final section, we discuss how it can be usefully applied in specific domains. We suggest that our abstract values and principles should be translated into a set of specific indicators; information from these can then be summarized in a set of report cards. To be sure, each choice of specific indicators will always give a narrowed interpretation of the underlying objectives. In part for that reason, the report cards should be seen only as a useful informational input into a broader discussion. Evaluating whether any completed or proposed change constitutes social progress requires an intelligent conversation on how trade-offs between different objectives should be handled and on how moral and feasibility constraints should be taken into account.

14 **Table 2.1: Where to find the values and principles that define the compass**

Cross-cutting considerations

The principle of equal dignity : §2.3.1
 Respect for pluralism : §2.3.2

Basic Values

Well-being : §3.1
 Freedom : §3.2
 Non-alienation : §3.3
 Solidarity : §3.4
 Social relations : Box 2.3
 Esteem and recognition : §3.5
 Cultural goods : §3.6
 Environmental values : §3.7
 Equality: §3.8

Basic Principles

Of General applicability:

Basic rights : §4.2
 Distributive justice : §4.3
 The Pareto principle : Box 2.5
 Beneficence and generosity : §4.5

Applicable to governments:

The rule of law : §6.2.1
 Transparency and accountability : §6.2.2
 Democracy : §6.2.3
 Giving rights determinate reality : §6.2.4

Applicable to civil society :

Toleration : §6.3.1
 Educating and supporting citizens : §6.3.2

Applicable to global institutions :

Global justice : §6.4

Arising from individuals' obligations to each other :

Minimizing double binds : §6.5.1
 Enabling individuals to undertake commitments : §6.5.2

15 1. The compass for this report

- 16 This full report is an ambitious attempt to map out and to assess social progress along many dimensions.
- 17 In order to be able to accomplish these two tasks one needs a number of things: a conception of what progress consists in; a basis for making comparisons; and a rough idea of the direction it is desirable to go in, so that twists and turns and indirect movements along the way can be properly accounted for. That is what this chapter aims to provide.
- 18 To start with the central idea: social progress. The idea of progress implies a positive development, a change for the better. Few people deny the idea of progress; we routinely appeal to ways in which things can be improved or worsened. Our report is indeed predicated on accepting that the idea of progress makes sense: e.g., that the abolition of slavery is a good thing, a moral improvement. Nonetheless, a person can embrace the ideal of social progress

without accepting it as a fact. That is, she can be a skeptic about the extent to which current conditions constitute improvements over past conditions. She may think the present is worse than the past, at least along some dimension. She may also disagree with others with respect to what social progress consists in.

- 19 All views of social progress depend on identifying the dimensions along which progress is being measured or defined as well as the relevant indicators and benchmarks for comparison. For example, someone who thought that social progress should be assessed with respect to the standard of living might think that real consumption were the relevant measure of social progress and that we should compare them with some given year—for example, 1980. We could then judge how consumption levels in the years following 1980 compare with it.
- 20 Unfortunately, from our perspective, any such one-dimensional model is too simple, even if one thinks that the material standard of living is *an* indicator of progress. For there are a plurality of value dimensions along which social conditions differ—not only the standard of living, but also freedom, social inclusion, sustainability and so on. Moreover, because these values are multiple, they can conflict and tradeoffs are often unavoidable. It is important to understand that something can improve in one respect, but regress in another respect.
- 21 This chapter provides what its authors take to be the most important normative dimensions for making comparisons. Our aim is to provide the key, non-derivative values and the important principles for guiding action that can be used to generate a “report card” for assessing different social policies and institutions. The subsequent chapters of this report provide information about how to measure and further elaborate the various elements of social progress in ways appropriate to specific arenas of social life. Our hope is that this chapter covers the main elements from which these more specific elaborations may be derived.
- 22 A second purpose of this chapter is—through identifying basic moral values and relevant moral principles for acting on these values—to provide a framework for tracking improvements along the various evaluative dimensions. For example what exactly is involved in an improvement in freedom or human wellbeing? While the empirical chapters will help provide benchmarks for making comparisons (i.e., better with respect to what?), our chapter provides the values and principles needed for assessing improvements (i.e., better in precisely what way?). But the very idea of progress also entails that we can identify a general line of direction. It is here that we hope the metaphor of a compass can be illuminating.

- 23 A compass helps you understand where you are in the space around you—how far off the map you may have strayed, where the east is and where the north is. It locates your starting point relative to other points and thus provides an orientation for any journey you wish to take. While our map is complex and the destination is multifaceted—so one can move closer to a target in one dimension while moving away from it in another—the goal of this chapter is to set the general line of travel. We attempt to do this without filling in too many details of the ultimate destination. Users of this compass may disagree about details of a goal while agreeing that some changes mark improvements. But we cannot do without information about goals altogether if we are to assess social changes.
- 24 The best path forward is often a winding one. Putting up with some temporary difficulties can be the best way of gaining longer-term improvement. Sometimes you have to go south to get around the bay in order to eventually go further north. To know if going south should be viewed as positive or negative change, you need to see how this change relates to the direction you want to go in. You also need to know whether taking one path rather than another locks you in to a particular destination. Not all paths can be retraced. Finally, some improvements may lie off all already given paths.
- 25 There are two caveats to note with respect to the role of our compass in this report. First, to decide the best path to follow, you also need to assess how feasible any given path is. A compass cannot provide that information. A map will help, but sometimes even the best guidebook is out of date, and one is left uncertain which paths are passable. Consider that we may not yet have sufficient evidence for what policy measures best improve educational outcomes in poor countries or what system of global regulations best addresses climate change. In many cases we must make our decisions under conditions of risk—situations where we do not know the outcomes but can measure the probabilities (think of a coin toss). But sometimes we must make decisions under conditions of uncertainty, where we do not have enough information to even know anything about the probabilities. We often have no way to know whether heading south around the bay will get us to the north. Beyond this, what works best for going north in one context may not work best in a different one.
- 26 Particularly important in this context is that societies vary in the challenges they face and their resources for meeting those challenges. Feasibility constraints also differ: what is possible in one context may not be possible in another. Considerations of corruption, poverty, democratic accountability, stability and political will all affect what can be achieved. A compass cannot by itself determine the limits of the possible.

- 27 Second, it is inevitable that people will disagree about the weightings of the various values with respect to each other, as well as about the best principles of action to use for policy purposes. Sometimes empirical evidence can help narrow the scope of disagreements (especially when uncertainty is at issue) but that is not always the case. Working out what to actually do under circumstances of disagreement, non-ideal conditions, and risk and uncertainty is a complex exercise.

28 **Box 2.1: The history of the idea of progress**

The simple conception of progress as an improvement over time, which we have adopted in the main text, should not be confused with the Enlightenment conception of progress, which implies that history or social evolution builds in a deep *tendency* towards improvement. Progress, on this 18th-century European understanding, does not simply happen, but is the result of an ongoing and irresistible process. Below we survey the rise of this more controversial conception of progress and its eventual challenge.

This idea of progress's irresistible forward march arose from a teleological philosophy of history: the idea that history has a meaning and a direction. This idea is found in Kant, Hegel and Marx. Although each of these thinkers described the driving force behind inexorable overall progress differently, each saw the dynamics of social change (sometimes aided by "superpersonal" forces) as embedding a "logic of history." The subject of progress, as they conceived it, was humanity or the human species as such; the inevitable progress was general, not local. This idea of a universal subject of progress underwrote a more general expectation that the world's different cultures and values would converge, while the Enlightenment's optimism supported the view that the outcome would realize moral progress and give everyone a fulfilling life.

Today we are confronted with a loss of trust in this Enlightenment idea of progress, leading some to talk about the "end of progress" (Allen 2015). Many doubt that world history is in fact inexorably following a single predicted path towards a convergent future in which developments in technology enable human needs to be satisfied, culture to be enriched, and peoples to live peaceably together. The claim that progress is guaranteed by some deep dynamic underlying human affairs has become less and less plausible. The sense is growing that forms of exploitation, social injustice, social domination and other forms of unfreedom and alienation may go hand in hand with technological progress. Disastrous effects of growth on the environment have suggested that technological progress can go together with social or moral decline. Postcolonialist critics of the Enlightenment conception have highlighted the Eurocentrism of its linear model of progress and its purportedly unified view of history. These critiques have cast doubt on the credibility of philosophies of history in general.

Any discussion of progress in the twenty-first century needs to avoid Eurocentrism and claims to inevitability. Our compass takes on board a pluralism that allows for progress in one domain at the same time as regress in another domain.

29 **2. Building blocks of the analysis**

30 In this section, we set out the most basic normative concepts we use in setting out our compass and the cross-cutting normative assumptions that guide how we develop it. We begin by explaining the distinction between values and principles, which underlies the differentiation between the following two sections.

31 **2.1 Values vs. principles**

32 **2.1.1 States of affairs**

33 Judging whether there has been progress typically takes the form of evaluating states of affairs, the way things are in the world. For example, other things equal, a state of affairs in which there is lower infant mortality is generally regarded as better than one in which there are more infant deaths, because infant mortality is bad. We typically judge different states of affairs by assessing the extent to which they include items that are good and the extent to which bad things are absent. When we judge states of affairs the labels we use are 'good', 'bad', 'better', 'worse', 'best' and 'worst'. Although sometimes we compare states of affairs cardinally, i.e., according to some numerical measure, sometimes we merely rank them.

34 Two observations are important in evaluating both particular aspects of states of affairs and states of affairs *tout court*. First, having a cardinal measure is useful in circumstances where we must make probabilistic calculations – for example, if an action may produce state A (better than the status quo S) or state B (worse than S), but we are uncertain which, then we will need to have some sense of the differences between A and S and between B and S to have a sense as to whether that action will be desirable. Second, and relatedly, it is important to acknowledge when outcomes are incomparable, i.e. that neither is better than the other, but neither are they equally good, or that they are incommensurable. Perhaps, because the items have such different characters, it would be a mistake to place the relevant items in the state of affairs on a cardinal scale of overall value or give them a determinate place in an ordinal ranking. The ideas of incommensurability and, even more so, incomparability of different states of affairs are somewhat controversial (see Chang, 1998, for different views).

35 **2.1.2 The need for principles: moral constraints and options**

36 If the evaluation of states of affairs were all that mattered to judgments concerning progress, our task would be exhausted by providing a complete account of good and bad items—or different *aspects* or dimensions of goodness and badness. Much of this chapter is devoted to providing the

contours of such an account, and many of the chapters that follow add detail, subtlety and sophistication to specific items that ought to figure in the evaluation of states of affairs.

- 37 Nevertheless, as important as it is to attempt to compare the value of different states of affairs, it is too simple minded to equate the promotion social progress with the realization of better states of affairs. What we should do is not so tightly connected to evaluation as all that. Distinct histories can make a difference to how it is reasonable to promote social progress. The judgment that country A is better, all things considered, than country B, given their different social norms and different circumstances, does not necessarily imply that country B should try to be more like country A. It may be reasonable for country B instead to opt to improve things consonantly maintaining its freely chosen path. A compass can serve to locate places on a map without necessarily recommending a particular journey.
- 38 Sometimes, although a state of affairs, A, is better than a different outcome, B, it would be a mistake to try to achieve A from B because doing so would be morally wrong—because there are *moral side-constraints* that forbid certain kinds of action. For example, if we accept that reducing infant mortality is an important goal, that does not generally imply that one is morally permitted – still less morally required - to steal money from one's rich uncle to pay for medicines to serve that goal. There are certain kinds of action that are morally prohibited even if their performance would improve outcomes. This observation is particularly important for a theory of social progress, because it highlights the fact that realizing a better state of affairs via the only available means might be morally wrong. That better world may be available to us in the sense that its realization is consistent with the laws of nature, but not available to us *from a moral point of view* because its realization would violate the rights of individuals or groups.
- 39 To assess social progress solely by evaluating states of affairs would also be to overlook the importance of *moral options* and *moral requirements*, each of which can provide a basis of normative assessment that is distinct from the evaluative. To give a simple example, although an individual would be better off if she pursued a healthy lifestyle, many believe that she does not do anything morally wrong if she makes choices that fail to optimally promote her health. Similarly, at the societal level, many hold that a political community may sometimes choose not to pursue policies that it has most reason to pursue: it might be morally permissible for it to host the Olympic Games even though the resources invested to stage them would do more good if spent on other projects. The idea of moral options suggests that even though an outcome would be best all things considered, individuals or political communities might be entitled to act in ways that do not aim to realize it.[\[4\]](#)

40 Taking these thoughts about moral constraints and options together, we distinguish between two particular aspects of normative assessment. First, we can seek to evaluate states of affairs as good or bad, or better or worse than others, without attending to the question of how those states of affairs are produced. Call this the “substantive” level of normative assessment. Second, a normative assessment can focus not on states of affairs but rather on the manner in which those states are produced. This latter aspect, which we might call the “process” aspect, often involves an appeal to principles that bear directly on what individuals (or collective agents) do. Some schemes of normative assessment might be purely process-focused, in the sense that the only feature of evaluation is how the states of affairs were produced. This is sometimes said for example about certain democratic outcomes—so that if, say, a particular policy regime has been chosen over another under conditions of proper democratic procedures, then focusing on the comparative substantive properties of the two candidate policy regimes (and on which is the better policy) is irrelevant. More often, both process and substantive aspects will be evaluatively relevant.

41 When assessing the progress of a society, both substantive and procedural elements should be accounted for. One wants to know both whether the society, and the individuals in it, are enjoying valuable outcomes and how well the processes and procedures of the society—its systems of justice, governance, economic regulation, mutual accommodation, and the like—are performing. In our judgment, no available conception of value adequately captures the latter. Accordingly, our compass includes both values and principles.

42 2.2 Basic vs. derivative values

43 We can collapse some parameters of evaluation into other aspects when those parameters are derivative from more basic ones. The economists’ preoccupation with gross domestic product (GDP) per head, for example, is likely fully explained by a concern for individual well-being, the thought being that increased income means increased preference satisfaction and increased preference satisfaction means increased well-being for the one whose preferences are more fully satisfied. It is the individual well-being that matters, normatively, not the GDP/head. Any demonstration that in a particular case increased GDP/head involved *reduced* preference satisfaction or that increased preference satisfaction involved *reduced* individual welfare, would be grounds for modifying the use of GDP/head as an evaluative tool for those cases. Indeed, if better measures of individual well-being were felt to be available from other more direct sources (say ‘happiness’ or other subjective well-being measures derived from questionnaires), then presumably GDP/head would lose its relevance. We must distinguish a debate about measurement from a debate about basic values: whether ‘happiness’ is a

better measure of individual well-being than GDP/head is a different question from whether happiness or GDP/head or both (or neither) should be promoted for their own sake.[5]

- 44 It is, then, helpful to distinguish between *non-derivative* values or principles—those that are sought or respected for their own sake—and *derivative* ones—those that are sought for the sake of something else. Of course, there are disagreements about which values and principles have derivative or non-derivative significance. These debates are complicated by the fact that there are many causal and conceptual connections among them all. Our attempt in this chapter has been to limit ourselves to discussing values and principles that seem to us to be of non-derivative normative importance. Thus, for example, we treat as distinct the basic liberty that supports one’s freedom to choose as healthy a diet as one pleases and the health-related well-being that ensues from one’s choice. This principle and this value, and the others we set out in Sections 3 through 6, represent distinct points on our compass, even though over some ranges these values may be fellow-travelers.
- 45 Our compass includes multiple non-derivative values and principles. That is one aspect of the necessary pluralism we address in 2.3.1 below. On the other hand, it is perhaps reassuring to observe that over an extensive range many of these values and principles are complementary. Greater wellbeing, for example, may be promoted by the same measures that promote greater social recognition.
- 46 Many items that are valuable derivatively are valuable instrumentally: because they are productive of a basic value. It seems to us that the ‘free market’ is a familiar case in point. We value the market order because (and to the extent that) it produces greater material well-being and greater liberty (or perhaps over some periods of history and in some domains, greater equality). We value federalism as part of a democratic political order not for its own sake but also to the extent that it produces reduced scope for political coercion (i.e., low cost of exit from uncongenial provincial regimes) and/or via competition, greater efficiency in the provision of regional public goods. There is a proper distinction here between means and ends and we think it fetishistic to value the means independently of the ends which they do (and/or don’t) promote. As Milton Friedman observed, disagreements about the free market are not primarily disagreements about values but about facts – facts concerning how markets operate and the effects they have on well-being and liberty and individual virtue. It is hardly telling any secrets to observe that those facts are (and long have been) matters of fierce ideological contestation. But in principle they are matters resolvable by appeal to evidence and debate among people of goodwill.

- 47 Derivative values include not only items that are valuable instrumentally. For example, we might value equality neither for its own sake (that is, non-derivatively) nor because it is means of promoting a different value such as well-being (i.e., for its instrumental value), but because it is a *constitutive* feature of a larger ideal, such as the ideal of a political community that displays fraternity or solidarity.
- 48 When we evaluate social progress it is important to keep these distinctions in mind. While certain values or principles have non-derivative importance, others are constitutive features of a larger ideal, and other items are instruments for the realization of non-derivative or constitutive value. In addition, some items serve us as *proxies* or *indicators* of progress: they are evidence of the presence of those items that are valuable for social progress instrumentally, constitutively or non-derivatively. In some countries, for example, an individual's postcode is treated as an indicator of socioeconomic advantage and inequality among levels of advantage associated with different postcodes is used as a proxy for gauging the level of socioeconomic inequality a society exhibits.
- 49 It seems clear that in the arena of action, these institutional pointers will occupy an important role. We will tend to assess states of affairs by reference to whether there are well-functioning democratic political systems, whether there is an effective rule of law, whether the economic systems in place involve freedom of entry and opportunity for all and whether they deliver tolerable economic outcomes for citizens. We will do this recognizing that such assessment is partial, provisional, and always susceptible to challenge on factual grounds within the social science – always answerable to a court in which the basic values of liberty and equality and well-being and social recognition are the final arbiters.
- 50 **2.3 Framing constraints on moral reasoning**
- 51 Having distinguished values from principles and derivative from non-derivative cases of each, we come now to two cross-cutting considerations that orient our efforts.
- 52 **2.3.1 Equal dignity**
- 53 Many declarations of human rights begin with an expression of the equal dignity of human beings. In the words of *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, “the dignity of the human person is fundamental” (United Nations 2015). Dignity this is a value that frames principles. The basic idea of equal dignity is that every human matters and no one matters more than anyone else. Two elements of equal dignity are worth spelling out. The first is the claim that every human being matters.^[6] It is not enough for equal dignity for everyone to believe that *his or her own* life matters. Rather, the principle of

equal dignity asserts that *everyone's life matters* and requires each to recognize and honor that fact. What this amounts to depends on what 'mattering' means. For some, it means that it is a matter of objective importance that everyone's claims and interests are acknowledged.

- 54 The second is the idea that humans enjoy equal dignity. There are more and less demanding ways of elaborating the egalitarian element of dignity. On the most demanding, strict, interpretations of equality our attention is *comparative*: however we treat individuals or groups we must not treat some more favorably than others (Dworkin, 2011, chap. 9). The more modest, rhetorical, reading makes the *non-comparative* claim that everyone is entitled to a certain kind of consideration: on this view, a person's entitlements do not depend on the extent of others' entitlements (Raz, 1986, chap. 9).
- 55 Affirming equal dignity is compatible with displaying favoritism towards one's own family or co-citizens over those outside one's family or political community. It does not, in other words, deny that individuals have special or associative obligations to particular others. Rather it serves to prohibit certain attitudes and activities—racism and sexism, for example—on the grounds that they cannot be reconciled with the equal importance of everyone. More controversially, it places certain demands on us, to ensure that everyone's basic needs are satisfied to the best of our collective ability. The principle of equal dignity gives our compass a substrate of universal concern and respect the content of which requires careful elaboration.

56 2.3.2 Respect for pluralism

- 57 Any account of social progress must come to terms with the fact that people and societies disagree about what makes outcomes good or bad and actions right or wrong. In the context of such disagreement any conception of social progress will be controversial, and must avoid the Eurocentrism of the Enlightenment conception of progress (Box 2.1). But how non-controversial should our compass be? At one extreme, we might try to articulate a compass that is acceptable to as many people as possible in the light of the distinctive convictions about ethics, religion, and morality they hold. However, a moment's reflection suggests that such a compass would be unattractive. The world is populated by very many people who hold deeply repugnant views and a conception of social progress that failed to challenge such views would itself be seriously inadequate.
- 58 But the other extreme must be avoided as well. At that end of the spectrum are conceptions that treat everyone's beliefs about religion, morality and ethics as fundamentally irrelevant to the project of identifying social progress. On this account, there is a fact of the matter about what constitutes social

progress, a fact that does not make reference to people's concerns or convictions about what is right, just or good; the task of the compass designer is to articulate the truth about the right and the good as well as she can.

- 59 The worry about this approach is that it can be alienating. Part of the role of a compass is to give individuals guidance that they can understand and embrace as their own, and to provide a basis for social unity (see Rawls 2005). If that is the case, then the values and principles of the compass should be ones that reasonable people can, in good faith, regard as their own, as following from or, at least, not inconsistent with their deeply-held convictions.
- 60 Steering a course between these two extremes is an account that takes people's distinctive beliefs seriously but avoids incorporating egregious moral mistakes (Nagel 1991). How that course is set out in detail is a matter of judgment. Plainly, our compass should acknowledge the equal moral worth of human beings regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, talent, and social position. Thus, racist views that deny this basic principle of equal dignity need not detain us in the design of our compass. But various disagreements about religion, for example, should. It would be wrong for our compass to be presented as following from a particular religious doctrine. Rather, its values and principles should be ones that are acceptable to the variety of religious and irreligious views that have currency, at least those whose values cohere with the basic ideals of freedom, equality and dignity.
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61 3. Basic values

- 62 For many people, social progress just means an increase in average or total individual well-being (and perhaps an improvement in its distribution, however defined). Some even treat social progress as measurable by growth in material production, i.e. growth in GDP. This is too narrow. Social progress should not be reduced to an increase in material consumption. People also care about things such as health, job quality, the natural and social environment in which they are living; they care about their freedom of choice and about their social standing. One can of course define a broad concept of well-being that includes freedom, esteem, cultural goods and the natural environment in that concept of well-being itself. However, one can also argue that these values go beyond well-being in that they would remain important to us even if they had no effect on well-being. In this chapter, we treat such values as freedom and esteem as independent basic values.

63 3.1 Well-being

- 64 We begin with a discussion of the fundamental value of well-being. At the outset, it is helpful to distinguish between two different questions that relate to the value of well-being. First, when we ask ‘what does human well-being consist in?’ we often mean to ask ‘what makes one’s life go well?’ Of course, many things that contribute to an individual’s well-being—a good level of cardiovascular fitness or of purchasing power, for example—seem to be valuable merely as means to doing or achieving things valuable for their own sake, traditionally known as “final ends” (Aristotle 1985, I.7). According to some, a person’s life going well can be aptly described in terms of the achievement of a single final end. Different theories of what that end is have been proposed. Hedonists argue that well-being consists in having the mental state of pleasure and lacking that of pain; others claim that an individual’s life goes better to the extent that her preferences are satisfied; and still others claim that there is an objective list of goods to which we should refer to judge how well an individual’s life has gone or is going (for a brief survey, see Parfit, 1984, appendix I).
- 65 The second question concerns our metric for comparing different individuals for the purposes of making distributive decisions. If our aim is to reduce inequality in well-being or to give priority in decision making to the most disadvantaged, we need to be able to compare the situations of different individuals in the right way, to identify the level of advantage of different individuals and how much more or less they would be advantaged by a particular policy. Some refer to this task as making “interpersonal comparisons of well-being.”
- 66 It might seem natural to think that the idea of well-being used for making interpersonal comparisons just is well-being in the sense of what it means for an individual’s life to go well and, indeed, some do take this view. But others believe that when making interpersonal comparisons for the purposes of guiding distributive decisions it would be wrong to adopt one’s preferred conception of what fundamentally makes an individual’s life go well; wrong, perhaps, because it would be a disrespectful response to the moral and religious disagreements prevalent in modern societies (Rawls 2005; Dworkin, 2000). People disagree about what makes a person’s life go well. While this disagreement has led some to reject well-being altogether as an appropriate metric of social evaluation, others have instead developed multidimensional accounts of well-being.
- 67 **3.1.1 Multidimensionality**
- 68 In applied work on social policy there is still often a strong emphasis on material resources (income and wealth) – see, e.g., the definition of poverty lines. In economics well-being is often equated with utility, and utility is seen as the representation of preferences revealed in choice behavior. Recently, the old utilitarian concept of subjective well-being has been revitalized under the

influence of the rapidly growing empirical literature on happiness and life satisfaction. Given our aim, which is to provide a compass for measuring social progress, “well-being” must be normatively understood: it must be valuable, in the sense that increasing it indeed constitutes social progress. The choice of a specific metric inevitably involves value judgments.

- 69 What dimensions should be included in the analysis? Two ways of answering this question are illustrated by the literature on the capability approach, which “concentrates on the capabilities of people to do things—and the freedom to live lives—that they have reason to value” (Sen 1999, 85). Which capabilities are those? Nussbaum (2000, 2006) gives one kind of answer by proposing as universally valid a list of ten “central capabilities.” Sen (1999, 2009), on the other hand, argues that the list of essential life dimensions should not be defined by theoreticians, but should be drawn up in a participatory process through public reasoning and so is governed in part by process norms.
- 70 While the conceptual differences between these two approaches are important, the problem seems less acute when it comes to practical applications. As a matter of fact, all lists of dimensions that are proposed in practice (by, e.g., the OECD [2011], the European Statistical System [2011], the Stiglitz [2009] report or the UN in its Sustainable Development Goals) are very similar. They all include material consumption and housing quality, health, job market status and leisure, the quality of social interactions and of the natural environment.
- 71 A more difficult question is about the relationship among the different dimensions. Should they be seen as incommensurable or is it possible to aggregate them into one measure of individual well-being? If one takes the former position and sticks to a multi-dimensional representation of well-being, how should one handle interpersonal comparisons involving a trade-off between the different variables? If one takes the latter position, how should the aggregation across dimensions be conceived? These questions bring us right into the heart of the debate on interpersonal comparisons. The essential distinction between hedonist, objective and preference based approaches will necessarily reappear in that debate.
- 72 **3.1.2 Different conceptions of well-being: happiness, capabilities, preferences**
- 73 In this section we compare four different conceptions of well-being: a resourcist conception, a hedonistic conception, an objective conception as exemplified in the capability approach, and a preference based conception. The first three of these are “objective” in that they characterize well-being the same way for each individual—including hedonism, which characterizes it in terms of a state of mind. The preference based view is “subjective” in that it

gives only a formal characterization of an individual's well-being, allowing each individual's subjective preferences to fill in the content differently. These relationships are summarized in the following table:

74 **Table 2.2:** Conceptions of well-being

75	Objective, state of mind	Objective, not state of mind	Subjective
	Happiness	Resources	Preferences
	Capabilities and functionings		

76 *Resources and income*

77 Some argue that if all relevant commodities could be bought on a market, giving people equal resources would give them equal opportunities for well-being, while leaving them complete freedom to spend their income as they want. This argument underlies much policy advice by economists who aim at respecting differences in individual's preferences. As we will see, this so-called ideal of "consumer sovereignty" is doubtful. Moreover, not all relevant dimensions of well-being can be bought on the market—think about health or about the quality of the natural environment. Finally, differences among people will mean that they differently convert material commodities into elements of well-being. For instance, how well-nourished people are depends not only on how much they eat, but also on the varying characteristics of their bodies and activities. Therefore, the same level of income or resources will not provide equal opportunity for well-being.

78 *Utility and happiness*

79 One of the most striking phenomena in the recent social science literature is the rapidly growing interest in the analysis of individuals' happiness at a given time and of their evaluation of their life satisfaction, as measured by simple questions in large opinion surveys. The answers to these subjective well-being questions are empirically robust. Average life satisfaction has remained almost constant in rich Western countries since the Second World War, despite the strong economic growth in that period.^[7] Other aspects of life, such as health and (as further discussed in Box 2.3) good social relations, have a significant impact. Both the momentary happiness data and the data on life satisfaction are readily available and easy to collect. If one is willing to accept the answers from the surveys as an interpersonally comparable measure of well-being, one obtains from each of these sorts of data a ready-to-use one-dimensional measure expressed on a convenient scale.

- 80 Are the happiness and life satisfaction measures simply two ways of getting at the same thing? The suggestion that they are is contested by most psychologists. They see “subjective well-being” as a multifaceted experience with at least two components: feelings and cognitions. For the cognitive component, individuals have to take some distance when formulating a judgment over their life. Positive and negative emotions, on the other hand, come in a continuous flow and are related to pleasures and pains as understood by Jeremy Bentham (1970). We will accordingly take the two measures to suggest two alternative views: in basing the evaluation of individual well-being on feelings of happiness, it suggests “hedonic welfarism; “preference welfarism,” by contrast, starts from judgments about what is a valuable life and aims at respecting these preferences. (We turn to an alternative form of preferentialism at the end of this subsection.)
- 81 In recent decades, important social philosophers such as Dworkin have criticized any approach that defines well-being solely on the basis of mental states of either sort. Sen (1985a) elegantly summarized many of these arguments by pointing out that subjective welfarism suffered from two problems. The first he calls “physical-condition neglect”: “A person who is ill-fed, undernourished, unsheltered and ill can still be high up in the scale of happiness or desire-fulfillment if he or she has learned to have ‘realistic’ desires and to take pleasure in small mercies” (Sen 1985a, p. 21). Redistributing from a poor peasant to a rich millionaire would then be ethically desirable if the rich millionaire were less satisfied with life. Interestingly, the recent work on subjective well-being has produced convincing empirical evidence that adaptation of this sort is indeed a pervasive real-world phenomenon. Even in a cohort of chronic locked-in syndrome patients, a majority reports being happy, and the longer they are in the locked-in syndrome the happier they report themselves to be (Bruno et al., 2011).
- 82 The second problem is “valuation neglect”. Valuing a life is a reflective activity in a way that “being happy” or “desiring” need not be (Sen 1985a, p. 29). If an acceptable approach to well-being should explicitly take into account this valuational activity by the persons themselves, then hedonic welfarism must be rejected. Feeling well is important to individuals, but it is not the only consideration entering their assessments of life.
- 83 Whatever the stance taken on welfarism, “it would be odd to claim that a person broken down by pain and misery is doing very well” (Sen 1985a, p. 17). In any multidimensional approach, how well or poorly someone is feeling is a relevant dimension.

84 *Functionings and capabilities*

- 85 The origins of the capability approach are to be found in a series of influential papers and monographs, written by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. The literature on the topic has been rapidly growing, but Sen's original description still offers a good starting point.
- 86 We have seen that Sen considers subjective welfarism unacceptable because of the problems of "physical condition-neglect" and "valuation neglect." On the other hand, focusing exclusively on income or on material resources would not do justice to the heterogeneity of human beings, either. As mentioned above, personal and environmental characteristics determine what people can achieve with a given amount of resources. According to Sen (1985a), these achievements, i.e. what the person manages to do or to be—such as being well-nourished, well-clothed, mobile, being able to appear in public without shame—are what really matters for well-being.
- 87 Sen further claims that a description of well-being in terms of achieved functionings is not yet sufficient, however, because it does not integrate the essential notion of freedom. His classic example involves the comparison between two individuals who are both undernourished (Sen 1985a). The first person is poor and cannot afford to buy sufficient food. The second person is wealthy and so capable of eating sumptuously but freely chooses to fast for religious reasons. While they achieve the same level of nourishment, it would be strange to say that they enjoy the same level of well-being. Therefore Sen introduces the notion of capabilities to capture the real opportunities of persons, and suggests that well-being be understood in those terms (Sen 1985b, 200). The capabilities of a person are given by the set of functionings vectors that are accessible to the person, i.e., the set from which (s)he can choose. Capabilities are a reflection of the real freedom individuals have to do things and go well beyond their merely having the legal right to do them. Thus, Sen integrates freedom into this conception of well-being.
- 88 The capability approach is inherently multidimensional. In fact, many of its proponents (including Nussbaum) emphatically reject the idea that the different life dimensions are commensurable. But as soon as we are interested in the inequality of well-being, the possible trade-offs between the different dimensions can no longer be neglected. Most proponents of the capability approach mistrust individual preferences and go for a valuation function that is common for all individuals. But how to construct such a common valuation function, in the light of the fact that people differ so deeply about what constitutes a good life? Here the different approaches taken by Sen and Nussbaum to selecting the dimensions recur at the level of trade-offs among them: to rely on public deliberation or to cast these value relationships as objective.
- 89 *Preference-based well-being*

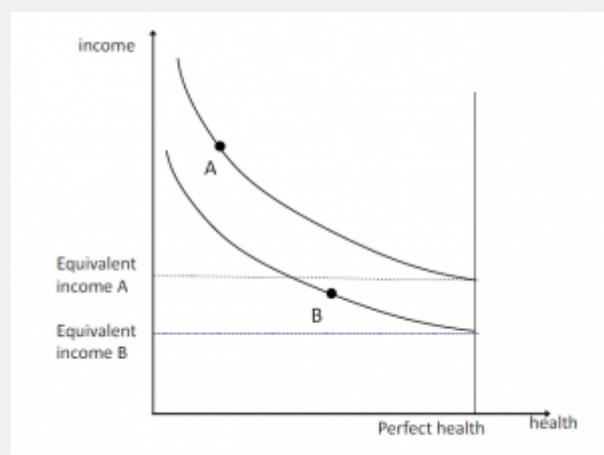
- 90 Preference based perspectives on well-being take the interindividual differences in what constitutes a good life seriously. The most popular version of preferentialism is the economic view of consumer sovereignty and respect for preferences as revealed in choice behavior. The booming literature on behavioral anomalies has undermined to a large extent the attractiveness of this approach, however. People are often imperfectly informed or follow suboptimal decision heuristics when taking decisions. A more attractive version interprets “preferences” as reflecting people's well-informed and well-considered ideas about what is a good life. On this interpretation, preferences, in addition to reflecting desires, also have a strong cognitive “valuational” component.
- 91 Respect for individual ideas about the good life is in line with the framing commitment to equal dignity (2.3.1) and with the perspective on personal responsibility that has been put forward by some prominent social philosophers. Rawls (1999a, 1982) argues that treating persons as autonomous moral agents implies that they should assume responsibility for their goals and their conception of the good life. Dworkin (1981a,b, 2000) stresses that individuals should be held responsible for their preferences: in his view, an individual cannot sensibly identify with his own preferences about how to conduct his life and at the same time request compensation on the ground that his preferences are a sort of handicap. In the same spirit, Fleurbaey (2008) argues that when individuals enjoy autonomy and freedom, respecting their freedom implies respecting their personal preferences.
- 92 It would be a mistake to think that a preference-based view of well-being necessarily coincides with that based in individual reports of happiness or subjective life satisfaction. Recall the earlier example of patients with the locked-in syndrome who report high levels of satisfaction because their aspirations have adapted to their situation. This does not mean that they would not prefer to return to their health state before they got ill—and it certainly does not mean that healthy citizens would not care about incurring the locked-in syndrome. We can take for granted that everybody would prefer not to incur the locked-in syndrome, but this common preference is not reflected in self-reported life satisfaction.
- 93 A preference-based notion of well-being should respect individuals’ well-informed ordinal preferences about what constitutes a good life, but correct for scaling. Here is one proposal (see, e.g., Fleurbaey and Blanchet, 2013, Decancq et al., 2015). The basic ideas are presented more formally in the box on preferentialism and equivalent income. Choose reference values for all the non-income dimensions of life. Then define the “equivalent income” as the level of income that would make the individual indifferent (as judged by his own convictions) between his current situation and the hypothetical reference situation where he would be at these reference values for all non-income dimensions. If the individual reaches these reference values, his income and

his equivalent income coincide. This suggests a general criterion for choosing the reference situation: reference values should be set in such a way that when all individuals are in the reference situation for the non-income dimensions, differences in preferences do not matter to determine who is worse or better off. If individuals are in the reference situation, we can focus on income only.

- 94 When there exists a "normal" level for the non-income dimensions to which all individuals aspire, it seems natural to take this normal value as the reference. An obvious example is health, since we may assume that, despite some interpersonal differences, there is a reasonable consensus about what is a normal, unproblematic health level.
- 95 The difference between the income and the equivalent income then measures the loss in well-being that results from deviations from that reference level, and this loss is dependent on individual preferences. Setting aside the idea of revealed preferences, whose limitations as indicators of well-being are well known, the attractiveness of preference based approaches, including the idea of equivalent income, depends not only on the ethical assumption that idealized preferences are a good indicator of well-being, but also on it being psychologically meaningful to suppose that individuals do have such idealized preferences. As psychological research has shown (e.g., Kahneman 2011), this is far from obvious.

96 **Box 2.2: Preferentialism and equivalent income**

The following figure illustrates the distinction between respecting individual preferences and using subjective well-being measures. For this graphical representation, we restrict ourselves to two dimensions (income and health), but it is obvious that this is only for illustrative purposes. The indifference curves in the figure indicate which combinations of income and health are equally good in the light of the individual's conception of the good life.

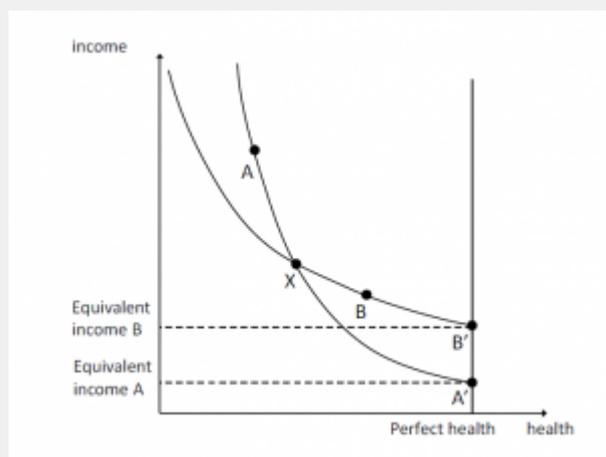


In the situation depicted in this figure, both the individual in life A and the individual in life B agree that the life in A is better than the life in B. Yet, this does *not* imply that the subjective well-being (or happiness) of the individual in A is larger than that of the individual in B. It is possible that the individual in life A has high expectations and aspirations and therefore

attaches low satisfaction scores to both situations, whereas the individual in B has low expectations and gives high satisfaction scores to both situations. In this case, it is possible that individual A scores her own life lower than individual B scores his own life.

The challenge is to formulate a measure of individual well-being that respects individual preferences when individuals have different ideas about what constitutes a good life. Such a situation is represented in the figure below. Consider first the case where the two individuals are both in situation X, having precisely the same income and health. Despite the fact that they are in the same “objective” situation X, it can be argued that the individual with the “steeper” indifference curve is worse off than the individual with the “flatter” indifference curve: she cares more about her health outcomes and, hence, more strongly disvalues being sick. This illustrates the importance of taking into account the fit between situations and preferences.

However, it is possible to argue that in some comparisons of life situations differences in preferences do not matter for the measurement of well-being. This may occur when the two individuals both enjoy perfect health as the individuals in A' and B'. When both individuals are in perfect health, one can compare their well-being on the basis of their incomes irrespective of their preferences, the argument goes.



Combining this assumption with respect for individual valuations allows us to rank all possible situations. Consider the individuals in A and B. According to their preferences, the individual in A is equally well-off as in A' and the individual in B is equally well-off as in B'. Given that we can evaluate the lives A' and B' on the basis of the incomes, we can also evaluate A and B on the basis of these incomes. These hypothetical incomes for A and B have been called “equivalent incomes”.

The equivalent income measure does not suffer from “physical-condition neglect”. When there is a potential conflict between individual preferences and subjective well-being (as described on the basis of the first figure), equivalent incomes respect the (common) preference ordering and “correct” for differences in expectations and aspirations.

97

3.2 Freedom

98

As we noted in §3.1.2, in connection with capabilities, people value not only the goods they achieve but also the freedom they enjoy in pursuing them. There are many goods we care about achieving—peace and quiet, satisfaction,

wealth, beauty, success, happiness, a contemplative life or an exciting one—but we often also care about the possibility of achieving these freely. Because freedom relates to the processes by which we achieve goods, there are principles associated with it, which we come to in sections 4 and 6; but freedom is also a basic and indisputable value—and in fact it has been claimed over and over again that the realization of freedom is the normative core of modern societies (Honneth 2015).

- 99 However, quite different and to some extent incompatible ideas have been associated with the concept of freedom, such as the drive not to be coerced or subordinated to anyone, to be one's own man or woman, to be able to live as one wants. Thus how exactly we are to understand freedom becomes a matter of theoretical dispute. We can make some initial headway by asking what the opposite of—or the key obstacle to—freedom is. Some possible candidates:
- 100 • *Coercion*: I am unfree when someone coerces me or I am coerced to do something; conversely I am free when I can do what I want without anything impeding me, either within myself or without;
 - *Heteronomy*: I am free when I am self-determined, when I live autonomously, “by my own law”;
 - *Alienation*: I am unfree if I am ‘foreign to myself’ in anything I do; conversely I am free when I can identify with what I do and do not experience my own activities and plans as imposed on me externally by anonymous mechanisms.
- 101 As we can see, each possible antonym corresponds to a certain understanding of freedom.
- 102 We can bring some order into this variety by turning to the famous distinction between negative and positive freedom (Berlin 1975). Negative freedom, for Berlin, is “freedom from” (in particular from external coercion and the interferences of others). Positive freedom, in contrast, refers to “freedom to” do certain things that are considered essential for individual self-determination or self-realization (Geuss 1995). Whereas Hobbes and Berlin advocate a negative conception of freedom, Rousseau, Hegel and Hannah Arendt can be read as advocates of a positive conception of freedom, as can the defenders of the capability approach.
- 103 On the first (negative) conception, I am most free when I can do what I want with the least hindrance and obstruction by others. The goals the individual pursues thereby are not up for judgment except insofar as they harm others or impede others' freedom – this is the liberal principle of non-intervention. A series of objections have been raised against this negative understanding of freedom: besides the pure possibility of freedom, isn't who can do *what* also relevant, i.e. an assessment of the goals? What counts as a hindrance to freedom, and don't we have to go beyond the purely negative conception of

freedom to determine what the relevant hindrances are? In light of these questions, Charles Taylor (1985b, 215-6) points out that there are not just external impediments to freedom, but also internal impediments, “when we are quite self-deceived, or utterly fail to discriminate properly the ends we seek”. In these cases we have to introduce positive reference points in order to distinguish between hindrances and aspects of our personality: “You are not free if you are motivated, through fear, inauthentically internalized standards, or false consciousness, to thwart your self-realization.” Moreover it is questionable whether we can even speak of freedom without considering the material preconditions of realizing freedom and thus also the social conditions in which people act. If individual freedom is only possible within certain social relations, doesn't this suggest a concept of social freedom? Philip Pettit (2001) has argued that it is not enough that one happens not to be interfered with, for it matters that one be robustly free from coercion and attack. On his conception of “freedom as non-domination,” freedom requires that one would remain protected against interference even if others' attitudes towards one changed.

- 104 Although these various conceptions of freedom have often been considered rivals, a multi-level analysis based loosely on Hegel can show us how to see them as complementary aspects of freedom, more complexly understood. We can build this idea up in a series of steps:
- 105 1) not being hindered from doing what I want (negative freedom, absence of external coercion);
 - 106 2) doing what I want *most* (which already calls on us to set our valuational priorities and rules out manipulation and internalized coercion);
 - 107 3) doing what I *really* want, i.e. which corresponds to who I really am (drawing in the idea of authenticity);
 - 108 4) doing what I can *rationally* want (an idea that may correspond to Kant's conception of freedom as rational autonomy or self-legislation);
 - 109 5) doing what accords with the social institutions and practices that I take part in, participation in which is essential for my self-understanding (social freedom as set out in Hegel 1973).
- 110 Whereas 1) describes negative freedom and 2) represents a transitional step, 3), 4) and 5) represent positive conceptions of freedom. A concrete example should help to illustrate this.
- 111 1) On the first understanding of freedom, I am free when no one stops me or will impose official punishment on me when I attempt to interrupt my work to get coffee or a drink of water.

- 112 2) On the second understanding, I am free if, on reflection, though (1) is true, I reflect a little and decide that I do not really want to give in to the immediate impulse to get coffee or water.
- 113 3) Being free on the third understanding means acting in accordance with my considered priorities, such that my action expresses what kind of person I am and want to be: “I am not the sort of person that interrupts my work lightly.” This involves more than simply a preference ordering: my desires (in the sense of generating consistency or a local order); it calls for the strong evaluation of my desires from a more long-term or fundamental perspective that relates to my identity (Taylor 1985a, 15-44), bringing in authenticity as a criterion of assessment
- 114 4) Only the fourth case brings an overarching and no longer purely internal moment into play: I am free under the aspect of rational desire when I refrain from interrupting my work on the grounds that it is incompatible with what could be rationally willed by anyone in my situation.
- 115 5) On the fifth understanding, my freedom depends on realizing those desires of mine that accord with the social institutions that make the realization of my freedom possible in the first place. Simply interrupting one’s work to get coffee or water is not only incompatible with the social role of a worker of my sort as I interpret it and as it is important for my identity; it is also incompatible with the objective meaning of the role and function of such work. I am free in this role precisely because I can realize something in this role that is important to the social institutions that undergird my freedom.
- 116 Seen in the light of this sequence of conceptions, a purely negative conception of freedom seems peculiarly thin. According to Taylor (1985b), it is in tension with itself, as it works with an underdescribed idea of the chooser whose choices are interfered with. In response, advocates of liberalism such as Berlin object that the positive notion of freedom is not only vague but has paternalistic if not authoritarian and totalitarian consequences. It would allow us to force people to live in accordance with reason in the name of their own freedom at the same time as we mask this force behind the concept of positive freedom. Against this emphasis on the “sociality of freedom”, advocates of a negative conception of freedom insist among other things that freedom also consists precisely in doing what does not agree with the demands of the social order and its institutions and roles. In response, it is urged that negative freedom is incomplete, because there can be no adequate individual freedom in the mere co-existence of individuals alongside one another, but rather only in the context of a system of social cooperation in which social institutions adequately embody the idea of freedom (in ways set out in Sec. 6).

117 The moral of this criticism of negative freedom cannot be that we should throw it overboard, but rather that it needs to be situated in a broader context in which the complementary meaning of positive freedom can also emerge. Accordingly, we should see the various aspects of freedom distinguished above as cumulative stages or levels of a more complex conception of freedom, rather than simply a list of independently comprehensible or mutually incompatible concepts of freedom. We are deceiving ourselves if we think that we are already free merely in the absence of external hindrances: in these circumstances we can also be unfree if we are in thrall to our drives or involuntary impulses, or if we cannot relate to the social institutions that shape our own lives as ones that we can make our own and that can thus enable our freedom.

118 3.3 Non-alienation

119 Alienation is the inability to establish a minimally satisfactory relationship of identification with or personal engagement with other human beings, things, social institutions and thereby also—as the theory of alienation emphasizes—oneself (Jaeggi 2014). An alienated world presents itself to individuals as insignificant and meaningless, as rigidified or impoverished, as a world that is not "one's own," in which one is not "at home" or over which one can have no influence. For instance, as Karl Marx argued, we must take seriously the danger that workers experience their labor as alienating. An alienated person becomes a stranger to herself; she no longer experiences herself as an "actively effective subject" but as a "passive object" at the mercy of unknown forces (Israel & Maass 1985). One can speak of alienation "wherever individuals do not find themselves in their own actions" (Habermas 1993). Thus understood, alienation does not describe the simple absence of something, but rather a defective relation.

120 Another essential characteristic of alienation is that one can be alienated only from those things or relations that are nonetheless in some sense "one's own." When we find ourselves in relations of alienation, we always seem in a complicated way to be both victim and perpetrator at the same time. The social roles in which someone can be considered "alienated from themselves" are roles played by that same person. Desires that we doubt are really "ours" are so confusing, precisely because they are at the same time undoubtedly our desires. And the social institutions that seem rigidified and alien to us are the same institutions that we have created and that we reproduce. The specific characteristic of "alienated relations" is that we have no power over what we ourselves are doing.

121 Alienation weaves together two different elements: firstly, a *loss of power*: alienated relations are relations in which we as subjects are disempowered. And secondly, a *loss of meaning*: an alienated world is a senseless world, a world we don't experience as meaningful or relate to in a meaningful way.

122 If alienation involves a lacking relationship, overcoming that lack requires at least a psychological appropriation: making something one's own. The theory of alienation helps us diagnose various forms of disturbance in one's ability to see our relations with others or with our social context as one's own. On this understanding of alienation, there is a direct conceptual connection to freedom: insofar as our freedom presupposes that we can take ownership of what we do and the conditions in which we do it—that we can make them our own—overcoming alienation is a precondition for realizing freedom.

123 3.4 Solidarity

124 As the African proverb reminds us, “rain does not fall on one roof alone” (Manser 2007). Solidarity can refer to a sense of belonging, a readiness to help, or the value of social responsibility. Given this ambiguity, it is not self-evident that solidarity is a marker for social progress. One could argue, to the contrary, that the transition from solidarity- and community-based subsistence to welfare-state arrangements informed by principles of justice constitutes social progress. On the other hand, solidarity is frequently invoked as the motivational basis of welfare-state arrangements. And some notion of social cooperation seems to be in the background of any principle of distributive justice, even if this fact is seldom acknowledged (Rawls 1999; Brudney 1999). Without denying that solidarity can have such instrumental value, this section argues that solidarity can be seen as a basic value, i.e. that an improvement in solidarity is a kind of social progress.

125 What exactly, is at stake when we invoke “solidarity”? According to the sociologist Emile Durkheim (1964), “solidarity is what prevents the breakdown of society.” Solidarity here refers to a state of affairs within a group of people or society that is characterized by mutual attachment, connection or simply (objectively given) dependency. “Solidarity” can also refer to being disposed to act in a way that reflects one's mutual attachments. Solidarity so understood is associated with the idea that we somehow 'owe to each other,' something we should do and expect each other to do – at least within particular relations and in specific situations. It is this second, normative aspect of solidarity that leads to the most controversial questions.

126 We need to distinguish relations of solidarity from other kinds of social relations. Like friendship, solidarity can be based on a mutual and mutually recognized feeling of attachment and some sort of connection. But friendship is a more specific and stronger emotional bond. Friendship is a face-to-face relation, whereas we can form solidaristic bonds with distant people and even with strangers (on the value of the broader class of interpersonal relationships, see Box 2.3). Consider solidarity as it evolves in social movements. Here solidarity is mediated through a common cause that unites a group of people because it stands for something they each identify with. Solidarity, construed in this way, is nicely described by Steve Biko (1978): “We

regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap warranting endless competition among us but as a deliberate ... community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer to the varied problems of life.”

- 127 The importance of identification demonstrates that solidarity should not be equated with the shallower common interest of a coalition. To be sure, solidarity may be based on common interest, for example the common interest of workers during a strike. Yet solidarity seems to express a deeper commitment than is necessary for a coalition, which is opportunistically formed in order to achieve a certain goal. One doesn't change solidaristic commitments the way one changes sides in coalitions when the constellation of interests shifts. Moreover, many of the attitudes that we consider solidaristic don't seem to be directed to realizing individual self-interest, and may even be characterized by a willingness to make sacrifices. This suggests an affinity between solidarity and loyalty; but solidarity is a nonhierarchical relation, whereas loyalty can have a hierarchical structure. Moreover, solidarity is more closely connected to a sense of legitimacy. It often evolves out of the sense that a certain cause, such as that of a workers' movement, is justified; and it often disappears once we lose our confidence that the cause is justified.
- 128 Solidarity, then, is something like mutual and mutually aware support among people as they work together in pursuit of common goals considered worthwhile and legitimate. Given this emphasis on the importance of a common goal, we can see that the existence of a common background among people relating face-to-face, such as we find in tight-knit communities, does not guarantee solidarity. On the contrary, small communities can be unsolidaristic. Conversely, there are many instances of the “solidarity of strangers.” The decisive question is under which conditions the members—the “we”—of a certain community are able to relate to each other and to act in a solidaristic way. There are two crucial distinctions then between solidarity and communality. Solidarity need not evolve naturally. It is often an artificial bond between individuals, one that is not simply given but created. As such it is a relation *among individuals*. It does not presuppose the unconditional fusion of individuals into a community. In modern societies solidarity typically evolves in its institutionalized form, via social rights, citizenship, and the related welfare state institutions. But conversely, and in addition, these institutions, in order to be supported, rely on solidarity.
- 129 Having distinguished solidarity from friendship, loyalty, and other forms of coalition, we should avoid conflating solidarity with the less specific disposition of being ready to help (see Sec. 4.5 on beneficence and generosity). If we think of solidaristic motivations as an expression of common goals, shared projects, or a common fate, they are distinct from compassion in two significant respects. First, as we have indicated, solidarity, relying on inclusion,

involves a kind of mutual awareness wherein one relates one's situation to the situation of the others. Acting out of solidarity means standing up for each other because one recognizes "one's own fate in the fate of the other." Pity or compassion for the other, in contrast, do not necessarily relate the other's to one's own situation, except in the very vague sense of being a vulnerable human being oneself. Most importantly, compassion and altruism are likely to mark the relation between unequals, the relation between those who need and those who provide help. They presuppose and may perpetuate a one-sided dependency and therefore an asymmetrical relation. In contrast, solidarity is, at its core, a symmetrical, mutual and reciprocal relation.

- 130 Although the symmetry and the sharing of common goals conceptually mark off solidarity from humanitarian generosity and beneficence, in practice, such values may overlap and build on one another. For example, external efforts to organize the victims of an earthquake to bring their complaints to the municipal authorities, posing fundamental questions of urban planning and poverty, can harness humanitarian aid to build solidarity. Earthquake victims who might have begun as passive recipients of humanitarian help become symmetrically related comrades in a common struggle. The development of modern welfare states has involved a similar transition. Overcoming pre-modern institutions of charity that provided individuals subsistence on an asymmetrical basis, the social rights that are the basis of modern welfare states express a commitment to solidarity, for they are meant to be inclusive, treating people as members having equal rights.
- 131 These considerations have an important consequence for the questions raised at the beginning of this subsection. If, on the one hand, solidarity is understood as (at least possibly) a solidarity of strangers, and not necessarily bound up with close-knit communities and face-to-face relations, then it can be understood as potentially involving a wide range of different modes of social aggregation, from the fluid sort exemplified by a social movement or a spontaneously evolving activity to the rather static kind of aggregation supported by a state's legally enacted social guarantees. Sometimes, it can be expressed simply in paying one's taxes, if this is done in the democratic awareness that doing so helps us all work together to provide the infrastructure we need in order to live in and as a society, and to organize the kind of social cooperation on which we all depend.
- 132 But how should we understand the acclaimed symmetrical character of solidarity?
- 133 Conceptualizing solidarity as symmetrical may be quite convincing in cases such as a strike movement in a labor struggle; here, the workers stand by each other and give each other mutual support in a joint activity. In this context, solidarity is, indeed, a symmetrical relation. But in some of the cases mentioned above, symmetry is less obvious. Being solidaristic with earthquake

victims in helping organize efforts to galvanize the local authorities into effective action, for example, doesn't begin as a mutual but (for the time being) as a rather one-sided effort. These initial organizers may have no basis for expecting any immediate payoff.

134 In such cases, there is nonetheless a kind of enlarged reciprocity at work, a reciprocity that is not meant to be a simple exchange relation. The reason for solidarity is the belief that the success and wellbeing of others is important to ensure the flourishing of projects with which I myself identify. Emphasizing the symmetrical and reciprocal character of solidarity thus does not imply denying or underestimating its altruistic dimension. Rather, the most distinctive, attractive, and challenging feature of solidarity is that it seems somehow to transcend the very dichotomy between altruistic and egoistic motivations. Despite its reciprocity, the motivation for solidarity cannot be reduced to the enlightened self-interest of rationally calculating, egoistic individuals. And despite the readiness-to-help involved, this is neither based on compassion alone nor on altruism as such. Neither is the symmetry involved in solidarity the self-interested symmetry and reciprocity of an insurance model, where everyone tries to lower his own risk by sharing it with others.

135 Solidarity, then, is a shared set of attitudes or dispositions that individuals recognize or are aware of in one another, that motivate them to cooperate in a shared endeavor, and that dispose them to value that cooperation for its own sake. Achieving solidarity, while very valuable for the endeavors to which it is harnessed, seems to be itself of irreducible value. Solidarity, in which people cooperate with others in ways that accept those others as equals and that jointly express that they care about this cooperation for its own sake, is one of humanity's highest achievements.

136 **Box 2.3: Social relations**

If social progress is understood as the qualitative and quantitative expansion of what matters to people, then the recent happiness studies provide valuable information. The findings are consistent with those from behavioral economics, neuroscience and evolutionary biology: human beings are more pro-social than previously imagined.

The happiness literature draws not only on the survey information about reported happiness and life-satisfaction mentioned in §3.1.2 but also on objective data on well-being (suicides, mental diseases, psychotropic drugs and alcohol addiction). The message emerging from this literature is that several things matter for well-being, including material standards of life; but the quantity and, above all, the quality of social and intimate relationships plays a major role in shaping people's happiness. "Relational goods" (Guy and Sugden 2005) are a component of social capital, which also encompasses measures of trust in institutions, voters turnout etc. Individuals with more and better relationships are happier (Bruni and Stanca, 2008; Helliwell, 2006; Helliwell and Putnam, 2004).

In several important ways, economic growth can interfere with relational goods. In the long run, average well-being is more likely to increase in countries where relational goods are increasing rather than in countries where the economy is growing (Bartolini and Sarracino 2014). In contrast, the most celebrated exemplars of growth in recent decades—the US and China—share similar patterns of declining subjective well-being (Stevenson and Wolfers 2008; Brockman et al. 2009), paralleled by a significant spread of mental illnesses, especially anxiety and depression (Case and Deaton, 2015; Diener and Seligman, 2004; Twenge, 2000; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). In these countries, the decline of well-being is largely explained by two driving forces. The first is the growing relational poverty exhibited by the increase in solitude, distrust, familial instability, generational cleavages, and the decrease in solidarity, honesty, social and civic participation (Bartolini et al. 2013; Brockman et al. 2009; Bartolini and Sarracino 2015). The second engine of growing dissatisfaction is the upsurge of social comparisons, i.e. the increasing dependency of the satisfaction for one's economic achievements on the achievements of those s/he compares with (Brockman et al. 2009; Bartolini and Sarracino 2015). A social crisis can be an engine of economic growth. In fact, money offers many forms of protection—real or illusory—from relational poverty. If the elderly are alone and ill, the solution is a caregiver. If our children are alone, the solution is a baby-sitter. If we are afraid, we can protect our possessions with alarm systems, security doors, private guards, etc.

Responding to the decay of a society's relational goods and infrastructure by relying on such private goods can yield a vicious cycle. Becoming accustomed to enjoying more private goods induces us to work and produce more so as to be able to afford them, thereby generating economic growth. The economic growth generated by these mechanisms can in turn fuel relational decay. Indeed, more economic activity can result in less time, attention and energy devoted to relationships. When growth does have this decaying effect, a process is generated in which growth fuels relational decay and this feeds growth. The outcome of this self-fueling mechanism is a growing affluence of what is private and an increasing scarcity of what is common: relations and the environment.

There is thus a possible dark side to the positive story about economic growth. It is the story of relational goods that are free for one generation, which become scarce and costly for the next generation and eventually luxury goods for the generation following that. From this perspective, growth is not an attraction; it is only a symptom of the erosion of social relationships. It is thus crucial to account for the relational goods enjoyed in a society separately from accounting for its economic growth.

137 3.5 Esteem and recognition

138 A long tradition, going back to Aristotle, sees the good opinion of others as a central motivating force in social life. People generally like to be approved of by others; and will do much to avoid being disapproved of. The precise term that is used for this phenomenon varies among users. But there is a family of related attitudes and statuses of this sort - esteem, approval, honor, glory, respect, repute; and their negatives - disesteem, disapproval, dishonor, disrespect, ill-repute. All depend (perhaps in slightly different ways) on the attitudes of others; and all are such that the positive versions (and avoidance of the negative versions) are general objects of desire.

- 139 This being so, a preference-based notion of well-being (as set out in 3.1.2 above) would suggest that one aspect of social progress would be increases in the level of esteem within a society (and decreases in disesteem). However, esteem may be resistant to aggregate increase in this way. In many contexts, esteem seems to be indirectly “positional”, because whether one does well or badly in some activity is typically assessed by reference to how well people do on average do. So, if to be “honest as this world goes is to be as one picked out of ten thousand” (as Hamlet claims) then being reliably honest will earn considerable esteem. If, on the other hand, one lives in a very honest society then even modest lapses in truthfulness will tend to give rise to disesteem. Esteem accrues, so the thought is, by reference to a standard which is itself socially determined—determined roughly by what performance people expect of others. If that is so, then there will be limited scope for increasing the total level of esteem across society: if everyone increases her level of honesty then that simply tends to raise the prevailing standard and all receive much the same level of esteem as before. One might applaud the increased honesty; one might even think that it is an instance of social progress. But it is a contributor to social progress *in itself* and not because of a general increase in the esteem that people enjoy. One can increase one’s esteem only by improving one’s performance vis-à-vis others—and that means that any increase in my esteem is bought at someone else’s expense.
- 140 This observation suggests that the main contribution that esteem can make to social progress lies in creating incentives for better performance in arenas where performance contributes to social progress directly (Brennan and Pettit 2004). So, for example, the desire for esteem among their peers may make judges more scrupulous in upholding the requirements of the law. Equally, the desire for esteem among academics may induce them to greater effort and conscientiousness in the arena of research; and thereby lead to greater levels of scientific progress.
- 141 However, the desire for esteem and associated peer pressure may also work for ill. Much depends on the values that prevail within a society – and more especially within the “ponds” that people occupy. Esteem-related motives seem likely to be in play in motivating anti-social behavior among street gangs or terrorist groups, for example. And esteem forces can also be involved in sustaining social hierarchy. If it is routine in a given society to afford honor (esteem/respect) to individuals on the basis of their birth, or membership of a “class” or caste, then the forces of esteem seem objectionable on egalitarian grounds. In such cases, action might be appropriate on two fronts: on the one hand, to change the values on which the esteem in question depends; on the other, to undermine the operation of esteem itself (as one might through suppressing information about the attributes in question).

142 To be an object of esteem (or disesteem) one must be recognized as ‘qualifying’ for evaluation. Esteem is an intrinsically human phenomenon. One might admire a view; but one doesn’t esteem it. One might fear a poisonous snake; but one doesn’t hold it in contempt. This inherently “human” property, and the idea of mutual recognition among persons on which esteem depends, is deeply linked to the fundamental ideal of equal moral standing set out in Section 2. Completely to lack such standing—to be treated routinely as ‘invisible’ for the purposes of generating esteem (and disesteem)—is to lack moral recognition. The lack of such recognition is generally mortifying and almost invariably indicates a wrong. In that sense, there is something arguably even worse for someone than to be disesteemed: the situation in which one is non-estimable. The “untouchables” (Dalits) in India until recently suffered such an extreme fate. Short of invisibility is failure to be recognized as an equal. While servants in a servant society can sometimes be esteemed in some ways by those they serve, they are not treated as having equal moral standing. The “lower classes” might lack it in a highly hierarchical society. Recognition in this sense is we think also an element in well-being; and it may also be worth seeking for its own sake. But recognition has a value that goes beyond its contribution to well-being. There is a basic moral requirement that each be afforded recognition of this kind. This requirement is basic not only for the moral reasons set out in Section 2, but also because it concerns the social mechanisms whereby one becomes the very person who one is (Hegel 1977). It will be a contribution to social progress if there is more extensive such recognition rather than less (Honneth 1995).[8]

143 Increasing recognition has two dimensions: one involves promoting the extension of the relevant kind of moral status to larger numbers in society; the other involves extending the *contexts* in which such recognition is afforded. This latter dimension involves the fact that recognition can be specific to domains. Women might be recognized at the cocktail party but not in professional conversation. Graduate students might have full recognition in graduate seminars but be ‘second-class citizens’ in staff seminars. And such recognition is not a zero-sum business: one person’s recognition does not necessarily reduce anyone else’s. Wider such recognition (in both dimensions) is something to be pursued under the social progress agenda.

144

Box 2.4: Gender equality

Esteem and recognition matter to everybody. They are, however, particularly important for exploited, segregated and undervalued groups—even those, like women, that are not numerical minorities. Members of such groups typically have to work much harder to achieve a given level of recognition, and their activities, abilities and achievements tend to be treated as unimportant. The cause of all this tends to be not just self-conscious, self-serving bias on the part of the dominant group but also “implicit bias” (Brownstein 2016) on the part of anyone. This value-blindness sometimes extends to the very value of the group members as persons. Women, particularly minority women can suffer very extreme forms of aggression, including battery, rape, torture, sexual kidnapping, trafficking and slavery. More frequently, and like other members of oppressed groups, they also suffer systematic “microaggressions” (Pierce

1970) such as interruptions, dismissive, disrespectful or aggressive replies, or mockery, that cause its recipients to feel they do not count. The resulting loss of self-esteem can in turn lead to the confirmation of stereotypes because people give up or because they underperform due to the impact the loss of confidence has on performance (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009).

Some argue that attempts to break this vicious circle by deploying affirmative action or quotas can be self-defeating, as it can cause everyone to think of the benefit of these policies as falling accidentally on the undeserving. However, the history of *affirmative action for men*, particularly white men, shows (i) that it was extremely beneficial to them, and (ii) that the departure point is not pure meritocracy (Gheus 2014). As Catherine Mackinnon (1988, 36) famously put it: "Virtually every quality that distinguishes men from women is already affirmatively compensated in this society. Men's physiology defines most sports, their needs define auto and health insurance coverage, their societally designed biographies define workplace expectations and successful career patterns, their perspectives and concerns define quality in scholarship, their experiences and obsessions define merit, their objectification of life defines art, their military service defines citizenship, their presence defines family, their inability to get along with each other—their wars and rulerships—defines history, their image defines god, and their genitals define sex. For each of their differences from women, what amounts to an affirmative action plan is in effect, otherwise known as the structure and values of American society."

By contrast, *affirmative action for women* and other minorities has proven to be effective at creating new role models, challenging stereotypes, restoring confidence and incorporating the perspectives and concerns of minorities in the public imagination and agenda. In the case of women, however, it is important for such policies to be accompanied by measures such as paternity leave, subsidized childcare, equal pay and particularly, the harmonization of school and office hours.

145 3.6 Cultural goods

146 The progress of human societies is not adequately measured solely by looking at the achievements enjoyed by those currently alive. Cultural achievements—knowledge, insights, modes of creative and artistic expression, and means of understanding—deserve a separate place on the ledger of social progress because they contribute not only to present well-being but also to future well-being. And some authors contend that they are valuable in their own right, over and above the contribution they make to individual well-being, as inheritances that belong to society as a whole (Taylor, 1995). Consider religion, for example. Doubtless, religious activities contribute to the well-being of participants, at least as those participants perceive their well-being; but instead of treating these activities primarily as means to their own well-being, they typically treat them as ends in themselves. Or consider the intellectual life. Although academic pursuits often promote technical progress and help satisfy people's curiosity, the intellectuals themselves (and the universities and departments they inhabit) typically treat expanding knowledge as an end in itself. The same holds for artistic pursuits. The thought is that the quality of a community's musical life, say, is an independent object

of value, not to be assessed either in terms of the total amount of money people are prepared to spend on it, or the number of votes it can muster in determining government policies.

147 Recognizing the contribution of cultural achievements to the future is important in part because they are the fruits of many generations' work and cannot be remade overnight. Many cultural artifacts, along with cultures themselves, are fragile. To be sure, in the flux of human history, many specific forms of cultural expression and items of human knowledge will inevitably—and sometimes thankfully—be lost. The collective maintenance of human memory, however, seems necessary to meaningful human progress. In the words of the Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "A people without memory are in danger of losing their soul." The so-called Dark Ages experienced in Europe for almost a millennium following the fall of the Roman Empire illustrates the devastating toll of allowing scientific and cultural memory to be destroyed. It is largely thanks to the careful and active stewardship, cultivation, and improvement of ancient learning in the libraries of the Arab world that the scientific and cultural benefits to humanity of this older learning were not entirely erased. This is one reason for the kind of effort engaged in by UNESCO to designate and help protect sites and monuments around the globe as World Heritage Sites.

148 The built, written, composed, and otherwise wrought monuments of world culture are worth preserving and appreciating in their own right; but in addition to working to protect and preserve the knowledge and the cultural forms and achievements bequeathed to it by the past, societies must work actively to cultivate and build upon their heritage. They must pass on to their descendants as full a range of knowledge and as broad and deep an acquaintance with and engagement in the tremendous variety of modes of human understanding and of expressions of the human spirit as they reasonably can. For the children now alive, the value of these efforts will show up, we may be confident, in the well-being and the freedoms that they enjoy; but for the children and grandchildren of those children, this kind of social effort has an importance that transcends its effects on those who are now alive.

149 **3.7 Environmental values**

150 For mainstream ethical traditions of the West, humans are the main focus of moral consideration, and they have no direct responsibilities to nonhuman beings. These ethical traditions often fail to assign intrinsic value to the environment, to the extent that they advocate that the natural environment has instrumental value only. Similarly, although some scholars, institutions and organizations have persuasively criticized mainstream economic growth theorists, who have defined development in economic terms, and used narrow economic indicators such as GDP to measure human wellbeing, they

themselves have adopted a human-centered approach to social progress. For instance, the UN General Assembly supported a human-centered approach to the value of social progress and development. This was reflected in its Declarations on Social Progress and Development in 1969 (General Assembly resolution 2542(XXIV)) and the Right to Development in 1986 (General Assembly resolution 41/128) respectively. In 1969, the assembly stressed that “each Government had the primary role and ultimate responsibility of ensuring the social progress and well-being of its people” (Article 8). This does not mean that the UN organizations have totally ignored environmental issues in other documents.

- 151 What is obvious is that human societies cannot flourish in isolation from the environment. Robust social progress requires a healthy natural environment and the protection of different natural resources. Yet, respect for the natural environment should go beyond its instrumental value for human well-being.
- 152 Many contemporary environmental philosophers have defended the intrinsic value of various aspects of the natural environment. Some of these arguments build on human valuations; some do not. The latter arguments present an objectivist version of nonanthropocentric intrinsic value theory (Taylor 1986, Rolston 1988, Attfield 1994, 2003, 2016); the former arguments develop an intersubjectivist version (Callicott, 1989).
- 153 Some of these philosophers argue that non-human animals, at least those with neurophysiological capacity for experiencing well-being and its opposite, have moral standing. On all versions of this non-anthropocentric view, non-human creatures have intrinsic value independently of human interests. On objectivist versions, this value is also seen as independent of human valuations.
- 154 Biocentrists go farther, as they hold that all living beings have intrinsic value. Creatures that lack feelings have the capacities to grow, flourish, reproduce and self-repair. And everything that is intrinsically valuable ought to be the object of moral concern.
- 155 Other environmental ethicists have extended the attribution of intrinsic value even beyond living things. For ecocentrists all natural entities are morally considerable. Some ecocentrists ascribe nonanthropocentric intrinsic value to species and ecosystems although there are several variations among their claims. Thus, for Holmes Rolston III (1988), intrinsic values in nature are objective properties of the world, as nature is a value generator independently of human beings. Such value discovered by humans already exists in nature. Rolston recognizes both individualistic and holistic values. He notes that every organism possesses a good of its own, and has its own value. Some living beings are more valuable than others because of their nature. As a form of life,

a species has its own value, as it defends itself. Rolston, thus, argues that individual animals, species, and ecosystems all have their own kind of intrinsic value and merit appropriate respect (Rolston 2002).

- 156 Eugene C. Hargrove for his part holds the view that anthropocentric and nonanthropocentric values are complementary and interrelated. Hargrove's conception of intrinsic value is pluralistic. For him, there is both a subjective and objective version. Animals and plants have objective intrinsic value because they are ends that use the environment as a means. Plants have nonanthropocentric instrumental values for animals. We can value plants and animals subjectively by valuing them intrinsically just as we value art objects. Nonliving objects are intrinsically valuable to living beings that require them for their survival.
- 157 Hargrove (1992) doubted that ordinary people would accept the existence of intrinsic natural values unless such a belief was part of their cultural heritage. On this account, he suggested a strategic, temporary retreat to what he called "'weak anthropocentrism' (the view, as I define it, that *anthropocentric* does not simply mean instrumental)" (1992:191). But Hargrove's pessimism now appears outdated. People's views have evolved since he made this suggestion; and today, many people (including animal welfarists and most environmentalists) do care about the good of animals and plants for their own sake.
- 158 This compass takes the view that the natural environment has both instrumental and intrinsic value. Unlike egalitarian biocentrists, however, we believe that living beings do not all have the same intrinsic value. There can be more and less intrinsic value, degrees and types of intrinsic value. A monkey has more intrinsic value than an ant because of having more sophisticated capabilities. We further believe that some non-human animals have interests—a point to which we will return in §5.5. "Having interests" does not require having emotions or attitudes or other forms of higher consciousness. It is difficult to deny that creatures capable of health have interests (or an interest) in being healthy, and in not being injured or beset by disease. One may mention apes, dolphins, pigs, dogs and other higher mammals. We of course concede that no non-human animals have the right to worship, to go to school, vote, or to publish their own biographies and histories. Other animals may not think abstractly about their place in the natural environment and their relationship to others; but this fact provides no basis for holding that animals have no rights and interests. What it does suggest is that humans differ from other animals in having cumulative transmissible cultures of degree and kind found in no other species—a capacity that flows from our radically richer linguistic capacities. On this basis, what we may conclude is that a human is more valuable than a monkey.

159 In asserting the intrinsic value of other animals and ecosystems, we by no means mean to deny that they have instrumental value. The flourishing of nonhuman beings and of the natural environment contributes to human lives' value in many ways. There is no doubt that social progress requires an ecologically sustainable planet. We do think, however, that accepting the thesis defended here that we should protect wild things for their own sakes will also result in a richer and better life for humans. In promoting human social wellbeing, we do well to have a positive relationship with the natural environment and its inhabitants.

160 To have that, we need to pay attention to all dimensions of value, and accordingly to celebrate and protect nature. Various indigenous communities in the world have developed such a more respectful relationship to nature. They believe that humans are a part of nature. Accordingly, for them, it is obvious that the natural environment and ecosystems deserve moral consideration and protection, including those elements of it that provide no economic value. They thus recognize both the instrumental and intrinsic value of the natural environment—a position that, as stated above, is perfectly consistent.

161 3.8. Equality

162 Social progress is involved in the *distribution* of the things of value (well-being, freedom, esteem, etc.) as well as their aggregate levels. Much of our discussion of such things falls under the rubric of “principles” rather than “values” because a central aspect of the distributional agenda is concerned with the obligations people have towards one another and the implications of such obligations for the design of institutions and the structure of public policies. But there are many factors that bear on the distribution of things of value that are not policy- or institution-determined. Changes in technology for example can have significant distributional upshots (think of the effect of machines on the importance of human strength as a determinant of productivity and hence of the gender distribution of income); and any such changes that make for greater equality are surely to be applauded. In other words, equality is a value and any measure of social progress must attend to it.

163 Consider for example the claim, associated most recently with Thomas Piketty (2014), that most of the benefits of economic growth in the last forty years have accrued to the richest one percent of the population in many western countries (the U.S. particularly). The diagnosis of this phenomenon is a matter of ongoing contention; but there is reasonable consensus that one of the causal factors has been a change in the structure of taxation policies. Nevertheless, it seems that even under the best of taxation regimes, some such increase in income inequality would have occurred.

- 164 Any plausible moral compass ought to expose such changes as an instance of social *regress*. Furthermore, even if one believed that policy change to ameliorate the worst effects of such changes were not required as a matter of *justice*, such policy changes are nevertheless properly regarded as highly desirable and worthy of widespread support.
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165 4. Basic principles

- 166 Having elaborated the different values that we take as relevant to the assessment of moral progress, we now turn to the principles relevant to the pursuit of moral progress. As we argued in §2.1.2, principles, and not merely values, need to be considered because principles register the importance of moral side constraints and morally protected options and because they reflect the importance of process: of how decisions are reached, how these decisions affect the allocation of goods and ills, and how actions are carried out. The principles set out in this section are not always compatible with one another in practice, but neither do they necessarily clash. One way that their potential clashing might be eased would be to see different ones of them as applying to different domains. For example, someone might hold that one principle holds across national borders, while another principle governs our relations with our fellow citizens. We will discuss this idea further in section 6.4 on global justice. It is also possible to hold that different principles apply to different types of social problems: the principles most relevant for dealing with climate change are not necessarily the principles most relevant for dealing with poverty. In practice, however, there is disagreement both about whether each of these principles is plausible and, if not, which of the principles is correct.

- 167 The principles relevant in a given context can have implications for which values are accorded weight, and how much weight they are accorded, if any. Therefore, identification of relevant principles is critical to the evaluation of social states. We need to consider not only how social states relate to values, but also how they relate to the various principles that order and weight these values.

168 4.1 Branches of justice

- 169 In discussing principles, we note important distinctions among three branches of justice. Justice is generally understood to be about what people are owed in different contexts. *Reparative* justice aims to compensate people or to correct for past wrongs and/or their continuing legacies. *Criminal* justice considers the

appropriate treatment for people who have wronged others. *Social* (or *distributive*) justice explores how at least some of the good things and bad things in life should be distributed among people.

170 Reparative justice and criminal justice each apply only in the context of wrongdoing. Only because there are wars, coercion, fraud, assaults, and corruption have societies developed systems of punishment and repair. Perhaps one day, human societies will progress to the point that war and violence are left behind. By contrast, problems of distributive justice arise as an inevitable part of the human condition—specifically, that we cooperate to produce our lives together under conditions of moderate scarcity.

171 4.2 Basic rights

172 The most uncontroversial principle for social justice can be understood in terms of the claim that each individual has a claim on a set of resources and freedoms that would allow him or her to live a minimally decent life. The strongest language we have for expressing this claim is the language of human rights. There are many theories about the bases of human rights, but it is not necessary for people to agree on these theories in order to agree that human beings have certain entitlements.

173 Since the adoption in 1948 by the United Nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, every individual is seen as having a set of rights against his or her state, and the international community itself is seen as having obligations to ensure that human rights are respected if the state is unable or unwilling to do so.

174 Human rights provide a powerful framework for evaluating social progress. One can measure different societies by how well the human rights of their members are secured. There are three important points to note about using human rights as a metric of social progress. First, human rights set a threshold level of attainment. Once individuals cross the human rights threshold, this metric takes no further account of their relative positions. Thus a human rights perspective is indifferent between two societies whose members are all above its threshold, but where one society is twice as wealthy as the other. Second, while there is considerable overlap in the understanding of human rights among different societies, some rights seem more important than others. Ensuring that everyone has adequate nutrition, for example, appears to be much more important than ensuring the right to paid vacation time, although both of these are listed in human rights documents. It is thus difficult to use human rights as a principle of justice without having some way of differentiating the importance and relevance to practice of the various human rights. Third, since rights are entitlements and not simply good things that we can simply choose not to honor, they are not meant to be identical to what people prefer.

175 4.3 Distributive justice

- 176 Different theories of distributive justice articulate different conceptions of what distributions are acceptable as fair, as well as different conceptions of which values are to be distributed. Some theories of justice entail that a society needs to distribute liberties fairly between people; other theories see justice as obtaining when there is a fair distribution of human welfare; still others emphasize the distribution of resources (regardless of their welfare effects).
- 177 Theories of justice not only differ in their distributional metrics, they also differ in their conception of fairness. We will first discuss libertarianism and different variants of equality of opportunity. We then move to approaches that focus on outcomes. In that context we will return to how basic rights approaches relate to the more demanding notions of justice and how they can be made operational. At the end of this subsection, considerations of efficiency and maximization enter the scene. They will be further worked out in the next subsection. Note that this subsection is about the content of distributive justice, not about the social processes that may lead to more or less of it: in the previous section we have argued that solidarity, in addition to being a basic value on its own, also can motivate the fuller realization of justice.

178 4.3.1 Libertarianism

- 179 Libertarians argue that securing basic rights (see §4.2)—among which they give property rights pride of place—suffices to generate an adequate account of distributive justice, or “justice in holdings” (Nozick 1974, 150). They hold that justice consists in respecting people’s rights, particularly rights to economic liberty—to hold, use and transfer private property including the means of production—and, therefore, that taxation of the rich to benefit the poor is generally unjust. Within the libertarian family there is a distinction between (i) those, such as Nozick, who hold that the right to private property is a fundamental moral right and (ii) those who argue for the protection of private property because of the beneficial consequences that arise from individuals securely holding, using and exchanging it (Tomasi, 2012). Here we focus on the former, non-instrumental, interpretation.
- 180 For Nozick, each of us has a moral right of self-ownership: each individual owns herself in the sense that others are not morally permitted to use her body or mind without her consent. Self-ownership libertarians are less concerned with whether people enjoy certain goods (as in the human rights or the capability approach, described in the previous section); their emphasis is on preventing certain kinds of interference by the state or individuals. They claim that it would be morally wrong to force A to save B even if the costs to A were very small. Similarly, if an individual receives income from an employer in

exchange for work, then, provided the employer was entitled to her holdings of resources, the transfer is just. If the individual's income is now taxed, then, in effect, the government makes her work for someone else. On this view, income taxation is equivalent to a kind of forced slavery (Nozick 1974, chap. 7).

- 181 Many libertarians would argue that there is no injustice in the fact that people starve, so long as their starving is not the result of illegitimately interfering with their rights. Self-ownership libertarians claim that their view is an interpretation of individual freedom. At least since this kind of view was lampooned by the French novelist Anatole France (1900, chap. 7) as saying, in effect, that the rich and the poor are equally free to dine at expensive restaurants, this claim has come in for considerable criticism for being merely formal (van Parijs, 1995) or for overlooking the various ways in which lack of money makes one unfree (Cohen, 2011, chaps. 7-8; see §3.2).
- 182 Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, self-ownership libertarianism also has a left branch (Vallentyne, Steiner and Otsuka, 2005). Left-libertarians insist on the importance of self-ownership, but state that natural resources should be considered as the common property of all human beings. This means that all human beings should share in the income that is generated by the use of these natural resources. This reasoning has become one of the dominant justifications for a so-called basic income: an income which is granted to everybody without any work condition.
- 183 **4.3.2 Equality of opportunity, luck egalitarianism, equality of outcomes**
- 184 Continuing with the example of Anatole France, it is important to realize that the owner of the restaurant could seek to exclude people on the basis of their ethnic origin or gender, and for a libertarian the owner would be free to do so. The same holds for more important activities than dining in an expensive restaurant, such as having access to jobs or to health care. There is near consensus that such discrimination cannot be tolerated in a good society.
- 185 This non-discrimination condition is the narrowest interpretation that can be given to the notion of equality of opportunity. A broader interpretation goes beyond non-discrimination by stating that all children should get the same chances in life, independent of the socio-economic status of their parents. This notion of equality of opportunity is an “ex ante” concept: the ideal is to put all young adults in the same position at the starting gate of adult life without concern for the outcomes they will reach as adults. It suggests the desirability of a range of policy options in the spheres of education, early child care and family support and limited rights of transfer of resources from parents.

- 186 Yet, the question remains how far one should go in this respect? For those, like Rawls, who put forward a principle of fair equality of opportunity that, like respect for basic rights and liberties, is supposed to constrain—rather than exhaust—the idea of justice in the distribution of advantages, it is enough to say that “those who have the same level of talent and ability and the same willingness to use these gifts should have the same prospects of success [at gaining jobs or offices] regardless of their social class of origin” (2001, 44).^[9] For those to assign to fair equality of opportunity the broader role of addressing the whole of distributive justice, the issue becomes more difficult as it is not obviously fair to allow those with greater talent and ability to reap greater rewards. Giving all children equal educational opportunities is not sufficient to give equal chances in life to super intelligent and handsome children and to much less intelligent and less handsome children. The position that individuals do not deserve credit for their larger natural talent is in sharp conflict with the strict notion of self-ownership. It also complicates the question of the right amount of compensation.
- 187 The most convincing “solutions” to the problems that arise for this more ambitious use of the idea of fair equality of opportunity turn from an ex ante to an ex post perspective. Such a development of the idea of equality of opportunity focuses on the distribution of final outcomes but distinguishes between factors for which individuals cannot be held responsible (“circumstances”) and factors for which they are responsible (their “effort”: Roemer 1998). The idea motivating this approach—which has also been called “responsibility-sensitive egalitarianism” or “luck egalitarianism”— is that individuals must be compensated for the effect of factors for which they are not responsible. This means that, somehow, it must be assured that the super intelligent and handsome individuals should get the same outcome as the less intelligent and less handsome, provided they exert the same level of effort.
- 188 Within this luck egalitarian view, an important debate arises about whether to hold people responsible for the preferences with which they identify, even if these preferences are heavily influenced, and perhaps even imposed on them, by the socioeconomic environment in which they grew up (Dworkin 1981b, Fleurbaey 2008). Others claim that individuals can only be held responsible for their own free choices (Arneson 1989, Cohen 1989, Roemer 1998). Formally mapping the possible answers to this question reveals that if one holds people fully responsible for their outcomes, one comes close to the libertarian position, on which inequality in outcomes is not morally problematic. By contrast, an equality-of-outcome position results if one does not hold people responsible for anything.
- 189 The sharpest criticism of this luck-egalitarian approach is formulated by philosophers like Elisabeth Anderson (1999), who argue that the mere fact of distinguishing “effort” from “circumstances” signals a lack of respect for other individuals and therefore threatens the level of self-esteem and of solidarity

that should be present in a socially coherent society (see section 3). Other people have argued that ascribing some responsibility to individuals is just the other side of the coin of acknowledging their freedom (Fleurbaey 2008).

190 4.3.3 Basic needs and a decent minimum

191 A way of building on basic human rights that is quite different from the libertarian's is to hold that all people are entitled to a set of resources and freedoms that allow them to live a decent life. This general principle can be made operational for a multidimensional conception of a decent life such as the one that emerges from our account of basic values in section 3. One can first define a sufficiency threshold for each dimension. One can then define "poverty" on the basis of not reaching the thresholds for the dimensions. In the applied literature, two extreme approaches are the "union" approach, in which someone is considered as poor if she does not reach the minimum for at least one dimension, and the "intersection" approach, according to which someone is poor if she reaches an insufficient level on all the dimensions (the terminology was introduced by Atkinson 2003). Intermediate "counting" approaches have recently become popular (Alkire and Foster 2011).

192 A threshold conception divides the population in two groups: those that have enough and those that do not, and claims that in a just society the latter group should be empty. This leaves a few important questions unanswered. First, how to rank individuals below the threshold? If it is not feasible to bring everybody above the sufficiency threshold, who should then get priority? Second, is sufficiency enough from the point of view of distributive justice; that is, are all situations in which everybody is above the sufficiency threshold equally good from the point of view of distributive justice? If not, then the sufficiency commitment can be seen as a constraint on other, more demanding principles. One could say, for instance, that distributive justice requires equality of outcomes, unless some inequality is needed to bring everybody above the threshold. Or that justice requires maximizing total well-being in society, under the constraint that everybody is above the threshold.

193 4.3.4 Egalitarianism, prioritarianism, and maximin

194 There is a simple version of egalitarianism: distributive justice requires equality in some or all dimensions. Restricting ourselves to well-being as the relevant dimension, each of the different interpretations of well-being in section 3 can be introduced into an egalitarian approach, yielding views with very different practical implications and different advantages and disadvantages.

195 Equalizing resources means neglecting differences in needs and other differences in the personal conversion factors, as described in section 3. Dworkin (1981b)'s proposal to introduce internal resources (while making a

distinction between preferences and handicaps) was one of the most important inspirations for responsibility-sensitive egalitarianism. Equality of subjective well-being (happiness) advocates a redistribution from the happier to the less happy people, even if the former are happy because they were able to adapt to an awful objective situation (the happy slave or the happy patient with the locked-in syndrome) or if the latter are unhappy because they have expensive tastes. The implications of equality of capabilities (if these are considered as commensurable) will depend on the procedure used to set the weights given to the different dimensions. If these are set “objectively,” that might argue for redistribution from individual A to individual B, even if both individuals A and B take B to be better off. If the weights follow from collective deliberation, redistribution might be imposed on individuals who were dissenters in that deliberative process. In a preference based approach, objective information is discarded to the extent that individual A can have a lower equivalent income than individual B, even if (s)he reaches a higher level on all the relevant dimensions. As we indicated in section 3, each of these different notions of well-being has strong arguments in its support. Their varied implications when applied within an egalitarian perspective show that questions about the nature of well-being and questions about the nature of distributive justice are bound up with each other.

- 196 One can wonder if “equality” in itself is a good thing to strive for. In a seminal article, Parfit (1995) distinguished between “equality” and “priority.” In the prioritarian view equality as such should not act as a principle, the relevant principle being that benefiting people matters more from the point of view of justice the worse off these people are. Fighting inequality can then still inspire action, but its value is merely instrumental: redistribution is defended because it may improve the fate of the worse-off, not because there is something intrinsically wrong about inequality. This debate has focused attention on different motivations underlying the quest for equality. However, for policy evaluation the differences between prioritarrians and egalitarians are minimal. Some have even argued that “any prioritarian will always find some egalitarian view which reaches the same practical conclusions about all possible cases, although possibly for different reasons” (Fleurbaey, 2015).
- 197 A fundamental question arises if (a) one aims at maximizing the advantage of the worst-off members of society and (b) the working of society is such that accepting some inequality can help to improve the situation of these worst-off. One is then confronted with a trade-off between “equality” and “efficiency” (here interpreted as maximizing the advantage of the worst-off). The former is Rawls’s “difference principle” (Rawls 1999a, 53), which is also known as a maximin principle, as it maximizes the advantages of those who occupy the lowest position. Taking into account feasibility considerations, mainly related to incentives, the maximin criterion may lead to very different policies than pure egalitarianism. Cohen (2008) has objected to taking account of feasibility issues within the concept of justice itself on the ground that the rich in a

coherent theory of justice cannot reasonably claim that they themselves need financial incentives and that this need of incentives puts a constraint on the pursuit of equality.

198 4.3.5 Utilitarianism's distributive implications

- 199 If individual well-being is measurable on a cardinal scale, the well-being levels of different individuals can be added and one can meaningfully define the sum of well-being, as well as the average level. Utilitarianism, which has been (and still is) extremely influential in economics, advocates maximizing this sum or this average.[10] The term “utilitarianism” has been very loosely used in popular discourse, even to refer to all approaches that are consequentialist or that focus on material consumption only. As philosophers and economists (e.g., Sen and Williams, 1982) use the term, however, utilitarians are defined (a) not merely as consequentialists, in that they evaluate policies and institutions on the basis of their outcomes, but also (b) as evaluating these consequences in terms of individuals' utilities and then (c) aggregating these individual well-being levels by taking a simple sum—the criterion utilized by Classical Utilitarianism—or perhaps going one step further to deriving the average level—Average Utilitarianism's criterion.
- 200 Many would say that maximizing the aggregate well-being is a criterion of efficiency that has little to do with distributive justice. Others claim, however, that giving an equal (unit) weight to the well-being levels of all individuals embodies a degree of impartiality that reflects a conception of justice (e.g., Mill 1988, 60-61).
- 201 In recent decades there has been a lively debate on the acceptability of the utilitarian optima from the point of view of distributive justice. Utilitarianism has strong implications for the distribution of goods even though it is agnostic on the distribution of utilities. Disregarding feasibility constraints for the sake of the argument and assuming that the marginal utility of income (resources) is decreasing and that all individuals have the same utility function, maximizing the sum of utilities implies equally distributing incomes (resources) among individuals. Yet this outcome-egalitarian result follows only on the unrealistic assumption that individuals have identical utility functions. Taking account of how they differ, utilitarianism will distribute more resources to the most efficient “pleasure machines,” i.e. to those individuals that are most efficient in transforming income into utility. It has been noted (Sen 1973), this may have undesirable consequences: if the marginal utility of the handicapped is lower than that of the healthy persons at each level of income, utilitarianism will give a larger income to the healthy than to the handicapped, rather than compensating the handicapped for their handicap.

202 This kind of result has led other researchers to propose other maximization criteria than the simple sum of utilities. Let us now look at some of these alternatives.

203 4.4 Aggregate maximization, justice, and efficiency

204 The multidimensional nature of the compass we have been developing seems to pose a challenge to the idea, popular among economists, that having a precise and rational basis for choice requires having something to maximize (a maximand). Yet maximization approaches may propose a large variety of maximands. Utilitarianism (§4.3.5) and maximin (§4.3.4)—or leximin, its lexicographic version (Rawls 1999a, 72)—are natural examples of maximands that have been amply discussed in the literature. Utilitarianism and leximin both satisfy the Pareto principle, in that an improvement in the well-being of one individual (keeping all the other well-being levels fixed) is taken to be a social improvement. More on the Pareto principle in the box. Yet, they may both be seen as extreme, with utilitarianism only concerned about the sum of well-being, i.e. attaching the same weight to all well-being levels, and maximin only concerned about the minimum, i.e. attaching a positive weight to the worst-off and zero weights to all the others. Welfare economists have proposed maximands (concave social welfare functions) that are in-between these two extremes, with marginal welfare weights that are declining if the well-being level increases. It is clear that this idea of giving a relatively larger weight to the worse-off is close to prioritarianism. As long as an increase in an individual well-being level leads to an increase in social welfare, these functions, too, satisfy the Pareto criterion.

205 Until now we only focused on maximands that, in a certain sense, embody a trade-off between efficiency and redistribution; but the idea of maximization or optimization can be interpreted more broadly. In fact, almost all approaches to distributive justice that have been discussed before can be reformulated as an optimization problem. Respect for basic needs can be made operational by minimizing the number of people below the threshold, egalitarianism by minimizing a measure of inequality, which can be variously defined (see, e.g., Cowell, 2011).

206 At an abstract level, such exercises in formulating a maximand simply register a social ordering of possible social states. Loosely formulated, optimization just means picking the “best” element. A shortcoming of formulating action principles as a maximization exercise is that it is not always easy to rephrase subtle ethical arguments in a form that is amenable to a mathematical formulation or to sum up the implications of potentially clashing values and principles in a single ordering of social states. Disregarding subtleties and unresolved trade-offs may give a false feeling of precision and sweep

important arguments in the debate under the carpet. Moreover, it is far from obvious that one can order all social states in terms of their justice or goodness.

- 207 That said, one should not neglect the advantages of a maximizing approach. First, a maximization approach leads to an unambiguous formulation of the different criteria, which allows for a clear-cut comparison of their policy consequences. Second, as we noted before, formulating a realistic compass for measuring social progress requires taking into account not only what is ideal, but also what is possible. Formulating a maximization problem makes it possible to introduce feasibility constraints into the exercise in a natural way. In addition, even if one cannot compare the existing situation with the “ideal,” one may be able to determine whether a change from the status quo is an improvement or not (Sen, 2009).

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Box 2.5: The Pareto Principle

An influential notion in the formal analysis of social progress is that of a Pareto-improvement. According to the so-called (“weak”) Pareto principle, situation A should be seen as better than situation B if everybody is better off in A than in B. Economists have been keen to strengthen the Pareto principle and to state that situation A is better than situation B if nobody is worse off in situation A and at least one individual is better off. The Pareto-principle is not uncontroversial, however, as it goes against strict egalitarianism: increasing the well-being of someone who is relatively well-off without decreasing the well-being of anybody else will increase inequality. The maximin-criterion (maximize the condition of the worst-off) can be seen as the “most” egalitarian social ordering that satisfies the weak Pareto principle, but, as discussed in the text, maximin is not strictly egalitarian. (Leximin, the lexicographic extension of maximin, is the “most” egalitarian social ordering that satisfies the strong Pareto principle).

It is important to realize that the Pareto-principle does not yield a complete ordering of social states: it remains silent in any comparison between two states between which some individuals see their well-being level increase and others see their well-being level decrease. In these cases there will be no unanimity about the desirability of the change. There are then two possible positions.

The first position holds that only unanimously approved changes should be undertaken. On this view, if there is no unanimity (if there are losers), the status quo should be respected. The second (more reasonable) position is to state that the Pareto-principle should be complemented with other criteria that are not in conflict with Pareto, but that also lead to policy prescriptions in case of redistribution. Utilitarianism, leximin and the concave social welfare functions all follow that route. They support Pareto-improvements, but at the same time they also make it possible to evaluate different forms of redistribution. They therefore do not necessarily support the status quo in case of disagreement.

209 4.5 Beneficence and generosity

- 210 The duty of beneficence calls for action to assist and support others; the virtue of generosity keeps one open to doing so. Even a society with just institutions will sometimes need to rely on beneficence and generosity in cases of sudden

and urgent need. Generous individuals and organizations function as a kind of moral capital, making a society's achievements less vulnerable to disaster and disruption.

- 211 The least controversial cases of required beneficence are cases of rescue: an injured traveler lying by the road needs first aid, a refugee needs a blanket, a tsunami survivor needs bottled water; you are passing by or passing through and happen to know first aid, have a blanket, or have a bottle of water. The American philosopher T. M. Scanlon (1998, 224) states the duty of rescue as follows: “[I]f you are presented with a situation in which you can prevent something very bad from happening, or alleviate someone's dire plight, by making only a slight (or even moderate) sacrifice, then it would be wrong not to do so.”
- 212 Societies develop practices and institutions that help see to it that people are provided with urgently needed assistance. Many of these efforts—such as the establishment of fire and ambulance services—efficiently provide the public goods (in the economists' sense) of security. At the same time, they efficiently relieve individuals of the burdens of obligations they would otherwise occasionally have to provide first aid or carry buckets of water. While these social measures vary from place to place, they usually include social safety nets, disaster assistance programs, and efforts at humanitarian relief. Globalization and the proliferation of charitably oriented non-governmental organizations make it possible for individuals to contribute to extending urgently needed assistance of almost any kind to anyone at any time. The prevalence of such urgent needs reflects considerable injustice (as will be discussed in §6.4). Even if efforts at securing justice should displace much of the potential broad-scale work that beneficence might do, however, the ineliminability of accidents and natural disasters tells us that a role for beneficence—both individual and social—will remain. For that matter, the difficulty of eliminating injustice will also mean that there are more highly vulnerable and needy people than there should be. For these reasons, generous hearts and multiple organizations for helping those in need are necessary to supplement governmental schemes. Other things equal, the presence of such organizations and the individual motives that underlie them are significant elements in securing social progress more robustly.
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213 **5. Units of assessment**

214 A compass for guiding our deliberations about social progress must provide a sense of the entities on whose progress we ought to focus. This question about the units whose progress is being assessed should be distinguished from the question about who or what are the *agents* of social progress, the types of entities that can or should do something to promote social progress. The relationships between these two sets of entities can cross-cut. By donating money to an international NGO, citizens of wealthy nations may act as agents who intend, in some small way, to promote social progress in a rural village in Bolivia or for their fellow Methodists in Mali—and may or may not succeed. In Section 6, we will come to the different types of agent that ought to act in ways that promote progress, and specifically to principles that apply specially to each of them. In the present section, our focus is on the former question, that of identifying the *objects of assessment* relevant to social progress—the units about which we ask whether social progress has been achieved on account, say, of an improvement in justice or an improvement in the well-being of its members.

215 This question about the units of assessment admits of both a permissive reading and a mandatory one. That is, we might be asking, in a permissive spirit: What are the set of units about which it makes sense to ask whether they have experienced—or can expect to experience—social progress? Alternatively, we might be asking, in a more mandatory vein: When we seek to assess overall social progress (globally?), what are the units of whose advances or declines we must keep track? The lives of individual human beings clearly matter. Do groups, religious communities, nations, regions matter and, if so, in what ways? To what extent do future generations matter within an account of social progress, and how does intergenerational justice affect what the present generation may do? As said already before, an account of social progress must also take into account the interests of non-human animals. But in what ways?

216 Thus, in this section, we focus on the kinds of units whose progress we ought to be assessing when identifying whether overall social progress has occurred or might be realized. We take for granted that the global unit is one whose progress matters: we clearly must ask whether or in what way there has been human progress, and how or in what way human progress might be promoted. One might think the same about nations—though, as we will note, questions arise about their boundaries.

217 5.1 Individuals

218 Social progress involves a number of improvements that take place primarily at a societal level. Such improvements, however, should be felt within individual lives, preferably all individual lives. If it were not important for

progress to be widely shared, we could licitly recommend measures that create overall improvements that are enjoyed only by a few, perhaps at the expense of the rest; but this is clearly unacceptable.

- 219 It can be entirely unobjectionable, however, for an individual to sacrifice the enjoyment of goods for a period of time to obtain greater benefits later, even if the costs she imposes on herself are very significant and long lasting. But we cannot mechanically assume that there is no difference between an individual at two different times and one individual and another, so that whatever sacrifice is permissible in one case is also permissible in the other. Intrapersonal and interpersonal distributional decisions significantly differ because we are each distinct and separate individuals, each with her own life to lead (Nagel 1995). Thus, the question arises as to whether the relevant unit for assessing an individual's life is a lifetime or a shorter period—say, for example, a year.
- 220 Now, the most natural way to think about our separate lives as the units of distribution is to take our entire life-span into account. To illustrate this point in relation to egalitarianism: some say that while an equal society is compatible with individuals having very different lives, with some having better childhoods and others a better old age, on the whole there should not be major net differences at birth among individual's total life prospects (Daniels 2008). Equality, thus understood, may sometimes require the reversal, rather than the elimination, of inequality for a period of time. For example, if a woman puts her career on hold to support her husband, it is better from the point of view of equality if he then puts his career on hold to support hers. For only by taking turns is equality fully restored. If a decade where one flourishes while the other does not is replaced by a decade where they both flourish equally, total-lives equality would not be achieved (McKerlie 2012).
- 221 It is fairly uncontroversial to say that if, in a society or the world as a whole, people lives improve in *length* and *quality*, social progress has, *ceteris paribus*, been achieved. On the total lives, view, however, difficult questions arise when length and quality compete. Suppose, for example, that A lives a shorter life than B but, on average, is more advantaged in terms of well-being or resources in each year of that life. According to the total life view, it might be that we should regard A and B as having had an equally advantaged life. These questions also raise important questions about health care policy. Although people with good lives tend to live longer, the costs of sustaining some people at the end of their lives are typically very high. This raises the question of how far should we go in the pursuit of longevity for citizens entitled to public healthcare (Daniels 2008, Segall; and see chap. on health).

222 Continuing to use egalitarianism to explore different ways of defining the unit of assessment for individuals, while the total life view is widely accepted, some find it insufficiently demanding, for example, because they think that nobody should have a childhood, or an old age, that falls below a certain threshold, even if this is compensated by a sufficiently good life in between.^[11] Another argument against focusing exclusively on total lives may be pressed by referring to societies stratified by age groups. Some of them exhibit many of the unattractive features of deeply inegalitarian societies even if the lives of their members are not unequal when taken as a whole, since everybody (who survives) eventually manages to belong to the council of the elderly, for example.

223 More broadly: while it is obvious that the overall assessment of social progress must take account of the improvements, or the lack thereof, experienced by individuals, there is a further question—as the contest between the whole-lives view and views that instead assess certain periods within each individual’s life—as to how to define the unit of assessment that appropriately captures how well individuals are doing.

224 5.2 Civil society groups

225 While it is uncontroversial to claim that an account of social progress ought to attach fundamental moral importance to improving the lives of individuals, it is more contentious to think that organizations or groups have such importance. Although we often use language that suggests that groups are unitary entities with lives of their own—we often say that such and such a policy would be bad for ‘the nation’ or an ‘organization’—many believe it is more plausible to view groups as collectives and that attending to the interest of a group is shorthand for acting in the shared interests of several individuals rather than the interests of a single ‘group-individual’. According to one version of this view, although the interest of a single individual in having the opportunity to speak a particular language, for example, might not be sufficient to justify holding others under a duty to protect or promote that language, the fact that many individuals share an interest in speaking that language may be enough to generate a duty on the wider society to protect it. On this view, collectives have no interests that are separate from the interests of the individuals that comprise them (Raz, 1986; for a thorough survey of these debates see Jones, 2008).

226 When considering a society’s political, social, and economic progress our attention is often directed towards its various accomplishments: its GDP; the percentage of GDP it devotes to health care, education, welfare, development aid, and so on; whether its citizens are attentive to morality and justice, and the extent to which it succeeds in satisfying the demands of distributive

justice. But should we also evaluate how the various civil society groups and organizations—social movements, NGOs, charities, community organizations, religious organizations—fare?

227 This question forces us to face an important question about how we understand efforts at assessing social progress. At the present time, these are mainly concerned with evaluating the performance of governments. Given that presumption, there is reason to limit the overall assessment to items that generate reasons for governments to act. Many doubt that there are non-derivative or instrumental reasons for governments to respond to the claims of particular communities or organizations within civil society or to treat them as having any claims that are distinct from the interests of individuals freely to express their convictions and to associate with others. Notwithstanding the different views in that debate, there is widespread agreement that the claims of such groups or communities warrant the attention of the wider political community only if their activities satisfy some threshold of reasonableness (Kymlicka, 1995). Several standards for identifying reasonableness in this context have been proposed, which have included particular requirements for the treatment of women (Okin, 1999), children (Feinberg, 1992; Callan, 1997), and non-human animals (Casal, 2007).

228 If the purpose of assessing social progress is simply to assess government's performance, then this point of agreement argues for ignoring how civil-society institutions are doing, independently of assessing the effects on their members. The conclusion would be different, however, if the point of assessing progress were not simply to rate or guide governments, but to consider, overall, how well a society is faring. Basic liberties shield some civil society institutions—notably the religious ones—from government interference. What goes on in them may not be the business of governments to worry about. Still, as we noted in §3.5, what goes on in them may be of intrinsic importance of a kind relevant to assessing social progress in this second way.

229 5.3 Nations

230 It is very common to assess the social progress of a nation or national state. For instance, the Human Development Reports rate the economic progress of nations every year. Nations—apart from those that are sometimes referred to as “failed”—are well-structured human collectivities with a legal system and an effective written or unwritten constitutional structure. The typical extent of unified national control of policy makes it natural to assess nations on how well they are doing. To get a deeper understanding of why it makes sense to assess the progress of nations, rather than simply focusing on outcomes for individuals, it will be useful to take a brief look at the reasons that can be raised against an unrestricted right to freedom of movement.

- 231 Restricting individuals' freedom of movement would once have been based on alleged birthrights. We no longer believe that the eldest son is entitled to inherit the entire family estate. Nor do we believe that being born into a certain family can entitle someone to claim an entire country as his birthright. Yet some still insist in their own birthright to expel from their country people not born there. Could this be justified?
- 232 Suppose we deny it is, and argue that we should allow the free international movement not only of products but also of people. Why insist on the free movement of objects and animals and reject that of humans? Allowing such movement would certainly be appealing in many ways. It would allow people to move to wherever suited their needs and preferences. If some locations become too crowded, the free market doctrine may help even things out. Although the effects of such system are hard to predict, some problems are easy to envision. People may bring habits which are inappropriate to different environments, there could be problems of brain-drain, and cultural confrontations may intensify.
- 233 More revealing of the normative importance of nations is that unrestricted freedom of movement would interfere with the ability of nations to pursue progress in their own distinctive ways. A nation may have decided to maintain high taxes to support public goods and assist the needy. Being forced to open their borders may jeopardize this ambition. Alternatively, a country's people may have decided to become environmental pioneers and invest massively in green technology, knowing that their commitment to environmentalism could involve major financial costs for them. Having made such a commitment, they would prefer the population to remain reasonably stable, so that the plan can be legitimately and successfully be carried through. These are legitimate concerns that can be shared even by those who agree with Schopenhauer that "nationalism is the cheapest form of pride", and find all the flag waving outdated and ridiculous.
- 234 Thus, we have reasons to allow some restrictions on the movement of people to create greater stability in the populations of a territory, and to allow different collective projects to be tried out, just like we have reasons to allow individuals to engage in what John Stuart Mill (1978, ch. 3) referred to as their diverse "experiments in living". Countries should be allowed to try out different tax systems and institutional designs, restrict certain benefits to their residents and enjoy most of the benefits of their wise policy choices, and bear the consequences of their poor choices too. Being restricted by the same democratically elected and mutually binding public rules and sharing certain institutions could create bonds and obligations between humans over and above those we have with all humans, and so some movement restrictions could be justified.

235 To be sure, birthright skepticism should remain with us, keeping us critical of current international borders and willing to question them. After all, they are largely just the product of historical accidents and were often drawn arbitrarily by colonial powers. The general reasons to preserve nation-states and an international division of the labor of promoting global social progress are not reasons to preserve the status quo and all state boundaries exactly as they are.

236 5.4 The ethical status of future generations

237 Suppose that we managed to eradicate all remaining poverty in the world over the course of the next two decades by embarking on an industrializing binge in which we use up all of the world's remaining fossil fuels. Suppose that this considerably improves average well-being and social justice and that the economic program builds in ways of mitigating the immediate effects of pollution on humans and other animals. Yet, finally, suppose that this effort dooms later generations to a world wracked by catastrophic climate change and a dearth of usable energy supplies. Should these ill effects on later generations be counted against the social progress that the globe, twenty years from now, should be assessed as having achieved?

238 Almost everyone believes that future generations have moral standing in the sense that their interests and claims limit what the present generation can permissibly do. It is uncontroversial to claim that we, the present generation, ought to take steps to avoid or limit the damage we do to the Earth's atmosphere and our depletion of its resources. Beneath the surface of this consensus, however, lurk differences with respect to (i) how we ought to understand the moral standing of future generations, (ii) how demanding are our duties to them.

239 (i) At the threshold of these questions lies a stubborn conceptual obstacle to claiming that later generations can be harmed by anything we do. If those who are alive cannot harm them, then how can how future generations' welfare be counted for or against the social progress achieved at a time previous to their birth? Philosophical doubt about whether we can harm them has arisen from a puzzle elaborated by Parfit, the so-called *non-identity problem* (Parfit 1984, chap. 16). Given that each individual is the product of a particular pair of gametes that can combine only within a limited time period, it is plausible to assume that the way people live their lives affects the identity of future individuals. Had cheap travel by train, car or airplane not developed, for example, very many present people would not have been born because their parents would not have met or procreated when they did. This fact appears to pose a problem for our usual *person-affecting* way of understanding our moral requirements according to which, for example, A ought not hit B because hitting B is bad for B; it *harms* him in the sense that, all things considered, it makes *him* worse off than he would be had A not hit him. The damage we do to

the Earth's atmosphere by the emission of carbon from cars and planes, which leaves future generations with a worse environment than we enjoy, appears not to be harmful to future individuals in this sense.^[12] To see this consider an individual, Cari, whose existence depends on a previous generation's carbon-emitting lifestyles. She would not have existed had the previous generation led a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. In Cari's case we cannot say that the previous generation's emissions have harmed her in the sense of making her worse off than she would have been had it been more environmentally friendly; it appears that its emitting activity was not bad for her.

240 Although a small minority holds that the non-identity problem establishes that we have very few duties to future generations (e.g., Schwartz 1978), most hold that, the problem notwithstanding, future generations have moral standing. Parfit himself argues that the fact of non-identity indicates that we ought to understand our concern for future generations in *impersonal* or *non-person-affecting* terms. Other things being equal, if we can choose between producing one of two possible (non-overlapping) future populations of the same size we ought to produce the one that enjoys the higher standard of living. That principle of impersonal beneficence (see §4.5) asserts that producing future people with a lower standard of living might be morally wrong even though it is bad for no one for the reasons given above. On this view, morality is not exhausted by a concern for the interests of identifiable individuals.

241 Parfit's is not the only reasonable response to this problem. Several different views have been developed in defense of the claim that, contrary to appearances, facts about non-identity do not show that a person-affecting moral concern for future generations is problematic. Some believe that an individual, P, can be harmed by Q's action even if Q makes P no worse off than he would have been had Q not performed the action: P might be harmed in the sense that Q's action places him in an unfortunate situation, even if Q could not act in a way that would leave P any better off (Shiffrin, 1999; Meyer & Roser, 2009). Some argue that cultural groups or nations can be harmed even if the non-identity problem shows that future individuals are not (Page, 2006). Others argue that depleting the Earth's resources *wrongs* future people even if it does not harm them; we wrong them in the sense that we fail to recognize their legitimate claims to an environment of a certain sort (Kumar, 2003

242 (ii) Assuming that we have reason to take future generations into account when assessing social progress, how stringent are these reasons? Do they give rise to demanding duties? One key question here is whether the distributive ideals that apply within generations (see §4.3) also apply intergenerationally. Certain defenses of equality, for example, regard it as an appropriate ideal only for those who reciprocate in a scheme of cooperation. Such defenses face difficulties in extending egalitarian norms intergenerationally, because of the absence of a reciprocal relationship between us and distant future generations—though see Mazor (2010) for an argument for demanding

intergenerational duties that appeals to the fact of *overlapping* relationships between contiguous generations. By contrast, conceptions of threshold, egalitarian or prioritarian justice that view justice in impersonal terms, or as unreliant on pre-existing reciprocal relationships, appear to be applicable intergenerationally.

- 243 How ought our compass for evaluating social progress be configured with respect to the demands of intergenerational justice? Two promising candidates are *respect for decent minima* and *sustainability*. The idea of sustainability—now so prominent in light of the sustainable development goals (see Box 2.10) can be traced back through the history of political thought to Thomas Jefferson’s observation that the ‘Earth belongs in usufruct to the living’ (1789). That is, the present generation is entitled to use the Earth’s resources as it chooses subject to the condition that it leaves future generations with as many resources or opportunities of equal value as it enjoyed (see Barry, 1999). Guaranteeing a decent minimum to everyone may require to do more for them than this if, for example, without further saving or investment, enabling them to continue the present levels of consumption is insufficient stably to sustain a just scheme of cooperation (Rawls, 2001, p. 159-161) or a particular threshold of well-being or advantage for everyone (Meyer & Roser, 2009). These ideas of sustainability and sufficiency can be well combined (see Casal, 2007): a hybrid conception of our duties to future generations that includes a concern for both is a promising response to the question of how demanding our duties are to future generations.

244 **Box 2.6: The problem of optimal population size**

By “optimal population size” one usually means the population size that maximizes value given certain constraints on available resources (e.g., Dasgupta 1969). According to classical optimum population theory, the relevant value is taken to be economic output (Dasgupta 1969). In contrast, today, most consider the relevant value to be human wellbeing. When policies affect populations of fixed size, maximizing value is a fairly straightforward optimization task. However, when policies affect future generations, the affected population isn’t fixed, since the policies will affect not only the living conditions and identities of future people but also how many people will exist.

If the current generation continues to consume resources at the expense of future generations, and the population increases significantly, this could lead to an enormous population—ten billion people per generation—in which most people’s lives are barely worth living. Suppose we could instead create a smaller population—around one billion people per generation—with very good lives. Which population would be better? Most would probably say the latter; that is, they would say that a smaller population with a high quality of life is better than a much larger population with a much lower quality of life. However, many traditional moral theories yield the opposite result. Classical Utilitarianism (CU) (see §4.3.5), is one example. According to CU we should maximize overall welfare. There are two quite different ways in which we could do this: by making people’s lives better, or by increasing the size of the population with lives worth living. So, according to CU, an enormous population with lives barely worth living *could* be better than a smaller population with very good lives. In his seminal work on optimal population size, Derek Parfit (1984, 388) named this result “the Repugnant Conclusion” and considered it a reason to reject CU.

The Repugnant Conclusion highlights a problem in a field known as *population ethics*; the problem is finding an adequate theory of population value where the number of people, their welfare, and their identities may vary.

One might think that Average Utilitarianism (AU), which ranks populations according to the average welfare per life in the population, fares better than CU, since it avoids the Repugnant Conclusion. However, AU implies that we can improve a population by adding lives not worth living (Parfit 1984 422, Arrhenius 2000).

The suggestions regarding how to avoid the Repugnant Conclusion are diverse. They include: introducing new ways of aggregating welfare into a measure of value; questioning the way we compare and measure welfare; counting welfare differently depending on temporal features or modal ones such as possibility; revising the notion of a life worth living; giving up transitivity of “better than”; and appealing to other values such as, for example, equality and desert (for an overview and references, see Broome 2004, Blackorby et al. 2005, Arrhenius forthcoming). Although these theories often succeed in avoiding the Repugnant Conclusion, they have other counterintuitive consequences. In fact, several impossibility theorems demonstrate that no theory can fulfil a number of intuitively compelling adequacy conditions which, most agree, any reasonable theory of optimal population size must fulfil (see e.g., Arrhenius forthcoming, 2000, 2011)—for example, the condition that one population is better than another if everyone is better off in the former than the latter, and the condition that it is better to create people with a higher rather than a lower level of well-being.

Though Parfit never found an acceptable theory of optimal population size, he continued to hope that such a theory would be found (Parfit 1984, p. 451). Others are more pessimistic in light of the impossibility theorems in the field. Such theorems seem to leave us with only three options: (1) Abandon one of the adequacy conditions on which the theorem is based; (2) become moral skeptics; or (3) explain away the significance of the impossibility theorems. There is no easy choice here.

245 5.5 Humans and other animals

- 246 In section 3.7, we noted that not only humans but also other animals and ecosystems have intrinsic value. In the case of other animals, at least, it is important to keep track of how well they are doing.
- 247 Although early humans were unaware of how many millions of other species surrounded them, other animals figured prominently in their lives, as the earliest cave paintings attest. By domesticating some types of animal, humans started to establish relations of cooperation and companionship with other species. In this process, some humans have established strong bonds and attachments to members of other species, and many have expressed admiration for their beauty and intelligence, as well as for the loyalty and empathy they show towards humans or towards their own kind.
- 248 In recent times, human activities have drastically reduced the number of existing species. We also impose much suffering on animals. We have moved from eating occasional animal prey to building factory farms that house

animals in pitiful conditions. We also use many animals in all sorts of experiments and tests, including those performed for trivial purposes.

- 249 At the same time, humanity has made some ethical progress. We have gone from thinking that we should not strike our slaves or women too hard (a *sufficiency* or threshold principle) to rejecting slavery and advocating gender and racial *equality*. We have come to realize that it is not only ourselves or our tribe that matters, and have begun to see that some ethical principles have validity across species boundaries. This realization appears to have been always present in some religions, such as in those of Indian origin, but not in others, such as those of Abrahamic descent. Among the philosophers of ancient Europe, only some far-sighted individuals like Pythagoras argued in defense of both women and animals. Nowadays, hardly anyone denies that animal suffering matters or claims we may disregard an individual's interests merely because of its species. The legal protection of nonhuman animals is now widely seen as part of social progress, and has reached the supranational level with, for example, the 2009 Lisbon Treaty affirming the legal relevance of animal suffering to European legislation.
- 250 These developments draw on and extend the principles we have so far listed as important for assessing and guiding social progress—most importantly the idea of justice and the various principles under its umbrella. Arguably, animals have the lowest welfare levels, the lowest capabilities, and all too often have been deprived of their natural habitats and confined to relatively small areas that are often affected by human pollution or greenhouse emissions (McMahan, Vallentyne). We may set aside egalitarian principles, for since animals tend to be below any plausible universal sufficiency threshold, there is reason to think that we should not only stop harming animals but also should help them when doing so is within our reach (Holtug, Horta, Faria).
- 251 Others however have resisted this kind of extension of our principles or believe it needs to be qualified, not because they advocate some form of *speciesism*, permitting or even requiring the disadvantageous treatment of any individual that is not *Homo sapiens*, but because they hold a distinct view known as *personism* (Kagan). On one construal, “persons” have a sense of themselves as intelligent creatures that persist over time and they can think of themselves as existing in different moments and places (Locke 1669). The set of individuals that can count as persons in this sense includes some highly intelligent and empathetic animals such as the great apes, some whales and dolphins, elephants and perhaps some exceptionally intelligent birds, like the magpies, which are also capable of mirror self-recognition, forward planning, empathy and practice tool use and death rituals. By contrast, some humans, such as anencephalic babies, are arguably not persons.

252 Death is particularly bad for persons because they (i) typically have more to lose from losing their lives, (ii) they are more connected to their future and (iii) they are more connected to others who would also suffer from their death. By contrast, if a fish is not more connected to its future than it is to another fish, and a fish is never missed by others, it is hard to explain why it is better that a fish lives 20 years than if a fish that lives 10 is replaced by another who lives 10. Imprisonment is also particularly bad for persons as they can imagine themselves elsewhere, resent being captured, have a sense of time and may worry about others missing them or suffering a similar fate. A fish that cannot distinguish between the pond where it is captive and another pond where it is not, cannot miss others and keeps on seeing the limits of the pond as if for the first time, does not suffer comparably. Some argue it makes no sense to speak of the “liberation” of creatures that lack certain mental capacities (Cochrane).

253 Although personism explains why death or confinement is bad for most humans but might not be bad for many non-human animals, it does not settle the question of whether there is any reason to judge pain of the same kind, intensity, and duration, as particularly bad for persons. Even if there is, we are left with the conclusion that there is an important range of other animals that come under the scope of moral concern. This being so, a complete reckoning of social progress will take account of the lives of individuals of at least some other species—not only because of their intrinsic value (as noted in §3.7), but also because it is their moral due.

254 **6. Principles specially applicable to certain types of agent**

255 The previous section developed the idea that, when assessing social progress, we must keep track of how well agents at various different levels are faring: not only individuals, but also civil society, nations, future generations, and non-human animals and ecosystems. In this section we turn to principles specially applicable to this or that type of agent and indicate what they ought to do. These principles, while perhaps indirectly supported by the fully general principles set out in §4, are not reducible to those principles. That is in part because they take account of the distinctive circumstances faced by differently embodied or realized human collectives. Because these principles state or imply obligations, the agents that we canvass in this section do not fully coincide with those discussed in §5. That is because the idea of moral requirements does not seem applicable to all of those agents. While we humans have obligations with regard to other animals and to ecosystems, it is

not clear that it would even make sense to say that these other animals have any obligations, let alone that ecosystems would. Similarly, while we who are now alive have obligations towards future generations of human beings, a human being who is not yet born has as yet no obligations.

- 256 In laying out principles applicable specially only to this or that type of agent, we will first cover a variety of agents that are institutionally structured (governments, civil society institutions, the global system), if only on the basis of quite informal institutions (or, if you prefer, by social practices). We will finally turn to principles that are applicable only to individuals. A full development of these principles of special application would consider how they interact (see box).

257 **Box 2.7: Division of labor among principles**

Some argue that the multiplicity of moral values and principles is merely apparent or superficial, and that a sound understanding will succeed in taming this diversity, allowing us to operate with a single principle. This is a controversial view. Taking a cautious approach, this compass-setting chapter has proceeded on the assumption that it is better to mention all of the values and principles that seem on reflection to be intrinsically important, lest crucial considerations be overlooked.

Assuming, then, that those seeking to promote or to assess social progress should take account of a plurality of principles, two further questions will arise. First, are all of the principles equally relevant in all contexts? And if not, are there important ways in which combinations of principles could work together across different contexts? The analogy, here, is to the division of labor. The grain farmer, the miller, and the baker each play important and complementary roles in getting bread on our tables. Perhaps pairs or trios of principles work together in complementary ways, such that if each were honored in its own domain, (the relevant) society would be just or would flourish (Scheffler 2005). Being open to considering such possibilities is important to thinking concretely about how moral principles can relate to social progress.

Two of the best-known proposals about such a division of moral labor are found in John Rawls's theory of justice. Each of these involves a causal segmentation, although neither's is as simple as that between growing grain and grinding it. The first Rawlsian proposal is that we distinguish between "the basic structure of society," which "comprises the main social institutions—the constitution, the economic regime, the legal order and its specification of property and the like, and how these institutions cohere into one system," on the one hand, and the transactions that occur within it, on the other (Rawls 2005, 301). Here, the idea is that the institutions of the basic structure shape individual transactions by providing the rules of the game, as it were. The elements of the basic structure settle, at least in outline, under what conditions claims to property-ownership will be recognized, contracts honored, or basic rights protected. One of Rawls's leading thoughts is that if the institutions of the basic structure are constrained to be fair, then one can be relatively relaxed about the individual transactions that occur within that structure, allowing considerable individual freedom at that level. Whereas the point of the division of labor among the farmer, miller, and baker is to allocate necessary phases of a production process to specialists, the point of this moral division of labor is to allow a plurality of moral concerns to be well satisfied by giving different ones sway in different domains. The basic structure, Rawls argued, must satisfy principles concerning the basic liberties, equal opportunity, and distributive fairness. If it does, he controversially held, then individual economic freedom (a non-basic liberty) can be given more sway at the level of individual transactions (Rawls 1999a, 73-8).

Rawls's second proposal for a moral division of labor invokes the more common distinction between those features of a society's public life that are settled by constitutional law and those that are not. Just as a society's basic structure frames what can go on within it, so too does a society's constitutional law (Rawls 1999a, 174). Rawls characterized the "constitutional essentials" as including not only the "general structure of the political process" but also the "equal basic rights and liberties" (Rawls 2005, 227). Rawls argued (again, controversially: see, e.g., Barry 1973) that a more just society would result if legislative efforts to implement distributive justice were constrained by constitutionally secured basic liberties than if these two elements were left to compete with one another in an unstructured way, without any division of moral labor (Rawls 1999a, 179).

The present section of this chapter attempts to articulate principles that apply specially to some subdomain of society—to civil society, to public political institutions, and to more informal relationships among individuals. Anyone proceeding to work more concretely with these principles should keep in mind the possibility of a division of moral labor among them.

258 6.1 The normative relevance of institutions

259 We begin our discussion of institutions with some consideration of why their configuration tends to be normatively significant in its own right. Human institutions are important for social progress not only instrumentally, as facilitating most of what we do, but also for their own sakes. This intrinsic importance can arise from an institution's structural properties or from its motivational implications. To orient our discussion of principles specially applicable to one or another set of institutions, we explicate each of these two features in turn.

260 6.1.1 The structural properties of institutions

261 Normative analysis has as its domain not just the actions of people but also the institutional frameworks within which those actions take place. "Institutions" serve to structure the relations between individuals – either by creating incentives for individuals to act in ways that are in the interests of others (with "interests" here broadly construed); or by coordinating the actions of individuals in ways that minimize conflict (or perhaps fail to do so); or by determining the distribution of benefits and costs across those who interact under that institution. These functions involve processes or procedures (see §2.1.2) that are "structural" in the sense that they operate in a way that is definite and yet interacts with the ends of the individuals in them at any given time. Some institutions, at least, operate according to a conventional set of rules that assign rights and obligations that are internal to the institution, thereby defining their procedures in a relatively explicit way (Rawls 1999a, 47).

- 262 For example, as economists have long argued, the competitive market serves such a structural role by creating incentives for participants to operate in the interests of others—at least in relation to so-called “private” goods—yielding efficient cooperation with a minimum of governmental encroachment on freedom of choice. In cases where goods are not fully private, such as that of carbon emissions, where an individual’s action indirectly affects many other people, other arrangements need to be sought.[\[13\]](#)
- 263 As an example of the redistributive aspects of institutional structures, consider the effect of democratic processes on redistributive policies. One possibility is that because voting power is distributed more equally than economic power, the effect of democratic processes will be to give rise to government policies that redistribute economic resources away from the richer towards the poorer. Equality of political influence may of course be something that is valued in itself, but these structural effects on transfers of economic power are also normatively significant. An opposite possibility is that inequalities in the distribution of wealth can give some disproportionate influence over government policies, leading to further advantages for the wealthy.
- 264 The structural effects of institutions are often analysed in abstraction from the motivations of the agents who are subject to them. But there are two reasons not to consider that abstraction as a firewall. First, the effects institutions have will likely be influenced by what motivations agents have. Whether the rules of the road ought to include speed limits cannot be decided independently of how safely individuals are inclined to drive if unregulated. How well the market works depends on how extensively participants have internalised norms of trustworthiness. And how redistributive an equal franchise turns out to be seems likely to depend on the proportion of low-income individuals who actually vote.
- 265 **6.1.2 The motivational effects of institutions**
- 266 Second, it seems likely that institutional arrangements will affect motivations in various ways, and so will mold the people that grow up with them. Adam Smith (in a manner echoed later by Durkheim 1964) thought that the division of labor would tend to make people “as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become... Dexterity at his own particular trade seems to be acquired at the expense of his intellectual, social and martial virtues” (Smith 1994, V.i.f.50). In other words, Smith thought that the material advantages of the division of labor—the “opulence that spread itself through all ranks of society” (Smith 1994, I.1.10)—involves effects on the “virtue” (or at least important aspects of the virtue) of market participants. In a somewhat similar spirit, many market critics have thought that commercial society encourages greed—and indeed seem to have thought that this effect was so obvious that it does not require any empirical support.

267 Such motivational effects may be of concern in their own right. Any normative scheme that admits some element of concern for virtue as an end in itself will be concerned about the effects of institutions on human character. So one question is whether our conception of social progress should admit a substantive account of human virtue. Although this chapter has not developed such an account, what we say here could be supplemented by one. But additionally, any motivational changes are likely to have implications for the structural effects of other institutions. For example, if markets encourage greed, may well matter when there is scope for fraud; in the electoral setting, where it might be desirable that individual votes reflect good judgments of the general interest; or in relation to providing stable and loving relations within the family.

268 In this way (as well as in others), various institutional arrangements may be at odds, or may work in complementary fashion. Sometimes one institution may serve to moderate excesses in another, as in the example already given about how democratic processes may moderate the worst possible distributional excesses of markets. Sometimes one institution may support the motivational background that helps another institution to work well. Normative analysis must be attentive to the relations among institutions. And these include not just direct effects, but also those effects mediated by any motivational changes that institutional arrangements induce.

269 **6.1.3 The basic institutions of society**

270 When scholars talk of the structural properties of institutions, they typically have in mind the two basic institutional forms of markets and politics (usually democratic politics). The former deals with the coordination of individual decisions involving bilateral exchanges. To be sure, there is a range of other organized activities, not fully reducible to either market or politics (or some combination), that might plausibly contribute to well-being in a way that we have not otherwise captured or that have a normative importance not fully exhausted by their contribution to well-being. One such institution is the corporation, which is not a market institution as such. Another range of activities that we have in mind are things like artistic pursuits, religious activities, sports, academia—a heterogeneous collection of activities that together constitute “civil society.” This term is familiar from the literature on democracy, where much is written about all that a vibrant civil society—so, flourishing institutions of the kinds just mentioned—contributes to democratic objectives, both directly and indirectly. Yet in addition, each location in civil society represents, at least in principle, a location for independent assessment of social developments of the kind that characterize a vibrant political life.

271 **6.2 Principles applicable to governments**

272 6.2.1 The rule of law

- 273 The rule of law distinctively enshrines the principle of formal civic equality and makes it possible to restrain the exercise of arbitrary power by enabling citizens to hold public officials accountable. The “rule of law” is something of a sacred cow in institutional debate, but what exactly it amounts to is a matter of some contestation. The original notion (Dicey 1915 and Aristotle and Cicero in antiquity) seems to have focused on the idea that lawmakers should be subject themselves to the laws they make. The thought is that, so constrained, lawmakers would be disposed to legislate in the common interest rather than exploit their powers to promote their own interests. But the idea is typically generalized to embody a requirement of equality before the law for all. This requirement implies an absence of discrimination of all kinds, and can have both a procedural and a substantive aspect. The procedural aspect requires that individuals will be entitled to due process before legal institutions: they will have equal standing before the courts and be treated with appropriate respect. Further, individuals will not be held without charge or be peremptorily carted off in the middle of the night. In criminal cases, individuals will be treated as innocent until proven guilty; and the onus of proof in such cases will lie with the accuser. The substantive aspect relates to the law itself: the law will not be applied retroactively (so that those subject to it cannot know its requirements); and individuals will not be held in custody without charge beyond minimal limits.
- 274 An effective rule of law will require certain institutional features: First, a judiciary that is independent (an aspect of the so-called separation of powers) and non-corrupt (independent specifically from those with the means to bribe or threaten court officers, but also disposed to uphold the law rather than pursuing their own independent interests or ideological convictions). Second, compliance by the executive with the courts’ determinations
- 275 Since these features of the legal process are normatively desirable for such a vast variety of reasons that these are difficult to summarize or encapsulate, it is sensible to count their effective realization as a point on the social progress compass. But we might ask what institutional supports might be helpful in making it more likely that these features will be realized, because these supports then become appropriate indicators that the rule of law is in place and secure. For instance, we might attend to the procedures whereby judges are selected, what pool the judges are selected from and who does the selection (and what interests or biases those selectors might have).
- 276 While legal scholars tend to focus on courts and judicial procedures and political theorists on the content of laws, criminologists and legal sociologists tend to focus on the delivery of the rule of law at the coal-face. They emphasize the crucial role of the police and the discretion they have to do their job effectively and correctly. But here too there are dangers—for

corruption, for discrimination among different classes of putative violators, for the exercise of brutality—and these can exist even where the law itself is decent and judicial procedures impeccable. Much depends on the culture of the police: the extent to which professional standards are appropriate and are enforced by both peer pressure and institutional incentives (such as promotion). And this depends in turn on a certain degree of transparency and answerability for conduct in appropriately public forums.

277 6.2.2 Transparency and accountability

278 “Sunlight” so the aphorism goes “is the best antiseptic”. When there are cameras that photograph police treatment of arrestees there is less danger of police brutality. When there is full disclosure of politicians’ asset portfolios, there is less danger that policy decisions will be made in politicians’ private interests. The mere fact that scrutiny is possible in such cases is sufficient to inhibit indefensible practices. In part, the inhibition arises from the fact that people care directly about the extent to which they are esteemed or disesteemed by the general public, a value on which we commented already in §3.5. In the case of politicians, these public attitudes are buttressed by the fact that candidates who behave “badly” as perceived by the general public can expect to suffer electoral consequences; and in the case of the police, because there is oversight by political agents who are likely to be held responsible if nothing is done.

279 The transparency that needs to be maintained is not a merely passive property. It is often not enough that the relevant activities are not secret. In many contexts, we also need institutions of publicity: avenues whereby the relevant failures are liable to be publicized. A free and independent media is clearly critical in this regard. Even democratically elected governments need to prove that they are responsive to the needs of their citizens and representative of their interests and preferences; as also that their processes and modes of functioning are transparent. They must be held accountable on an ongoing basis, with all the necessary safeguards to ensure that an unresponsive or unrepresentative government cannot continue in power indefinitely.

280 Sometimes, to be sure, full public disclosure is not desirable, either because public opinion does not track what is normatively desirable or because the release of information would undercut the desirable effects of policy. The intentions of central banks in relation to monetary policy, much like the battle plans of the military hierarchy, cannot be made available prior to action. Sometimes secrecy is positively valuable. For example, the secret ballot is regarded as a cornerstone of best democratic practice precisely because voters should not be liable to intimidation or undue influence from employers

or marriage partners or authority figures. Equally, the proceedings of jury deliberations are insulated from public scrutiny precisely because it is felt that public opinion should have no influence.

- 281 Even where there is appropriately no accountability to the general public, there should generally be some kind of accountability. How jurors actually deliberate is rightly subject to scrutiny by other jurors; indeed, in many jurisdictions, final voting is not secret within the jury—as it is not in many appointment committees for academic jobs. If the absence of a secret ballot in these arenas is desirable, it is because the importance of having jurors and or members of academic appointments committees be answerable *to each other* – even if not to the general public overrides the risk of intimidation.
- 282 The point here is that greater effective transparency can be better achieved via dedicated scrutiny from people specifically appointed to undertake that scrutiny than by the general public. The degree of effective “transparency” is not simply a matter of the numbers of persons who have access to the information in question or who might be able to witness the relevant activity.
- 283 No principle of transparency would be acceptable if it rode roughshod over the value of privacy, which is something else that matters to people for its own sake. People can value their privacy even where they have nothing in particular to hide. It is a violation of sorts when others have access to information about you that they want for no better reason than their prurience or sheer curiosity. Such issues have come into public focus recently with the Wikileaks and Snowden episodes. And though these cases are matters of high contention, it cannot be denied that invasions of people’s privacy in the interests of detecting criminal or terrorist activity imposes a loss on ordinary citizens; or that there is no charge to be answered when that loss is imposed without people’s being aware of it. How much secrecy should shield the “secret police” is a question that ought to be an issue of public judgment and public knowledge.
- 284 The upshot of these thoughts is that a requirement of effective transparency applies at least to public institutions, bearing in mind that:
- 285
1. there is a presumption in favor of privacy where the information does not impact on public roles;
 2. sometimes mechanisms of publicity and accountability can be rendered more effective by focusing on a targeted audience rather than an open-ended one;
 3. transparency is a more effective tool when buttressed by broadly democratic institutions—although it may be more needed where democratic constraints are weak or absent.

286 6.2.3 Democracy

- 287 Amartya Sen (2009, 329-32) has noted that while institutionalized systems involving the election of legislators may have originated in Europe and North America, many other cultures, including Emperor Ashoka's India and of some African cultures, had independently developed the idea that government should rest on open discussion among free and equal citizens. He quotes Nelson Mandela's recollections of local council meetings in Mqhekezweni (Mandela 1994, 21):
- 288 Everyone who wanted to speak did so. It was democracy in its purest form. There may have been a hierarchy of importance among the speakers, but everyone was heard, chief and subject, warrior and medicine man, shopkeeper and farmer, landowner and laborer The foundation of self-government was that all men were free to voice their options and equal in their value as citizens.
- 289 A more elaborate democratic system including checks and balances was developed by the Oromo people of Ethiopia (Legesse 2000). Dasho Karma Ura (2010, xvi), writing from the perspective of newly-democratic Bhutan, has aptly observed that "democracy needs to be organically grown and should be rooted in the specific culture, history, and values of [a] country." It is certainly true that successfully implementing democracy at the national level requires a supportive set of social habits and attitudes.
- 290 There nonetheless are strong reasons to support the principle that all governments should be democratic, in a way that combines democracy's "purest" elements, as singled out by Mandela—discussion among citizens treated as free and equal—with its institutionalization via the election of representatives who make the laws of the jurisdiction in question. The scale and complexity of modern national societies makes extending the ancient Athenian model of direct democracy, in which all citizens (a limited class of male property-owners) gathered and took turns holding official responsibilities, impracticable. Modern representative democracy gives equal political rights to all (honoring the principle of one person one vote), but affords no forum wherein all citizens can gather to deliberate on the common good. Nevertheless, it is viewed as the best way to honor their equal standing as citizens while respecting their basic liberties. At their best, modern democratic arrangements allow citizens to arrive at decisions regarding the common good without doing violence to the diversity of views they hold.
- 291 Already, this defense of representative democracy can be seen to respond to several of the general values and principles set out above in Sections 3 and 4. When pressed more deeply for a justification of democracy, many respond by arguing that it will instrumentally serve one or more of these values and principles. It has been argued, for instance, that implementing democracy will

enhance citizens' well-being by tending to lead to more reliably sensible decisions (Estlund 2008; Landemore 2013), by broadening citizens' sympathies and otherwise enhancing their characters (Mill 1991), or by helping avert famines (Sen 1999, 178-80) and wars—at least with other democratic nations (Rawls 1999b, sec. 5). Others have aimed to ground democracy as necessary for equality (Christiano 2008) or freedom (Pettit 2012). Moreover, understood as involving rule by the people, or collective self-rule, democracy is a political instantiation of the basic value of autonomy (Rousseau 1968, I.8; Richardson 2002).

292 Each of these broadly instrumental modes of arguing for democracy has strong merits. Important as these arguments are, however, it is doubtful that any one of them suffices as a complete justification of the principle that governments should be democratic. As noted, this principle calls for combining the element of discussion—which should be respectful and reasoned—the element of treating citizens as free and equal, and a set of electoral mechanisms. Accounts appealing just to one basic principle or value seem unable to account for all of these elements of democracy. A more complete justification of democracy may require characterizing it as a distinctive principled response to a number of basic values and principles (Richardson 2002). On such an account, democracy has intrinsic importance. Although it draws some of its normative significance from its connections with other, more general values and principles, democracy has normative significance of its own. For that reason, it is important to list the principle of democracy here, as a principle specially applicable to governments.

293 The internal normative complexity of the idea of democracy and its relevance to several of the general values and principles generates a range of possible interpretations of this ideal. For example, prioritizing the principle of freedom gives us the classical liberal, even Lockean, idea of popular government that places the greatest emphasis on the liberty of the individual. Its most familiar institutional form is the classical model of representative democracy, encompassing formal political equality including universal adult franchise, free and fair elections, freedom of speech and expression, and the rule of law. Democracy so interpreted may, however, be unreceptive to claims of redistributive justice on the grounds that addressing them it violates individual rights (Nozick 1974). By contrast, privileging the principle of equality is likely to lead us in the direction of a more participatory form of democracy that questions the worth of the formal rights of participation if these are effectively denied to large numbers of people on account of inequalities of gender, ethnicity, race and class. Not satisfied with the procedures of formal equality, participatory democracy aspires to substantive equality, through the use of political equality to achieve social and economic equality.

294 While liberals are wont to see political participation as a right of citizenship, a republican conception of citizenship views it as a duty rather than a right, and is therefore more demanding of civic virtue. For advocates of republican citizenship, the activities of citizenship are desirable because they enable individuals to integrate the various roles they play, as also to help integrate them into the civic community (Dagger 1997, 101).

295 **6.2.4 Giving rights determinate reality**

296 All agents must respect human rights and the equal dignity of persons; it falls specially to governments, however, to give them determinate reality for their own citizens and residents. In other words, it is largely up to governments to see to it that human rights are not mere paper guarantees. When they do that, they must exercise diligence, intelligence, and creativity in giving these rights shape in a way that is both robust and suitably tailored to local circumstances.

297 In describing this duty of governments, we do not need to settle the long-disputed question of whether human rights have determinate content and objective validity that is independent of the establishment of any government. If there are such so-called “natural rights” whose content can be determinately established, then governmental efforts to give reality to rights should respect these objective contours. Even absent such an agreement, however, there is, as we noted in §4.2, broad consensus on the moral importance of many human rights, despite disagreement about how best to justify them. Whatever their ultimate normative source, these rights will need to be given an effective reality by concrete institutions. This effort will inevitably shape them in specific ways that are not determinately fixed by their general justifications.

298 This need for governments to give rights concrete reality has been most obvious to people in the case of so-called “positive rights.” Take, for example, the right to work. Article 23 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states that “Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, [and] to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.” Without appropriate governmental institutions, this declaration would be, as it is pejoratively put, merely aspirational. To take an extreme case, in a so-called “command economy,” an individual’s choice of employment is not free. More generally, the right to work is ill realized without some form of social guarantee of employment security. In most places, this is established via the legal regulation of employment contracts, the empowerment of labor unions, and the provision of unemployment benefits. Although governments have considerable leeway in designing an appropriate mix of such strategies to fit their own circumstances, it is morally important that they put some such system of employment security in place.

299 Although this kind of task is most obvious in the case of positive human rights, it is by no means confined to their case. Governments must also take affirmative steps to give concrete reality to the core negative human rights. In order for anyone meaningfully to enjoy a right not to be assaulted, a police force, a criminal justice system, and perhaps street lights need to be in place (Shue 1996, 37-8). These are all means to securing individual's physical security that, while not strictly speaking necessary means, are the time-tested means that almost all human societies have found to be indispensable for this task.

300 As it deploys such means, the state will also, unavoidably, be engaged in settling the precise contours of the relevant rights. Immanuel Kant (1996) argued that getting the contours of rights definitely settled is the key reason why individuals have a duty to submit to political rule. Consider, for example, whether the right to bodily integrity should be interpreted as generating an objection to someone taking photographs of one's body, perhaps for advertising use (cf. Pallikathayil 2010)? Does it imply that it is wrong for medical scientists or police detectives to make use of someone's bodily fluids or tissues for research, investigative, or commercial purposes (cf. Skloot 2010)? More broadly, the specific contours of privacy rights not only vary in different cultures but are now constantly being forced to shift in reaction to shifting information technologies (Allen 2011). While it is not possible for governments to anticipate, let alone settle, all such difficult questions, it is incumbent on them to work to clarify them sufficiently so that everyone's human rights are given sufficiently definite and robust reality within their jurisdiction.

301 **6.3 Principles applicable to civil society**

302 We have already characterized civil society as a heterogeneous collection of institutions, associations, and practices that are not properly characterized either as elements of the market or as political institutions (§6.1.3). This subsection elaborates additional principles that could be seen as applying distinctively to the domain of civil society, either on its own or as it interacts with political institutions. Many if not all of these principles may also be seen as reinforcing the basic principles set out in §4.

303 Societies are populated by individuals who are members of several collectivities ranging from families and kin groups, to associations in civil society and political communities like the state. The literature on social capital has shown that some of the principles that govern personal informal relationships—such as those forbidding violations of trust—also have positive implications for strengthening civil society and democracy (Putnam 1993). However, this subsection limits itself to a discussion of only such principles as

are *distinctively* applicable to civil society and its treatment by political institutions, while emphasizing the ways in which they might service the basic principles.

304 6.3.1 Toleration

305 Requiring peaceably accepting differences with others, such as religious ones, toleration is a principle—or a family of principles—most appropriately applied to the realm of civil society. Although it may appear somewhat anodyne, honoring principles of toleration is a prerequisite for any more robust and valuable respect and esteem for others' cultures and beliefs. Toleration presumes the existence of practices or beliefs that people consider wrong or perhaps even bad, but that they are voluntarily willing to accept under certain conditions. In societies marked by strong cultural differences, for example, states can and do make laws and policies to promote multiculturalism, mostly with a view to securing harmony and peaceful co-existence among members of different cultures, races and religious communities living in a bounded political community. Legislated multiculturalism however will remain fragile unless individuals and groups in societies learn to value pluralism and diversity, and attitudes of toleration are fostered in civil society (Maclure & Taylor 2011).

306 In all free and democratic societies, as Rawls wrote, there will be a plurality of incompatible, but reasonable, religious, philosophical, moral and political doctrines that individuals and groups subscribe to, and that are comprehensive in their scope. These belong to what Rawls calls the “background culture” of civil society, expressed in its daily life, its associations, its universities and churches (Rawls 2005, 14). How then, despite these deep divisions, can people live together as free and equal citizens of a stable, just and well-ordered society? The challenge is to elaborate a political conception of justice that even a diverse citizenry holding a plurality of deeply opposed but reasonable doctrines can collectively affirm.

307 Toleration, says Rainer Forst (2003), is “a virtue of justice” because justice is the *context* in which the question of toleration arises. As he argues, toleration should not merely be a matter of the powerful choosing to be indulgent or of people merely facing the necessity of getting along. Rather, while it need not involve mutual esteem, it must involve mutual respect. Civil societies characterized by toleration of this sort embody respect in a distinctive way. As a result, people can, despite holding incompatible ethical beliefs and subscribing to different cultural practices, still respect each other as moral equals, making it possible for them to come together to define a framework for their collective life that is governed by norms that they all accept but that do not go in favor of any one “ethical community” (Forst 2003, 74).

- 308 To be sure, there are limits to justifiable toleration. Forst claims that these flow from the criteria of reciprocity and generality on which public justification rests, in general. The importance of reciprocity is self-evident: we cannot claim for ourselves a resource that we deny to others. Generality requires that the reasons we offer in support of certain norms should be acceptable as valid to everyone involved as free and equal persons (ibid., 76). Toleration ensues when, though persons “disagree with others about the nature of the good and true life, they tolerate all other views within the bounds of reciprocity and generality” (ibid., 78). The reasonable exercise of public reason requires civility, which encompasses a willingness to listen to opinions different from one’s own, and to be open to the possibility of modifying one’s views in light of those of others.
- 309 If a plurality of conceptions of the good is, as Rawls claims, a natural and reasonable outcome of human reason under free institutions, then it applies not only in societies that meld people from different cultures but in every society where individuals have the freedom to frame and pursue their own conceptions of the good. If this is right, then clashing conceptions of the individual and the common good will arise even in a culturally homogeneous society, so long as it respects basic liberties. Such articulations occur and are discussed and arbitrated, through the exercise of public reason in the public sphere—itsself an important institution (Habermas 1989; Richardson 2002, chap. 13)
- 310 Configured as a realm where citizens, of equal moral standing, recognize themselves as social beings and give expression to this recognition through mutual cooperation, civil society thus provides crucial conditions for democracy. Within a public sphere, bolstered by protections of the freedoms of association and expression, civil society’s many associations can fruitfully interact, enriching the exercise of public reason. The articulation of the common or public good occurs in this space, making civil society a “source of both value and values” (Edwards 2011, 5) or, as Michael Walzer described it, “a setting of settings,” a space where all visions of the good life are included but none is privileged (Walzer 2007, 123). It is in civil society that the preliminary negotiations among these multiple and competing visions takes place, though the final determination of the vision that will guide society occurs through processes of democratic decision-making.
- 311 **6.3.2 Educating and supporting citizens**
- 312 It is therefore pre-eminently in civil society that citizens are prepared for participation in public activity. Mutual respect for the autonomy of persons is the foundation of practices of citizenship. Citizens are defined not just by their legal standing as members of a political community, but also by their role as free and equal, as well as reasonable and rational, participants in its affairs. Accordingly, citizenship entails more than simply voting every few years. It

also presumes a commitment to some notion of the common good that can motivate promoting it through active participation in public affairs. This could take many forms: debate, discussion and even disagreement; forming or joining associations that represent one's particular vision of the common good; or seeking public office. A society's educational institutions—elements of civil society by our capacious definition—play a central role in creating citizens, especially in a democracy (Gutmann 1987).

313 Claims to rights that may be formally guaranteed by the basic structure, but remain substantively unavailable to citizens, may also be claimed through practices of “insurgent citizenship” (Holston 2008), making civil society a site of contestation over citizens' entitlements. Mounting citizenship claims could, in the extreme case of an unresponsive state, require practices of civil disobedience. Social movements of this kind are viewed as legitimate if they are undertaken publicly and non-violently, with the willingness to suffer punishment for violating the law (e.g., Walzer 2007).[14]

314 In such ways, associations in civil society complement the work of the institutions of representative democracy in giving basic rights and liberties determinate reality (see §6.2.4). While the formal democratic institutions are presumed to offer reasonable mechanisms for enabling a society to chart its path to progress, as its citizens understand and define it, the many elements of civil society play a complementary role in setting social norms and maintaining a democratic political culture that is respectful of core values and principles such as freedom and justice, of social progress. The normative ties of civil society to democracy are thus deep and fundamental.

315 6.4 Global justice

316 We began our discussion of the different units whose progress is to be assessed (§5) by stating that we may take for granted that among these is the global unit. For some dimensions of assessing global progress, shifting from the national to the global level of assessment is a simple matter of aggregating the indicator data. That shift is considerably more complex when the dimension under assessment is justice. Under the heading of justice, we have discussed different distributive principles (such as equality and sufficiency) (§4.2), and also different accounts of the metric of distributive justice, such as resources and capabilities (§3.1.2). (The account here will assume familiarity with the approaches described in those two sections.) In addition to articulating these aspects of the relevant principles, accounts of justice must also specify among whom such principles apply. Who is included within the scope of justice? The preceding section has introduced the *temporal* aspect of the question, exploring duties of justice to future generations (§5.4).

317 This section explores the *geographical* aspect, looking specifically at the extent to which principles of justice should apply to the world as a whole. Are there global principles of justice? Or do principles of justice apply only within units like the state or nation? Or do some principles apply globally and others within the state or nation? In addition to these questions about scope, we also face questions about what are the relevant moral units for these principles of global justice. If there are global principles of justice, are the fundamental rights-holders and duty-bearers individual human beings, or are they collective bodies like nations, states, firms and international organizations or both?

318 We can begin with the question of scope and then turn to the question of what the fundamental rights-holders and duty-bearers are.

319 **6.4.1 The geographical scope of justice**

320 Traditionally, theories of justice have taken the nation or the state to define the scope of principles of distributive justice. However, this assumption that these apply only within a society has come under considerable pressure, and increasingly political philosophers have argued that they apply—also or instead—at the global level.

321 Many different accounts of global justice have been proposed. Some, for example, defend a system of basic rights to economic goods to which everyone is entitled (Shue 1996). Others think that Rawls's Difference Principle should be applied at the global level, and thus that global inequalities should be arranged so as to maximize the condition of the world's least advantaged (Beitz 1999, part III). Others adopt an egalitarian approach, and hold that global inequalities are unjust (Caney 2005). Although these accounts differ in the principles they affirm, their normative assumptions and the arguments that support them entail that the scope of their principles of distributive justice should be global.

322 We can divide arguments for global justice into “associational” and “non-associational” approaches. The former holds that principles of justice apply to, and regulate, “associations,” where an association is a catch-all term for human cooperative groupings, including various different kinds of social or economic system. (The varieties will be examined below, in §6.3.3) The latter, non-associational approach, by contrast, holds that principles of justice can apply to a set of persons regardless of whether or not its members share membership in some pre-existing social or economic or political association. Though these two approaches differ in their starting points, they tend to converge in their conclusions.

- 323 Consider associational approaches first. A leading exponent of an associational approach is Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1999a), which develops principles of justice that apply to the "basic structure" of a society (see Box 2.7). Now, although every nation-state has a basic structure, many have argued that thinking only of the basic structure of nations is no longer tenable. Charles Beitz (1999, 143-153) has argued that, given the nature and extent of global interdependence, one must conclude that there is a global basic structure, and hence should endorse global principles of justice. Highlighting the globalized nature of modern economic life, his argument draws attention to the extent of the global trade of resources, goods and services; the existence of multinational corporations; and the influence of the international financial system, comprising numerous transnational and global regulatory frameworks and regimes and institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. All of these affect people throughout the world.
- 324 This position receives further support once we consider global environmental interdependence. Climate change provides a good illustration of this. The economic behavior of people in one part of the world generates high volumes of greenhouse gases, thereby affecting the extent to which others elsewhere enjoy food security, or are vulnerable to storm surges, flooding and heatwaves, or are exposed to dangerous diseases
- 325 Drawing on these kinds of economic, political, and environmental linkages, we can see that in a globalized world, there is a powerful case for endorsing global principles of distributive justice, and that confining principles of justice to states is implausible.
- 326 A related reason for endorsing global principles of justice has been proposed by Thomas Pogge. Pogge's argument has two key elements. First, like Beitz, he thinks that principles of justice apply to institutions. Pogge holds that "any institutional design is unjust when it foreseeably produces an avoidable human rights deficit" (2008, 25). Pogge then adds that agents have a strict duty not to uphold and support such unjust schemes. If they do uphold them they are violating their duty not to harm others by acting in a way that sustains a system that foreseeably and avoidably denies people their rights.
- 327 The second step in Pogge's argument is that the governments of wealthy countries are, in fact, violating this duty and are responsible for global poverty. They do so by imposing unjust trade rules. In addition they also contribute to global poverty by colluding with unjust and repressive states. They treat governments, irrespective of how undemocratic or unjust they are, as the legitimate owners of the natural resources within their jurisdiction (thereby affirming what Pogge terms the "international resource privilege"—see also Wenar 2016). Similarly, they treat all governments as entitled to take out loans which subsequent governments must honor (thereby affirming the

“international borrowing privilege”: Pogge 2008, 119-121). These practices cause devastating civil war as competing groups seek to capture the benefits of ruling, harming the people of resource-producing countries while lining the pockets of their rulers. For both these reasons, these international arrangements thereby contribute to poverty. The governments of affluent countries thus have a duty of justice to eradicate poverty, where this should not be understood as having an amorphous duty to aid the global poor, but rather as a strict duty of justice not to collude in causing their poverty.

- 328 Notwithstanding their differences, Beitz and Pogge’s arguments rest on a shared normative assumption and a shared empirical one. Both assume that justice applies within systems characterized by at least a certain level of interdependence. As Beitz notes, minimal levels of trade are insufficient to constitute a basic structure: it must reach a certain threshold level of integration and impact on the lives of people (1999, 165-167). Second, their arguments assume that the level of interdependence and economic integration required for the application of principles of distributive justice is met at the global level. Pogge’s argument further assumes that global poverty stems from the actions of affluent countries and not wholly from local causes.
- 329 In contrast, the non-associational arguments for global justice do not depend for their force on empirical claims about the extent of global interdependence. They hold that principles of justice can apply even if persons do not share membership in any pre-existing association.
- 330 One example of this kind of approach is Henry Shue’s defense of basic rights to a minimally decent human life (1996). Shue argues that persons have a basic right to have their basic needs met, where a basic right is a right that a person must enjoy if he or she is to enjoy other rights. Since humans all need food, water and shelter to enjoy other rights, they have, on Shue’s argument, a basic right to this minimum standard of living. Shue then reasons that this entails not only a duty not to cause poverty but also two more affirmative duties—a duty “to protect from deprivation” and a duty “to aid the deprived” (1996, 68).
- 331 Others go further. For example, luck egalitarians hold that “it is bad – unjust and unfair – for some to be worse off than others through no fault of their own” (Temkin 1993, p.13). If this is right then it would suggest that it is bad for some to be worse off than others because they come from one country rather than another, and thus that luck egalitarianism should apply at the global level (see §5.3).
- 332 The central cosmopolitan point thus remains: the core tenets underlying standard accounts of justice—whether associational or non-associational—suggest that those accounts should apply at the global level.

333 6.4.2 Three kinds of association

334 Some, not accepting this point but not willing to jettison the category of global justice, either, hold that whilst there are some global principles of justice, there are others that apply only within the nation or state. Many, for example, have argued that egalitarian principles apply only within the state (e.g., Miller 2007), but that a threshold based conception of justice applies globally. At least two distinct arguments have been given.

335 First, some reason that principles of egalitarian justice apply within schemes of reciprocity. They further argue that the state is a realm of reciprocity but that there is no global scheme of reciprocal cooperation. They infer from this that egalitarian principles apply within the state, but not at the global level (Sangiovanni 2007).

336 Second, some argue that the state is a morally distinctive kind of relationship because it exercises coercion. Michael Blake (2013), for example, makes an argument to this effect. He starts from a commitment to autonomy, and then argues that this has two implications. First, since autonomy is centrally valuable it is important that everyone enjoys the decent minimum standard of living necessary to be an autonomous agent (so a principle of sufficiency should apply at the global level). Second, however, when a state coerces its citizens in ways that purport to put them under legal duties, it owes them a justification for that restriction of their autonomy. And this, Blake contends, can be met only by the state applying egalitarian standards to its citizens. Since he believes that there is no analogous coercive framework at the global level, he concludes that there is no case for equality at the global level

337 These conclusions are overly hasty. Even if equality applies in schemes of reciprocity, it does not follow that it *only* applies in such schemes. The argument from autonomy and coercion is similarly vulnerable. Some will argue that the global order is indeed relevantly coercive (Valentini 2011, 115ff); but waiving that objection, that equality applies in a coercive framework does not show that it applies *only* in such a context. (For further discussion and references see Caney 2011.)

338 In practice, ensuring that everyone is above a decent minimum might require greater equality at the global level. As in the domestic context, significant disparities of economic wealth can enable to dominate and control others (Brock 2009, chap. 12; Ypi 2012 chap. 5; Satz 1999, 81-82). Such control can, in turn allow the wealthy to undermine political implementation of a decent minimum for people everywhere.

339 6.4.3 The units of global justice: nations, peoples, states

340 Where do nations and states fit into our understanding of global justice? Some conceptualize global justice in part in terms of the principles that should govern the ways that “peoples” (Rawls 1999b) or “nation-states” (Miller 2007) should treat each other.

341 The moral significance of nations is discussed above (§5.3). In this context, it is relevant to note that ideals of national self-determination and self-government have appeal because, and to the extent that, they contribute to the well-being and the freedom of their members. Cosmopolitan accounts of justice of the types described above can take on board such an understanding of the importance of self-government. Where they would differ with nationalists and statist is rather with regard to what principles should regulate the global institutional framework within which nations and states operate. Still, these differences should not be exaggerated. In the first place, Miller (2007) and Rawls (1999, 65) each endorse a set of basic rights. Furthermore, Miller allows that securing this might require addressing global inequalities (2007, 75ff).

342 **6.4.4 Different principles for different issues?**

343 One further question needs to be addressed. At the global level there are very many issues that might plausibly be thought to be subject to principles of justice. These include (among others)

344 - the nature of global trade;

345 - the effects of climate change and the distribution of burdens and benefits in combatting climate change;

346 - migration and free movement; and

347 - the regulation of international financial markets;

348 - international labor rights and rules concerning sweatshop labor.

349 This heterogeneous list raises the question of whether there should be different principles of justice for different issues. Such a diversity of principles could mirror to some extent the diversity of global institutions, which include institutions concerned with trade (like the WTO), climate change (the United Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC]), the Ozone layer (the Montreal Protocol), the use of the sea (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea), labor rights (the International Labor Organization), and so on. Furthermore, some argue that we should seek to construct different principles for different practices (Sangiovanni 2008).

350 Two points should, however, be noted. First, even if one did think that the right principle of justice for a given practice depends in some sense on the nature of that practice, that is quite compatible with affirming more general global principles of justice. To be sure (as we have already mentioned), applying global principles of justice may well require different concrete rules in different situations.

351 Second, although the issues dealt with by global institutions are heterogeneous, it would be implausible to treat any of them in isolation, as they are profoundly causally interdependent. For example, trade (by facilitating fossil-fuel-intensive economic growth) can contribute to climate change; tackling climate change by using biofuels instead of fossil fuel energy can lead to a spike in food prices in developing countries, thus affecting rights to food.

352 Given this extensive interdependence among all of the issues dealt with by international institutions, there is a need for an overarching set of principles that regulates the ways in which they interact. This is especially so, given that the different policy areas often bear on the same interests of individuals, such as health and the capacity to lead the life of one's choice. To treat these issues as separate realms is thus implausible

353 **6.4.5 Concluding remarks on global justice**

354 There remains ongoing debate at both the methodological and substantive levels about the nature of global justice. (In addition to the accounts above, see also Risse 2012 and Valentini 2011.) Nonetheless, it is striking that notwithstanding these differences there is shared agreement on the evils of global poverty, destitution and malnutrition, and convergence on the view that a just world would be one in which all were able to enjoy a decent minimum standard of living.

355 **6.5 Principles arising from individuals' obligations to each other**

356 Rounding out this section's discussion of principles specially applicable to distinct domains, we come to principles specially applicable to individuals on their own or in their informal (non-legal) relationships with someone else. Of course, many of the principles set out in §4, including those of justice and beneficence, apply to all individuals; but they also apply more broadly. Here, as in the previous parts of this section, our attention is focused on principles of limited domain. The *value* of social relations was treated in Box 2.3. The *principles* specifically applicable to individuals as such or within specific informal relationships such as friendships and familial relationships are many and various, but their main significance for how to promote and assess social progress is relatively simple, and boils down to two points. First, societies should avoid making it impossible for individuals to fulfill the special

obligations incumbent on them. Second, assuming more urgent and basic needs are adequately addressed, societies should facilitate individuals' voluntary undertaking of a wide range of otherwise permissible commitments. In other words, the social significance of these informal and individual obligations is indirect, and generates principles applicable to other actors. Negatively, it arises from the fact that social circumstances can exacerbate contingent conflicts among obligations, putting individuals in a difficult bind. Positively, it arises from the fact that voluntarily undertaking obligations by committing oneself to this or that cause or associative enterprise is an important way for individuals to enrich their lives and to contribute to one another's satisfaction of their relational needs.

357 6.5.1 Minimizing double binds

358 One common source of difficult and uncomfortable clashes among an individual's various obligations is uneven social progress. Feminist theorists have highlighted such issues, often calling them "double binds" (e.g., Kroeger-Mappes, 1994). In many nations, for instance, gender equality in hiring has progressed faster than either the workplace culture or the local parenting practices. As a result, women in leadership positions or in roles such as that of a lawyer often face difficult conflicts between their obligations as employees to be ruthless and their more general obligation to be politely respectful of others, which their sexist social context still interprets as calling for women to be gentle (Williams 2001, p. 252). The obligation to be politely respectful of others is morally significant (Buss 1999, Stohr 2012), and the issue of how to satisfy it in social conditions embodying prejudice and criticizable inequality is a difficult one. The upshot is that women in these positions will often justifiably feel caught between two morally significant demands that clash not merely on one occasion but pervasively.

359 Conflicts between workplace obligations and parental responsibilities are also very common. Although all parents who work outside the home face tensions between their employment obligations and their obligations to care for their children, in most societies these dilemmas arise most acutely and pervasively for mothers. In the absence of adequately flexible working and child-care arrangements, mothers often feel understandably torn between these two sets of obligations (Kroeger-Mappes, 1994; Kittay, 1999; Williams, 2001). To be clear: the moral ill of suffering a moral dilemma that is thrust upon parents—especially mothers—by imperfect social arrangements is a problem over and above any injustice or discrimination that those arrangements embody. The latter are adequately captured by the principles of justice and non-discrimination laid out in §4. Here, the point is that, given such social problems or imperfections, obligations that devolve on individuals can collide in a way that puts them in practically impossible, morally difficult, and emotionally trying positions. Although such difficulties may be expected as social progress moves forward unevenly, without instantaneously adjusting to

one another the expectations and obligations that arise in different spheres, one may hope that as social progress proceeds further, such adjustments will be made, reducing the prevalence of double binds.

360 6.5.2 Enabling individuals to undertake commitments

361 There is a positive side to this coin. In addition to the danger of double binds that it poses, individuals' freedom to undertake multiple commitments, such as to their work and to their children, also has positive relevance to social progress. It is not just that individuals' liberty to undertake associative commitments is basic and should be protected in civil society (§6.3). In addition, societies should make it possible for individuals to enter into a wide range of obligation-generating commitments.

362 Here, the argument is that providing space for obligation-generating commitments to arise is crucial for giving depth to human relations, whose general value we have already canvassed (Box 2.3). Thus, societies should foster not only romantic love, but also committed relationships; not only sexual reproduction, but also committed relationships between parent and child; and not only commercial transactions, but also committed relationships between professional and client.

363 The set of professional and associative obligations that one person can owe another thus are important to mapping out a space in which progress can be pursued. This claim assumes that people can accrue such special interpersonal obligations. Moral philosophers debate how to analyze and how to account for such special obligations, such as may be owed by parents to children or children to parents, or owed by comrades working together on a common cause, or by compatriots, to each other (Hardimon 1994, Jeske 1996, Simmons 1996, Scheffler 2001, Richardson, 2012). Nonetheless, it is widely agreed that such special obligations do arise (e.g., Confucius, 2000, esp. p. 51). That being so, making it possible for such special obligations to arise and to be fulfilled is an important social task.

364 7. Looking ahead: using the compass

365 This chapter has aimed to set out the key values and principles relevant to assessing social progress. These are relevant to all social domains, albeit in differing degree and with greater or lesser directness. We have concentrated on values and principles that have a claim to non-derivative importance—normative significance that is not clearly derivable from any other value or

principle. Even with this restriction, we have generated a long list of values and principles that must be taken into account in assessing social progress (see Table 2.1). Although this list is relatively long, each of the items remains quite abstractly formulated.

- 366 To bring these values and principles to bear in assessing social progress and in guiding policy proposals in any given social domain, it will often be necessary and apt to do more work in interpreting and specifying them in a way suitable to that domain. Sincere efforts at doing so will respect the values and principles in question.
- 367 Assessing progress—achieved or expected—and designing policies are different but related activities. In this concluding section we discuss briefly how to bring these relatively abstract values and principles usefully to bear on specific issues. We first discuss the idea of using report cards to value policy outcomes (Has there been social progress?). We then comment on the link between outcomes and specific policy actions (What policy measures should be taken?). Here we are using the term “outcomes” broadly, to include whether or not the principles’ requirements on process have been or will be satisfied over the relevant period.

368 7.1 Evaluating social progress and regress

- 369 Social progress is an overarching concept that integrates many social domains. An overall accounting of social progress would need to consider the causal interactions among these different domains and how to integrate these in an overall normative perspective. The examples abound, but let us just mention the topical link between inequality, religion, democracy and security, or the well-known relationship between health and the distribution of material welfare. The need to consider interactions was also emphasized in section 6.4 on global justice. Yet, for all practical purposes, there is a division of labor with different actors responsible for action in different domains (§4 *init.*; Box 2.7). These specific actors often cannot meaningfully focus on overall social progress as such, and instead need guidance tailored to their specific domain. Moreover, while ultimately all values and principles may be relevant in all domains, some will be essential in some domains and largely negligible in others. We therefore propose to illustrate how to apply our normative framework with a specific domain in mind (e.g. climate change, income distribution, gender relations, international security, democracy).
- 370 The *first* challenge is then to determine which of the *values and principles set out above are (most) relevant for the specific issue at hand*. To do so well is an art, not a science, and will benefit from input from a wide range of perspectives.

- 371 After selecting the relevant values and principles, one must answer two follow-up questions. First, at what level should the values and principles be applied and evaluated (see §5)? At the local, the regional, the national, the world level? Including future generations and non-human animals or not? The decisions in this regard will affect how the relevant values and principles should be interpreted and made operational. For example, the content of distributive justice might reasonably be thought to depend on the level at which it is evaluated. One may be egalitarian at a lower level and aim at a decent minimum at the world level (see §6.4.5). One may have a preference based concept of well-being when thinking about actual generations but use a more objective well-being concept for future generations, whose preferences are unknown (Karnein, forthcoming). One might accept a preference based concept of well-being for humans (who have a sophisticated valuational capacity), but understand well-being in a hedonist way for other animals. These choices will matter and must be made explicit at the start.
- 372 The second follow-up question is who the relevant actors are, whose past or expected contributions to social progress are to be assessed? As noted in §6, certain principles apply specially to certain types of actors, such as governments, individuals, or social organizations. More generally, it is common to look to different sets of actors to take the lead in realizing different values and principles. Here, too, complex interactions may be expected. For instance, within a well-organized society, even if acts of generosity and beneficence should come in the first place from individuals, government policy can facilitate these actions both by providing tax incentives, say, and by providing social safety nets that prevent such generosity from being overwhelmed. We will return to this second question in the following subsection.
- 373 Suppose now that someone concerned with progress in a given social domain has selected and interpreted a set of relevant values and principles and specified at which level and to which actors they should be applied. To go further, one will have to make the analysis still more specific and operational. *How can one move from the relatively abstract values and principles set out in this chapter towards a more specific set of indicators?*
- 374 The first step in this process is to make explicit how one interprets the principle—perhaps in a way that provisionally takes a side in or glosses over continuing controversies about how best to understand them. As we have made explicit in the foregoing, it is not enough to say that one is in favor of “distributive justice” or of “maximal freedom”, because the ideals of distributive justice or maximal freedom can be interpreted in different ways. And these different interpretations will have consequences when we apply them to devise policies. Yet even where we have offered a single interpretation of a given value or principle—such as of *esteem* in §3.5 or *the rule of law* in §6.2.1—we do not suppose or suggest that the work of interpretation

is done. Even if what we have said above is correct as far as it goes, it may be necessary to specify the relevant values and principles further so as to bring out their full relevance to the domain, level, and actors in question. For instance, open-minded evaluation of the effect of evolving social media on social progress will not tendentiously specify the value of *relational goods* either as being fully achieved by being someone's online "friend" or as registering only face-to-face encounters, but as technology continues to evolve, it will need to consider revised (more specific) interpretations of this value that appropriately take account of new obstacles to and opportunities for human interrelationship that the newest social media provide.

- 375 Once an adequately interpreted and specified set of values and principles is in hand, one's aim is to evaluate, on their basis, whether a move from situation A to situation B is a case of social progress or not. This requires that we can structure and interpret the facts so that they can be evaluated in the light of each of the relevant values and principles. Often we will need specific indicators to do this. Suppose we care about *environmental values* (§3.7). How to determine in which social state environmental values are better honored and protected? Environmental values embrace a complex and varied set of elements, including the avoidance of species extinction and the stability of ecosystems. Any specific indicator will necessarily cover only some of these. Inevitably, specific indicators—at least if they are chosen with data availability in mind—will always give a simplified and narrowed operationalization of such complicated objectives. And the same problem arises even for defining indicators for a seemingly straightforward concept such as *income inequality*. It is not always obvious how to define income; and even if it were, one would still have to choose an inequality measure. Different measures may evaluate a change in the income distribution differently.
- 376 In most cases one will therefore need a set of complementary indicators adequately to capture each interpreted value or principle; and even then care is needed. The task of bridging indicators to the underlying values and principles is even more delicate if we want to evaluate a development over time or compare the performance of different countries, since an apt selection of indicators will depend on the context. This difficulty has nothing to do with the degree of quantification of the indicators (to which we will return). Even if we restrict ourselves to ordinal indicators, each specific choice thereof will unavoidably be restrictive. And an indicator that would not help in ranking situations, i.e. in deciding whether situation A is better than situation B, is useless if we want to define social progress.
- 377 Once one has selected a set of indicators of the satisfaction of the relevant values and principles, one can set up a *report card*, monitoring, say, the yearly changes in the indicators or comparing the values of the indicators for different evaluation units (e.g. countries). Such a report card should be set up separately for each value and principle. If the full set of report cards reveals

that some indicators show improvement and other indicators show disimprovement, an intelligent conversation is needed to come to an overall judgment; but the set of report cards should contain the information that is needed to feed that intelligent conversation.

378 **Table 2.3:** Example of domain report card

379	PRINCIPLE OR VALUE X	Evaluation unit and period	...	Evaluation unit and period
	Indicator 1			
	Indicator 2			
	...			
	Indicator n			
	Summary evaluation			

380 Once one has this kind of setting, one could go further and use the framework to formulate targets, i.e. goals that should have been or should be reached within a given time span. The summary evaluation would then also involve a comparison between the realized outcomes and the outcome targets that had been formulated in advance. (It is important to see that we are until now focusing only on outcomes and not on the policies and policy instruments that are needed to reach the target.)

381 To arrive at an *overall evaluation of social progress (or regress)*, requires two further steps. First, evaluating progress within any chosen domain will likely require taking account of various values and principles may be at play. For example, inequality, freedom, and esteem may each be relevant to evaluating income distribution. Assessing the progress in that domain will then require looking at this trio of values and principles. Second, *evaluating overall social progress requires bringing together the results in the various social domains* (e.g. income distribution, health, respect for political rights).

382 Similar methodological questions arise regarding each of these two steps. Let us first look at the overall evaluation within one domain. This is easy in situations of dominance, i.e. if there is progress (of regress) for all values and principles at the same time. It is also easy if one decides to give absolute (or “lexicographic”) priority to one principle or value over the others and therefore is willing effectively to disregard the performance on the other

dimensions. Setting aside these extreme approaches, however, one has to confront the issue of how to trade off a better performance (“progress”) on one principle for a worse performance (“regress”) on another principle.

- 383 The most radical solution is to apply weights. This basically requires that all the relevant indicators be quantitative. Simple weighted measures of social progress, aggregating at the same time over values or principles and over domains, have become very popular in recent years. They have the apparent advantage of transparency. However, their uncritical use may be dangerously misleading. Users of these measures are strongly tempted to look only at the resulting final score. This means neglecting both the potential weakness (or at least narrowness) and the informational richness of the underlying indicators. This danger can be exacerbated by the temptation to choose indicators based on how easy it is to define them quantitatively and to find data corresponding to them. Moreover, looking only at the score resulting from the exercise also means accepting uncritically the relative weights that are used to specify the trade-offs. For lack of a better alternative, index designers all too often use an equal weighting procedure, but without having any good arguments for this choice. Finally, most simple measures assume that the set of weights is constant over time or in between-country comparisons. There are good reasons to question this assumption, as it seems natural to assume that the differing evaluative perspectives of the people in these different societies or the different circumstances of these societies—or both—will provide grounds for varying the weight ascribed to different objectives.
- 384 Weighting may be more or less acceptable if the items to be weighted are expressed in commensurable units. After all, the concave social welfare functions described in §4.4 in some sense exemplify sophisticated weighting the well-being of different individuals. However, when we have to consider very different objectives (esteem, cultural heritage, freedom and the distribution of material consumption), all attempts to explicit weighting will necessarily do violence to the qualitative distinctions among the values and principles in question. This does not necessarily mean, however, that we cannot say anything at all. Intelligent conversation can elucidate the trade-offs and ultimately contribute to some definition of social progress in a given domain, perhaps by refining and enriching the underlying concepts. Provisional attempts to set up some formal weighting scheme can spur intelligent discussion even if they do not end up being accepted as definitive. They may indeed serve as a starting point for that discussion and perhaps even help in structuring it. Techniques of multicriteria decision making can be useful in this respect. However, one should never take their outcomes simply at face value.
- 385 If desired, one can bring together the summary evaluations from the report cards on each different value and principle into one overall report card on social progress in domain X that could look as follows.

386 **Table 2.3:** Synthetic report card

387	SOCIAL PROGRESS IN DOMAIN X	Evaluation unit and period	... Evaluation unit and period
	Summary evaluation principle 1		
	Summary evaluation principle 2		
	...		
	Summary evaluation principle k		
	Summary evaluation		

388 Similar methodological questions arise in the last step, which is the *aggregation of the outcomes in the different domains to arrive at an overall social assessment*. Of course it can be informative to show that a nation—or the world—is doing better on life expectancy but worse on mental health and equality. But what are we to make of its ‘social progress’ (or regress) “*all things considered*”? How can we say anything about its progress *tout court*? Here also, explicit weighting is an extreme solution. And here also it is not meaningful to accept uncritically the findings of any mechanistic weighting procedure. A creative alternative that has been worked out by the OECD offers the visitors of its website the opportunity to change the relative evaluation of the different dimensions of its “Better Life Index” themselves (<http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/#/111111111111> (<http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/#/111111111111>)). Even without explicit weighting one can get interesting insights by exploiting the natural assumption that a specific outcome becomes relatively less important as we have more of it. We illustrate this possibility further in the box. Yet, the ultimate evaluation of whether there has been social progress will have to follow from an informed and democratic deliberation procedure.

389 A complication arises if, as is likely, the same values or principles are relevant in more than one domain, giving rise to two distinct ways of proceeding. For instance, well-being and freedom will surely be affected by the situation in many domains: income, health, political institutions. It may then be misleading to first formulate an evaluation for each of the domains (with a narrowed down concept of well-being and freedom) and then “aggregate” over the different domains, for this will ignore the effects of well-being and freedom of interactions among the domains. An alternative option would be to first

aggregate the effects of changes in the different domains on each of the basic normative dimensions, and then in a second step decide about the relative weighting thereof. The latter option is more difficult, but is better suited to take into account the interactions among the various domains, though perhaps less well suited to take into account interactions among the values and principles.

390

Box 2.8: Weighing and convexity

Even without explicit weighting, one could exploit the notion of convexity in any defensible aggregation function to induce something about how the relative priority of different elements is changing over time, or how it might differ between places. The idea of convexity is rather like the principle of diminishing marginal value of each specific element. It says that the appropriate terms of trade between elements reflect how much of each element is present. It does not tell you what the relative weights between elements are, but it does permit two kinds of comparisons: inter-temporal and international.

Take the inter-temporal first. Suppose we know (or have very strong evidence for believing) that there has been significant material progress since say 1700. We believe, say, that

average income per head in the world has increased by about a factor of ten over the last three centuries. (The rate of growth has been faster in the West: a factor of 17 in the UK; around 20 in Western Europe; and 55 in the USA.) We do not know so much about equality except in the recent past; but suppose we focus on just the period from 1950 to the present. Within the US (where data are reasonably authoritative) GDP/head has almost tripled since 1950; and inequality has worsened since 1950. What do these facts suggest? They suggest that whatever the value of additional equality in terms of additional growth forgone (the “appropriate terms of trade”) was in 1950, those relative values will have changed significantly over the last 70 years: increased equality should now be worth more than 70 years ago and increased average income should be worth less. The claim is a normative one, not a descriptive one.

Consider a different application: the trade-off between mental health and longevity. We know that for every decade of the 20th century, life expectancy in the West rose for virtually every category of persons by about two years per decade. Accordingly, the proper terms of trade between actions designed to increase longevity and any element that has remained roughly constant (say the suicide rate) ought to increase the relative priority attached to the latter. Treating suicide as an indicator of mental health suggests that suicide should be a considerably higher priority relative to increased longevity now than it was in 1900.

The crucial overarching claim here is that in weighting the various elements of social progress to achieve an overall measure the weighting function is properly convex; other things equal, it ought to treat any given element as being of less significance relative to others, the more extensively that element is achieved vis-à-vis others. This is a necessarily a normative claim because social progress is necessarily a normative concept: ‘social progress’ is something that *pro tanto* we ought to promote. Convexity is a substantive normative property and perhaps needs more defense than it receives here. But it is surely a weaker assumption than a full specification of weights; and it does allow us to say some things and to suggest some priorities in settings where we would otherwise have to be silent (and indeed arguably would have to give up on a notion of social progress *simpliciter* entirely.)

391 7.2 From principles and values to action

- 392 In the previous subsection we introduced the idea of report cards for evaluating the outcomes (or the performance) of individual countries or of the whole world on the relevant dimensions of social progress. Evaluating outcomes is important and relevant, but one would hope that a compass could also be useful prospectively, i.e. to choose among different policy options.
- 393 It is clear, however, that a compass is not sufficient to find the best way forward. At the very least, one also needs a map. While we deliberately remained in this chapter at the level of normative principles, for policy analysis one also needs empirical knowledge about the facts and (even more difficult) about the causal relationships between actions and outcomes. Indeed, while mere correlations may be useful in a descriptive endeavor, they can be highly misleading when deciding about policies.
- 394 Thinking about policies requires going beyond a description of the ideal and taking into account feasibility. Taking account of the limits of feasibility in an intelligent way requires one to continuously work to be clear about what one is aiming to accomplish. In this chapter, we have set out many values and principles that have a claim to non-derivative importance. They hence each are candidates for what is worth promoting and respecting for its own sake. Policy-makers can use this list of values and principles to help guide them towards a clearer understanding of what they seek to accomplish in any given context. The limits of feasibility always take shape in relation to some idea of what one is trying to do. Conversely, one's ideas about what one is trying to do often come to take more definite shape as one struggles with the limits of feasibility. In this regard, it is important to remember that it can make sense to think about what one seeks for the sake of what. For instance, macroeconomic policy might sensibly treat the capability to work as a central capability worth promoting for its own sake, while at the same time viewing this capability as a means to allowing individuals not only to earn income but also to realize their full potential (Sen 1975, Richardson 2015).
- 395 Interacting with one's evolving sense of the aims of policy are at least three types of constraints. First, there are resource constraints. Suppose that policy makers could effect the social changes they want in the light of the ideals introduced earlier; i.e. suppose that they have an almost unlimited ability at social engineering. They accordingly would be able to select a "first best" policy option, to use the economics jargon. Even so, they would nonetheless be unable to achieve everything in a finite world with a limited set of (both natural and human) resources. They would still have normatively difficult choices to make.

- 396 Of course, the supposition that policy makers could effect any social change they wanted is highly unrealistic. Society is not perfectly malleable. Governments do not have all the information needed to implement “first best”-policies—often because they lack knowledge about the true productive capacities of individuals (needed to implement a just scheme of income taxes) or about their preferences for public goods (needed to avoid free-rider behavior). Since individuals’ behavioral choices will not necessarily be guided by the social principles that the government would like to pursue and since their behavior cannot be controlled by the government (because of informational asymmetries) and probably should not fully be controlled by the government even if it could (because of respect for human freedom), policy proposals will have to take into account incentive constraints. We then move in what economists would call a “second best”-setting. Note that we do not argue here for an adjustment of the ideal (e.g. from equality to maximin); we simply draw attention to the obstacles on the way to the ideal. Note also that one has to interpret “incentives” broadly: human beings are not driven only by materialistic motives.
- 397 While incentive constraints are the main focus of economists, we mentioned already in §2.1.2 that policy choices can also be constrained by moral considerations. This is a third way that policy choices can be constrained. In the case of some of the principles mentioned in this chapter, such as respect for basic rights, these constraints will ordinarily take the form of taking certain options off the table. For instance, policy-makers should simply not consider what they might be able to do if they could arbitrarily lock up or surreptitiously sterilize members of a small but obstreperous minority group. When dealing with tensions among principles or with the margins of their interpretation, however, it can be reasonable to take into account feasibility and incentive constraints (Rawls 1999a, Part III). Consider, for example, what exactly should be done to implement an adequate system of transparency and accountability or how to implement religious liberty in a way that respects the freedom to exercise one’s religious beliefs yet avoids allowing discrimination. When moral principles enter policy discussions, this may take the form of a requirement that some principles can never be subject to trade-offs. In some cases, however, moral constraints must be introduced in the analysis explicitly.
- 398 Only a thorough empirical analysis, taking into account these constraints and incorporating the best available knowledge may in the end lead to a well-supported set of specific policy proposals, linked to the different outcome goals. Remember, moreover, that different actors—and not only governments—are at play and will influence the final outcomes. The actions they each should take will differ, but will influence each other and must therefore be considered together.
- 399 This sort of analysis may finally result in a “toolkit table” that could look as follows:

400 **Table 2.4: Toolkit table**

401

	Policy-makers	International organization	NGOs	Citizens
Goal 1	Policy a	Action A	Action A'	Action A''
Goal 2	Policy b	Action B	Action B'	Action B''
...				

402 Here, too, one could go further and add targets, as mentioned above in the context of outcomes. In the context of a policy toolkit, these would be policy targets—e.g. a minimal share of GDP that should be devoted by the government to health care, or a minimal number of local medical units that should be set up by a NGO. Policy targets will necessarily depend on the specific situation and have to be adapted continuously. They can act as motivating and coordinating focal points. It may be convenient for actors to concentrate on a specific action target, rather than always to have to think in terms of a broader concept of social progress. On the other hand, there is also a danger of confusion between policy targets and normatively significant outcomes. What ultimately matters for social progress are the outcomes that are summarized on the report cards, which reflect values and principles of non-derivative importance. The distinction between outcomes that matter normatively for their own sakes and policy targets that may reflect mere means to those ends is not always made explicitly in the lists of criteria that play a prominent role in actual policy debates. We illustrate this in the box on the Sustainable Development Goals.

403 **Box 2.9: Sustainable development goals**

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (United Nations 2015)	IN THIS CHAPTER
[Sustainability as itself a goal]	See Environmental values (3.7) and The ethical status of future generations (5.4)
1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere	Basic needs (4.3.3)
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	Basic needs (4.3.3)

3. Ensure healthy lives...	Basic needs (4.3.3)
...And promote well-being for all at all ages	Well-being (3.1)
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	Equality of opportunity (4.3.2)
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	Equality of opportunity (4.3.2); Gender Box 2.4
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	Basic needs (4.3.3)
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	Basic needs (4.3.3)
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth,	(this is a mere means)
...[and] full and productive employment and decent work for all	Giving rights determinate reality (6.2.4), including the right to work
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	(these items are mere means)
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries	Distributive justice (4.3)
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	Basic needs (4.3.3)
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	(these are means to sustainability)
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	(urging the importance of taking means)
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	(these are means to sustainability)

15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	(these are means to sustainability)
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	Solidarity (3.4); Justice (4.1, 4.3, 6.4)
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development	(these are means to sustainability)

404 Two important concluding remarks. First, decisions have to be taken under risk and/or uncertainty. Using the traditional distinction (Knight 1921) adverted to in §1, a situation of risk is a situation where we can attach probabilities to the possible events on the basis of evidence; a situation of uncertainty is one in which one cannot do this. Situations of risk can reasonably well be handled using traditional criteria of rational choice, although there is no consensus about whether one should take an ex ante or an ex post approach. Situations of uncertainty raise more challenging problems. It is important to think explicitly about risk and uncertainty when devising policies. Shifts in risk assessments should lead to policy adjustments. Moreover, in evaluating policies retrospectively, it is crucial to recognize that the decisions had to be taken in considerable ignorance about the actual state of the world. Even a policy that was optimal in the light of the knowledge that was available at the moment of taking the decision can be seen in retrospect to have had disastrous consequences, perhaps because unlikely possibilities ended up being realized. It is even possible that all the policy targets are reached but that the (normatively more significant) outcome targets are not. Even though Machiavelli (1995, chap. 18) was surely right that people commonly judge political events by the outcomes, policy-makers should neither be blamed for having been merely unlucky nor praised when unwise policies turn out well by sheer good luck.

405 Second, much of our discussion in this section assumed a setting with given institutions, with policy makers taking decisions within a given structure. This perspective on its own does not sufficiently take into account the possibility of changing those decision-making structures, which is sometimes essential to social progress. If institutional changes need to be made, who is going to implement them? For instance, which actors can legitimately contribute to making the political process in a country more democratic, if those in power resist such change? Which actors can make steps in the direction of a better-

functioning market? While feasibility constraints loom large in this context, the normative framework that has been introduced in this chapter can also be used to motivate and evaluate institutional change. In the box we illustrate this for one specific but highly relevant issue: the limits to be imposed on markets.

406

Box 2.10: The limits of markets

Societies have always drawn limits on the kinds of things that can be bought and sold. While there is universal agreement that human beings should not be bought and sold (although in practice human trafficking remains an urgent problem) the morality of many other trades is debated. The chart below uses the values detailed in this chapter to understand the issues at stake in some contested markets. The values we have highlighted here are inequality, understood as inequality not just in income and wealth but also in social standing; setbacks to individual welfare or autonomy; and harms to background social institutions and practices, including culture (Satz, 2010).

For example, markets in child labor are problematic because of the harms to the child laborer, because of the inequality and vulnerability they produce between children and families, and because they undermine democratic institutions and lead to low productivity and growth. By contrast, a market in apples is unlikely to have such effects.

As can be seen in this chart, problematic markets can differ in what makes them so. This can be important for policy. For example, because the main reason for concern about markets for addictive drugs is harms to the users, effective regulation may remove the principal objections to such markets. For the same reason, banning certain addictive drugs may result in greater net harm to individuals and to society. This is arguably the case with current drug policy in the United States. Banning child labor looks to be highly justified given the above analysis, but care must be taken that such bans do not drive child labor underground with worse consequences for children and their families. That is why the best way of addressing some problematic markets is to provide resources and empowerment to the poor and vulnerable. This is particularly the case for an issue such as prostitution, where the principal problem is the marginalization and exploitation of the sex workers. By contrast, in the case of some problematic markets such as trade in antiquities, where what is most problematic is not the treatment of the purveyors but the fate of the items traded, policies should be instead driven by broader social values. These distinctions are illustrated in the table.

Table 2.5: Different reasons for limiting markets

<i>Contested or banned markets</i>	Inequality	Harms to individual well-being	Harms to society
Child labor	X	X	X
Prostitution	X	-	-
Antiquities	-	-	X
Blood diamonds	-	X	X

International arms		X	X
Addictive drugs	-	X	-

X signifies a high score; - signifies a possible problem

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- 594 [1] Affiliations : Georgetown University; University of Leuven
- 595 [2] Affiliations : University of Siena; Australian National University; Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies, University of Pompeu Fabra; University of Warwick; Humboldt University; Jawaharlal Nehru University; Addis Ababa University; Stanford University
- 596 [3] Affiliations : Institute for Futures Studies Stockholm, Oxford University
- 597 [4] The terms ‘moral constraint’ and ‘moral option’ were, so far as we are aware, coined by Kagan (1989).
- 598 [5] The conceptual distinction should be clear. In practice, it might be difficult to maintain because “well-being” is a concept that has multiple uses of which the evaluative might be only one.
- 599 [6] This is not the claim that only human lives matter: see Sec. 3.6.
- 600 [7] This has been the dominant position in the empirical literature since Easterlin (1974). Recent work, however, has disrupted the consensus around that result (see, e.g., the discussion in Fleurbaey and Blanchet, 2013, pp. 185-191).
- 601 [8] To see this, note that a group might be the object of disesteem and so recognition may reduce members’ preference-satisfaction. Yet the extension of recognition to larger numbers would constitute social progress nevertheless!
- 602 [9] Rawls thus does not treat his principle of fair equality of opportunity as bearing on overall outcomes.
- 603 [10] The two are of course equivalent if the population size remains constant. The thorny issue of the optimal population size is discussed further in Box 2.6.

- 604 [11] This problem may not be a serious one for the total life view; but we use it here merely to motivate the alternative idea of assessing defined periods within individuals' lives.
- 605 [12] At least, philosophers will add, for those who have lives worth living.
- 606 [13] These new arrangements may include market-based mechanisms such as the creation of a market for emission permits.
- 607 [14] We consider these conditions as sufficient for the legitimacy of social movements. This does not imply a position on the issue whether violence is always illegitimate. This issue is raised in chapter 10.