7. For the entire subject of current ecological thinking, see Roderick Nash, *The Right of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).
8. See Martin Luther King, Jr., *A Testament to Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).
9. T. D. Weldon, *The Vocabulary of Politics* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1960).
10. Don Herzog has both described this view well and argued it well. See his *Without Foundations: Justification in Political Theory* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985).
11. While he might not be entirely comfortable to be described as a contextualist, Charles Anderson is a very good one; see his *Pragmatic Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

Chapter 2

The Individual and the Political Community

Human beings are social and political animals. We customarily live in close proximity to each other and develop informal divisions of labor with great ease. Moreover, our historical pattern has been to build and empower formal political institutions, usually as means to expedite the public relationships we find so valuable and sometimes as tools used by leaders to extract goods and services from their followers.

Political relationships and institutions have apparently always been a part of our history. Undoubtedly, our ancient ancestors built some sort of political communities as means to deal with each other and nature as soon as environmental circumstances put groups in proximity. And as even the most primitive technology emerged, it is likely that some political arrangements were instrumental in its development, deployment, and control. This remains true in today's nuclear age.

Since circumstances motivate intellectual curiosity and questions among human beings, the ubiquity of political communities inspired a lot of speculation and analysis about the relationship of the individual and polity. In fact, these analyses are so extensive that they constitute one of the major currents of Western political thought. For example, the relationship between the individual and polity is what inspired Aristotle over two millennia ago to write that man is a political animal and that without a political community we can be either beasts or gods, but not men.[1] He felt that politics were as natural to people as breathing and that we become fully developed only as political (social) animals.[2] Rousseau also observed in his influential *Social Contract* and other essays that there is an inevitable intertwining of the arts and sciences, civilization, and politics.[3] Modern thinkers like Marx,[4] Freud,[5] Camus,[6] and most others have made evaluations of the same phenomena a

prominent part of their political theories. Each of them argued that the needs and prospects for humankind are best met within a political setting.

The prominence of analyses about citizen and polity in political theory does not mean that all thinkers agree on what kind of political institutions are best. Nor do they agree on how powerful they ought to be, who should be in charge of them, how much sway they ought to have over individual lives, how much the individual ought to appreciate and defend the political, and many similar questions. Such questions have been at the core of political theory for the twenty-six centuries since the conversations of Socrates and writings of Plato. Though many of these are discussed elsewhere in this volume, our present context focuses on the ideas and debates in political theory about humans as political animals.

HUMAN NATURE AND POLITICAL THEORY

The most enduring and contentious theme students of political theory encounter involves human nature. Virtually every major political thinker has wrestled with what human nature is and its relevance to political institutions and practices, whether explicitly or implicitly. The subject has always had the capacity to engender arguments and prescriptions with profound political consequences. The ideas of ancient theologians like Augustine and Aquinas,[7] contemporary Muslim theocracies where Sharia[8] controls the state and the laws, and the utopian and anarchist communities of the last two centuries[9] all depend on certain assumptions and visions of the nature of human beings. So did the very different social contract theories of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau.[10] The many political theories of socialism also envision a new socialist human being whose nature can be transformed from competitive to cooperative.[11]

Though human nature seems to be a straightforward and uncontroversial concept to many of us, to many of the social scientists and biologists who study it the idea of human nature is quite controversial. Statements like "All people are evil by nature," "Human beings are naturally aggressive," or "People are loving and cooperative until they are trained to be otherwise" conflict with the evidence of modern sociobiological research.[12] The chief debate among these scientists involves the respective roles of biology and culture in human behavior. This debate, popularly referred to as "nature versus nurture,"[13] is between claims that our actions are natural and universal and counterclaims that they are learned.

Most contemporary scientists recognize that each side is able to marshall some convincing but not definitive evidence. The ability of New Guinea tribe members to identify correctly and then describe photographs of Americans acting out anger, surprise, loathing, happiness, and fear and the ability of Americans to do the same for photographs of the New Guineans registering the same emotions in their own way suggest that there is some universal biology at work here.[14] Similarly, the existence of many different work ethics, sex roles, and concepts of the proper role of the state in family life in different societies (or the difference in language between New Guinea tribe members and Americans) suggests that culture affects our behavior too.

The controversy between how much nature and nurture contribute to human nature is far from settled among scientists. The current state of the research suggests that there is a genuine role for both in our sociobiological understanding of human nature, even though these roles have different political relevances. Unfortunately, science cannot tell us much more than this.

That leaves us in a troublesome position as political theorists because the substance as well as the extent of such a role has important implications for political theory. The question of whether or not there are innate human behaviors with political implications occupies the heart of our enterprise; whether people are X or Y, what X and Y are, and whether this "Xness" or "Yness" is learned or genetic is not philosophically neutral. If a person's behavior comes from nature, he or she cannot help it because of drives, reflexes, or temperaments. (Even if we do not have instincts, our drives, reflexes, and temperaments are channeled by learning despite their natural origins.) What is more, we are powerless to design a polity to change what is unchangeable. But if our behaviors are learned, we can change what is done through changes in our political institutions and policies. Since doing political theory forces us to design polities and policies and pursue political values that are based on such assumptions about the nature of people as citizens (whether we have definitive evidence for these assumptions or not), our advice is to tiptoe carefully through this dark and foreboding forest.

Whether people are by nature aggressive (as certain religions and political theories hold) or cooperative (as is maintained by other religions and political theories) has profound implications for our holding of values like freedom and equality. As a result, it has a great impact on what kind of political institutions we ought to build in the name of such values for the common good. For example, the familiar institutions and values of democracy depend on assumptions that human beings are bright enough to understand complex political issues and personalities, reasonable enough to evaluate them and make the right decisions for themselves, if not for the general good, and cooperative enough to be willing to play the game, no matter what its outcome.[15] Unless nature permits such "democratic" human characteristics, any and all democratic institutions are bound to fail and a great deal of contemporary political theory is rendered nonsense.

Similarly, if people are intrinsically selfish and passionate, their coexistence and competition for goods and services in a world with finite resources are likely to result in a "war of all against all which ceaseth only in death" and a life that is "poor, nasty, solitary, brutish, and short." Such a human-nature-dictated jungle may require powerful controls to keep the peace at almost any cost by imposing order for the common good.[16] It may require an authoritarian, nondemocratic political system.

The kind of polity we build and the extent to which it should incorporate the values necessary for democratic participation and governing depend on whether citizens are (or can be taught to be) cooperative or mean and aggressive by nature. If they are the latter, we must separate and police them for their own good. If they are the former, then more extensive individual liberal rights and more liberal political institutions make sense.

Issues of nature or nurture also have profound implications for the possibility of reform and change. Even if there was overwhelming evidence that people actually behave aggressively toward others in a given social setting, the case for an inevitable human nature that thwarts any political change is not made because of the matter of cause and effect. If the observed aggression results from learned behavior in a political system that rewards competition and punishes cooperation (inadvertently or not), it is possible to change what is learned by changing the structure of rewards and punishments within the polity. Thus, it is possible to change the perceived "nature of people" and adopt political values and institutions that depend on reason, cooperation, and social behavior.

For instance, democracy (especially participatory varieties) as envisioned by Western political theorists depends on citizens who are interested enough—or see some personal reward—in public policy to participate in and to agree to abide by the results of the process even if they find themselves on the losing side. This is so because the democratic process itself is judged to be legitimate and will allow losers to reorganize and enter the fray and win on another day and another issue.

On the other hand, if the perceived aggression or mean-spiritedness of people is caused by instinct or nature, then no amount of social conditioning or attempts to teach more cooperative behaviors will work. Natural instincts will prevail and people will compete and conflict ceaselessly. A democratic political system that depends on cooperation and give and take would not last long among such citizens. A veritable police state (on the order of Cuba or Chile under Pinochet) would be necessary for public harmony. Policies and institutions would need to be security oriented and prevent inherent aggressions from undermining the greatest good for the greatest number. Democracy in such a situation would only lead to what Plato called rule of the mob.[17] Such "mobocracy" would get in the way of enlightened leaders searching for a government dedicated to order and truth. It would place the smart in a position to lead the stupid.

Ultimately, ideas and facts of human nature (and whether the way we act is innate or learned) remain topics of investigation among social and natural scientists. It is not clear whether natural drives and temperaments (so-called instincts, to the extent that we have them) are complex enough or of a high enough order to be politically relevant. Perhaps much of the complex political behaviors and roles that undergird democracies, dictatorships, and other contemporary political systems are learned and/or customary—and can be unlearned or relearned in different ways. Since most of what we commonly think of as human nature is more properly labeled human culture, most

political theory should probably concentrate on how desirable behaviors can be rewarded and/or undesirable behaviors can be discouraged.[18]

One view is that of anthropologist Matt Cartmill, who suggests that while we know that some very basic kind of human nature is there, we should not assume that it contains any discernable or predictable political patterns. He submits that it is prudent to build social and political institutions that allow for human possibilities and development through learning but which are, nevertheless, somewhat cautious because of our worst-case fears about human nature.[19] As political theorists, we can do this by providing some safeguards against individual abuse and aggression in our polities. This complements our optimism with prudent caution about human nature. Even if further research renders more pessimistic theorists of human nature[20] to be inaccurate, caution on the subject will do little harm. For the present, human nature is a subject about which we still know too little to proceed with no restraint.

POLITICAL THEORY AND THE ELUSIVE PUBLIC INTEREST

As we examine the relationship between the individual and society, another controversy occupying political theorists involves the public interest. Like human nature, this concept appears to the layman (especially journalists and politicians) to be straightforward until an exploration of its subtle meaning and impacts reveals otherwise. Actually, the parameters of an objective public interest are so important, diverse, and controversial that no political theory worthy of the name can afford to ignore them.

The public in public interest refers to our common life, the problems and possibilities of people sharing the same corner of the planet at the same time. Social proximity brings interaction and forces us to deal with each other in some way, whether peaceful or violent, accommodating or exploitative. The set of relationships, institutions, techniques, and values that the interactions develop constitute the public relationships of politics. These include such disparate current examples as the building of a united Western Europe or the civil violence that has accompanied the political realignments of Yugoslavia or Ethiopia. Such events contrast with relationships that are more private and less affect the general public. What we do with our families on a weekend afternoon or whether we watch television or read on a weeknight are typical examples.

Political theorists have always struggled with defining which public relationships, policies, and institutions are justified and which are not. The ones deemed just are what we know as the public interest. One political dictionary defines it in part as "an interest that concerns the community at large."[21] A current American government textbook presents a sampling of definitions that refer to it alternatively as "the common good"; the "common right, the public good, the universal law, in preference to all private and partial consid-

erations" (John Adams); "what men would choose if they saw clearly, thought, rationally, acted disinterestedly and benevolently" (Walter Lippmann); or "the aggregate of common interests, including the common interest in seeing that there is fair play among private interests . . . not the mere sum of the special interests" (E. E. Schattschneider).[22]

These definitions of the public interest illustrate that there are things in the common good that transcend and go beyond merely aggregating private needs or interests. Such familiar values as liberty, equality, and justice have been commonly argued by political theorists to be in the public interest. So have institutions like democracy, fair tax policies resting on ability to pay, spending policies based on public need, and government interventions into the economy for the protection of the consumer.

There is considerable controversy surrounding specific definitions and components of the public interest. What is more, there is controversy as to whether there is an objective and enduring public interest at all, or whether there are just coincidental collections of private interests and needs that must be kept from conflicting in a good society. If the latter is true, the only valid role for government to pursue is night watchman. If there is a public interest, then the good polity should pursue it with all of its resources.

One approach is what has been called the political theory of public utility[23] because it envisions a role for government in providing utilities for the public. Because it is a powerful and serious institution, government is in the best position to supply basic needs directly or by encouraging/mandating other institutions to do so. In the contemporary West, basic utilities (taking technology and values into account) are national defense, abundant energy, public education, a fair economy, public safety, public communications and transportation, civil liberties, and participation in government. They stop short of any alleged rights that exploit others. Rights to pursue luxuries or private gain are recognized, but lie in the private realm and are not included in the public interest.

Thus, the public interest is government making certain that the basic needs of citizens are provided for (usually by the public and private sectors working in tandem) and that the values and institutions of the common good are protected from private manipulation. This theory of the public interest has room for both laissez-faire and social reform liberal concepts of government. Also, the theory is variable enough to shift as technology changes and public personalities and institutions perform differently. As a result, the theory's definition of basic needs, luxuries, and appropriate institutions and sectors to provide goods and services to the public is dynamic rather than fixed.

No matter what theory is used to define public interest, debates about its precise content are inevitable because the "real" public interest is difficult to define. Yet, it is a useful concept and its broad outlines need to be kept in mind when the proper relationship of the individual and society is contemplated in political theory.

A problem of any conception of the public interest involves which private interests should be preserved from public trespass. Political theorist Sheldon Wolin warns that "The most important developments in the last twenty-five years have been the closer intertwining of economic and political power structures. . . . Managerial skills, managerial attitudes, managerial ideology, are fundamental to both . . . an extension of power . . . from a combination of public and private powers . . . the result is a common network of control and surveillance pressing into the private lives of people."[24]

He counsels that the public interest may be served by limiting this kind of power through slow, deliberative, participatory forms of democracy. Public power so organized, he suggests, "comes down to people cooperating" and is a way to control both public and private power through a kind of public sector that will allow people to get along well together, in spite of differences.[25] Thus, to Wolin, the public interest is served by limiting its reach by limiting some public power through democracy. Such limits would prevent abuses of power—whether public, private, or cooperative—through serious attention to democratization of all of our institutions with political implications, whether they are officially governmental or not.

Other political thinkers (principally earlier liberals like John Locke and John Stuart Mill) have suggested that there is an important sphere of private rights and/or interests that must never be violated by any governments, even for the greatest good for the greatest number.[26] These include virtually absolute freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and all other political rights that allow a free marketplace of ideas in which minorities can attempt to become majorities by hawking their political wares. Functioning as limitations of the rights of majorities, these rights are commonly referred to and valued as minority rights within the liberal tradition.

Taking these perspectives together gives us a perspective on the public interest. It is defined by and requires an infrastructure of values and institutions that meets the legitimate needs of majorities and limits arbitrary and selfish power regardless of public or private origins. Interestingly, this view of the public interest is also consistent with the advice that Cartmill gave about dealing with human nature and politics.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Political rights are controversial concepts that involve important issues of debate about the proper relationship of the individual and society. The arguments about them focus on the newsworthy topic of human rights and the equally important relationship of political rights and responsibilities of citizenship and government.

Human rights have dominated headlines in recent decades so effectively that they have entered our popular vocabulary. Virtually every citizen recognizes the term, and news commentators and after-dinner speakers assume

that human rights are a seamless whole with an objective definition that is understood and accepted by all. Unfortunately, that is not true, despite such widespread assumptions.

In principle, most knowledgeable observers agree that a human right is an inviolable moral claim that all human beings possess as a part of their humanity. By definition, such a right ought not to be denied by any individual or institution. Regardless, the same knowledgeable observers disagree on what specific rights are included and how extensive they are. The Nuremberg Tribunals (held after World War II by a victorious United States to prosecute Germans and Japanese for war crimes and crimes against humanity); the various Geneva Accords specifying the rights of civilians, noncombatants, and prisoners of war; the claims of such international human rights advocacy groups as British-based Amnesty International; and many general provisions of international law have done a lot to clarify the general outlines of human rights involving war between state combatants. Critical ambiguities remain, however. Furthermore, the human rights associated with civil conflicts (such as the Intifada by Palestinians against Israeli occupation of the West Bank of the Jordan River or various coups and revolutions around the world) are still very ambiguous. So are the alleged rights of terrorists and their victims. It is hotly debatable whether acts of terrorism are crimes or violations of human rights under any circumstances and whether innocent victims or governments have any rights against terrorists.

Also contested are just what rights there are. Are there human rights to a secure economic environment, a liveable natural environment, a democratic government, basic privileges of acting on conscience, fundamental civil liberties, and so on? Not only is there a substantial list of different rights advocated by different groups; there is also a major problem of enforcing rights once a consensus about them emerges, since the sovereignty of nation-states is frequently claimed to be a bulwark against any interference in the domestic politics of nation-states and groups that are alleged to deny human rights. There is also debate about whether human rights belong exclusively to nation-states on behalf of citizens, groups on behalf of members, or only to individuals, who (unfortunately) have no official legal standing in international law.

Therefore, while human rights is certainly a valid concept that is an important component of any sophisticated understanding of the proper relationship of the individual and the political system, it remains controversial and ambiguous within international and domestic law as well as political theory.[27]

POLITICAL ECONOMY, INDIVIDUALISM, AND POLITICS

Political economy encompasses a substantial area of individual interaction with politics and government that has barely been recognized, much less dealt with, by contemporary political theory. As technology has effectively shrunk the world, our economic interactions have more political impact than ever before. The reverse is true also. Political theory needs to perceive and deal with the new reality of a world of human interdependence. Global transportation, communications, money transfers, ecological impacts, wars, and political struggles are a reality. Major economic and political events anywhere on the planet create ripples that wash across the globe.

The failure of the wheat harvest in the former Soviet Union, for instance, has a major impact on the agriculture and the economy of North America. Farmers, food processors, freight haulers, and others are affected even though they may never have seen or known any residents of the affected countries. Similarly, a critical decline in the value of the stocks on the New York Stock Exchange causes virtually mirror reactions in financial markets in Zurich, London, Tokyo, and elsewhere; and the individuals, governments, and corporations who have a stake in those financial markets are affected substantially. Pollution dumped in the air in the Ohio valley is shown to harm Canadian forests through acid rain while Ohioans breathe air pollution spewed into the air from smokestacks far to their west. Furthermore, Europe is well along in the process of becoming one economy, and some so-far weak political institutions have emerged to manage it. Along the same lines, the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade in Geneva, Switzerland, continues to sponsor negotiations (with some limited success to date) on lowering of trade barriers globally. Also, the International Monetary Fund has relieved some of the debt burden of South American governments, but with the strings of mandated economic reforms that have made life more difficult for individual Latin Americans at least in the short run.

Such events are part of the larger process of political economy that has enveloped not only the globe but virtually all of the individuals in it, no matter where they live or how much they are aware of these phenomena. Political economy concerns alternative economic and political systems. As such, it embraces our traditional ideas of both the polity and the economy. It views economics and politics as different ways of thinking about and organizing the same things—things that are not inevitably separate simply because we are taught to think about them that way. Used by political scientists and economists alike, political economy describes the public interactions that pertain to distribution and regulation of material goods and services.[28]

Political economy as a concept embraces both free and guided markets and a vast range of political and economic institutions and behaviors. Although both, it is probably more political than economic because most major economic decisions and allocations ultimately are made at least indirectly by governmental or quasi-governmental organizations. Consequently, they are political dominators of the values and facts of our material lives. The economic dimensions of politics, on the other hand, come from the reality that political decisions and governments cannot operate independently of the economy and resource patterns that they regulate. Economics has an important effect even on the politics that regulate them. We as individual citizens are affected

by the whole constellation of structures, processes, and policies of the public sector, whether traditionally political or economic.

Political economy's evolution has been accompanied by a profusion of issues that modern political theory must sort out if it is to remain relevant. Fortunately for us, these questions are just manifestations in political economy of questions that have traditionally been among the central concerns of political theory. Thus, our literature of liberty, justice, and equality has many useful applications in our search for answers.

A major concern involves exploration of the legitimate public and private roles of individuals in the economy. How much economic liberty should an individual have? How much economic equality should he or she have? Does a person (or a group acting as a business firm) have the right to produce any products they wish, even those that will harm the environment or are dangerous? Do they have the right to lie to us about their products?

If we view these questions from the perspective of the desirable balance between liberty and equality, some general pathways and guidelines emerge. All other things being equal, human beings ought to have as much individual liberty as possible in order to develop and mature. However, ours is a world with finite resources, and our proximity to others produces an economic as well as a political interdependence. Consequently, we argue that we must limit the economic freedom of individuals and voluntary groups to the extent that their pursuit of individual economic liberty denies the same right in others. Thus, we have the right to any economic choices and priorities that our desires and means will allow, provided that we do not abuse, exploit, harm, or steal from others as we pursue them. Environmental degradation, fraud, theft, production of dangerous products, and so forth are clearly proscribed by this argument. Being wealthy, producing or owning luxuries and ostentation, and pursuing material instead of other priorities are fine as long as they meet our other criteria, however.

Equality falls into the equation here neatly. If we all have the same liberty to make economic choices that are only limited by others' same liberties, then the case is made for an equality of opportunity in political economy. From this perspective, each of us is not guaranteed an equality of wealth or outcome, but all of us have a right to market our talents fairly (labor, ideas, creativity, etc.) in a free marketplace of political economy. Discrimination because of sex, ethnicity, race; lack of access to quality minimums of education, nutrition, housing, and so forth are prohibited under this notion of equality. The bottom line is simple, though not easy. Our view is that liberty and equality work best in the sphere of political economy when they are balanced so that neither suppresses the other. Both flourish within limits. Of course, this theory of the best approach to political economy is debatable. Socialists may argue that we ought to have more individual equality and less liberty; laissez-faire liberals may argue the opposite; and social reform liberals may want strong controls on corporations. But overall, this approach to the individual and society in political economy makes sense to us because it is rooted in the traditional values of political theory.

A similar set of questions emerges regarding the legitimate private role of the public institutions in an economy. How much should the government regulate individual economic behavior? How much should the government influence corporate economic behavior? Here, too, the traditional values of political theory provide us with a great deal of insight. One widely accepted approach to these questions is advanced by laissez-faire economists who advocate a substantially free commercial marketplace.[29] Political economists like Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill have suggested that commercial goods and services as well as political ideas and ideologies ought to be dispensed in a free marketplace, where any merchant has a right to offer his wares to the public. But there are no guarantees of success: If the wares are attractive to the consumer and the price is competitive, then the merchant will ring up many sales. Entry into the marketplace is virtually by right. But success or failure in it is determined by the competitive realities of the marketplace. Equality can be harsh.

Under this approach, citizens are consumers as well as sellers, and private firms have a natural right to consume as well as offer their products for sale in a free marketplace. Government's task is to make certain that the marketplace remains free and that no firms, governments, or cabal of forces conspire to restrict entry into the marketplace, thereby destroying its freedom. Individuals and entrepreneurs are to be regulated by the forces of the market, not by external forces such as government. The faith of this position is that the public interest will be secured by the operation of the market and that fraudulent or unattractive products and practices will not sell. Thus, the profit incentive to produce them would not be present and they would not be produced or followed. Individuals would boycott firms that discriminate unfairly in hiring, and shoddy products would remain on the shelves if this form of market regulation worked perfectly.

In opposition to this perspective, other political economists[30]—such as John Stuart Mill in his later years, Karl Marx, and John Maynard Keynes—have suggested that unassisted markets do not work in the public interest. They argue that unregulated producers and sellers of goods mislead consumers about quality and suitability of products and produce them in socially harmful ways that exploit workers, pollute the environment, and serve little social purpose. And individuals either do not know about or care about unfair discrimination. Thus, they suggest that the government is the only social agent that represents all without favoritism and has the power to restrain giant and selfish corporations who violate the public good in their quest for profits. They argue that the public interest can only be served if government regulates the marketplace. Government, itself subject to public regulation through elections, has a duty to guarantee entry to the marketplace to all who maintain standards of production, product safety, truth in advertising, and competitive practices that are consistent with the public interest. Firms that violate these norms should be restrained and, if necessary, punished by laws and regulations that define and pursue the public interest through antitrust,

environmental protection, regulation of advertising, product safety, and so on.

In principle, under this system the public interest is safeguarded by government while a large degree of operational individual and group freedom in the political economy is still maintained. Firms willing to comply with rules for the public good are still able to enter the marketplace, and individual consumers are entitled to pick the products and services they wish from an abundant menu of choices. We are persuaded by the history of free enterprise that this approach makes sense and ought to be pursued. Notwithstanding, it does not work as neatly or as fairly as its advocates suggest. Government regulation sometimes is ill-conceived or punitive or becomes obsolete as technology and conditions change. Moreover, private interests sometimes manipulate government for their own ends (thereby bypassing the public interest), and consumers can be persuaded by advertising to purchase products that are not as they seem. Nevertheless, despite defects and imperfections, we feel that the question of the desirable role of the government in the political economy is best answered by the approach to political economy and political theory that suggests that markets are the best regulators of economic behavior, provided that they are helped out by government intervention that aims toward the public interest and individual economic freedom. The values of liberty and equality seem to work out best in the marketplace under such an approach.

Because government at its best can have a major impact on how individuals live, its injection into our lives should not extend further than protection of the public interest and securing equal opportunity for all. Government has no place in telling us what our life-styles ought to be, how we should dress, think, and act, except for a moral obligation to restrain all behaviors that present a clear and present danger of harm to others. We suggest that the burden of proof ought to rest on government: Its intervention needs to be justified in the public interest, and individual freedom in the political economy (and other areas of public life) should remain unmolested unless a convincing case is made that it is a threat to the public good. Under those circumstances, government intervention that is only as extensive as is required to solve the problems at hand—and that restricts behaviors and not classes of people—is sensible and should serve as a guideline for the answers to the questions we have posed in this section.

PRIVACY

A special aspect of individual rights and the public interest concerns the right to privacy of individuals: their right to be free from snooping by public and private interests alike. Not necessarily obvious, this moral claim on the part of individuals has a long and well-established history in political theory. It is especially prevalent in the modern Western political theory that has accompanied the Industrial Revolution.

Today's information technology has provided a historically unprecedented ability to monitor the behavior and habits of people. Modern vehicles, workplaces, banks, shopping places, and homes are increasingly equipped with telephones, fax machines, computers hooked to on-line services, and similar devices. Government and even commercial groups have access to sophisticated satellites and other listening, measuring, and tracking technologies that can monitor all kinds of information while remaining unseen themselves. Therefore, seemingly innocent conveniences and devices make us vulnerable to those who can monitor our uses of telephones, credit cards, computers (even ones that are not thought of as freestanding computers, such as the ones in our telephones or cars). We are equally vulnerable to those governments and businesses that maintain files on us (individually or in the aggregate) in national and international data banks, with credit, pension, banking, traffic control, arms control and disarmament, and consumer purchase pattern information being added every time we use a credit card or an automatic teller machine, make a phone call, or perform other acts with hidden or undiscernible consequences.

High technology makes us more vulnerable than ever before to those who can and/or want to follow and monitor our activities for public or private, legitimate or illegitimate purposes. Surely, few of us would object if a regional transit planning authority used modern technology to study how many people drive from our suburb to downtown, when and with how many passengers in their vehicles, what they bought and carried back while downtown, if they made cellular phone calls along the way, and similar habits and patterns in order to plan a commuter rail line that might be heavily utilized and thereby contribute to the public interest. Most of us would accept this as a legitimate purpose for monitoring habits with information technology.

Yet the same or similar technology can be used for more sinister purposes that fewer of us would accept. A government trying to suppress civil liberties (freedom of speech, press, assembly) used by dissidents in opposing unpopular policies can track whom we go to see, who was with us, whom we called on the telephone, to whom we sent a fax, if we were away from our homes or offices during a given period, and so forth. A private corporation can measure what television channels we watch in order to test new markets for products or in order to decide whether we are interested in pornography or activities they deem subversive. Whether it is legitimate to track such information depends on who is using it and for what purpose. Thus an important task for contemporary political theory ought to be to fashion some guidelines for answering such questions. Thinkers who value personal liberty highly, such as John Stuart Mill,[31] maintain that individual rights of liberty and privacy are so important that they must not be violated by anyone, including governments. Such rights come from our very personhood and allow us the freedom and the space to develop our minds and live with dignity. Thus the proponents of personal freedom advocate such civil liberties as freedom of speech, press, assembly, and life-style choices and argue that not even democratically elected majorities can take such rights away. These rights allow minorities in a

democracy a chance to become majorities and protect minorities who may be right about things even if the majority never agrees. They usually argue that basic rights include an unambiguous right of privacy. U.S. Constitutional law, for example, recognizes a right to privacy, and court decisions often restrict government actions by citing this right. As technology becomes more and more obtrusive, this right will become more and more precious.

Interestingly, the sole exception to a virtually absolute set of civil liberties and rights permitted by rights advocates like Mill involves exercises of such rights as they interfere with the right of others to use their rights. In other words, the concept of the public interest referred to earlier is used by these political theorists to specify the limits of all rights, including privacy. Relying on the value of equality, Mill makes a persuasive argument that the public interest incorporates the equal moral worth of all. My rights as a human being are identical to yours because you, too, are human. Both of us have rights to dignity under a politics justified by how well it serves its citizens individually and collectively and by how effectively it can reconcile the two if they are in conflict.

If that is true, it is sensible to argue that a person has a valid moral claim to all rights (including a right to privacy that follows from the individual's right to different choices in life-style and to one's integrity of personal worth) except when those rights are used in a manner or context to exploit, dominate, or otherwise infringe upon others. In practical terms, my right to listen to whatever music I desire on my stereo does not extend to listening to it in a manner that will disturb you in your home or space. Moreover, governments or corporations have a right to monitor only the public aspects of my life-style for statistical or planning purposes, but no right to monitor or evaluate what is largely private because it has no public impact on others and thus is none of others' business. Citizens and consumers ought to realize that technology is such that the privacy of cellular telephone conversations or credit card limits cannot be secured despite regulations that exist to protect them. Thus, in these matters, care is in order.

The AIDS epidemic has taught us that there is no purely private realm. Almost everything we do has some impact on others. We need to recognize degrees of impact as we apply labels and policies to decide what is private or public. We also need to acknowledge that there are natural-law or religious traditions that advocate limiting privacy even if little social damage is done by it. Some environmental activists and some fervent members of religious communities that emphasize community fall into this category, and their arguments should be viewed as interesting alternatives.

We are persuaded that a good political theory of privacy and the public interest ought to define and defend an extensive right of privacy based on prudent rights of individual worth. The intrinsic moral worth and choices of people ought to be protected and not be violated by public authorities except when such violations are limited to and by the public interest in extent and kind. Private research and data collection ought to be restricted to an essentially unlimited right to observe and record public behavior only. The boundaries of the home, office, and vehicle ought to be respected as parameters of privacy, and what goes on within them ought to be considered private.

The right of privacy is an extensive one and the burden of proof should rest on those who would deny such a right. A good case for exceptions to that right must be limited to the context and to the extent that violations of others' individual rights (including but not limited to the right to privacy) are a clear and present danger. Only then should these rights be subject to regulation on behalf of the public interest. A person's right to privacy cannot serve as a shield that protects the violation of the rights (including privacy) of others. Thus, the government or other agency is justified in snooping and collecting data on criminals, spies, and other willful violators of individual rights.

Like other civil liberties, however, this right on behalf of the public interest is not a general license. Prior restraint and censorship cannot be tolerated on the part of government, although government has a right to hold individuals responsible for the consequences of their behaviors if they can be proven to violate the public interest. Our right to privacy is so strong that the case for each and every violation of our right to privacy by government snooping must be made before duly constituted authority, and permission to snoop or otherwise violate the rights of privacy should only be granted by limited and specific warrant to ascertain specific information in a specific manner that follows carefully drawn guidelines. Violation of such warrants by information collectors should be criminal acts subject to prosecution of abusers just as is the case with police brutality.

CONCLUSION

Modern citizens are social and political animals who interact with others not by choice but by circumstances. Political relationships and interactions are an inevitable consequence of the fact that we are traveling on a crowded planet at the same time in history with other voyagers through time and space. Since the public context to such sharing is the subject matter of political theory, our discipline has a prominent place reserved for ideas and values about the proper relationships of the individual and society.

Politics and government are important enterprises that ought to be pursued and perfected to the best of people's abilities. At the same time, we must also respect the individual. People formed the first governments, and there would be no need for politics, government, or political theory without us. Consequently, the individual and his or her worth are at least as important as the collective interactions of individuals and perhaps even more so. For that reason, it is our position that public relationships and institutions must be instrumental to individual needs and moral claims. Politics and government are justified and honorable only to the extent to which they make individual interactions and relationships in the public realm more humane, meaningful, effective, or comfortable.

Our view of the proper relationship between individual and society comes from this perspective. It is the context of our whole approach to political theory. Our moral choices and the values we embrace about the public interest, human rights and responsibilities, political economy, and so forth define us as political theorists and human beings. Thus we have chosen values and institutions that place the rights of the individual first. But we are willing to define individual rights in ways that could limit those rights if so doing helps us to track the seemingly always elusive goal of equality. We feel that exceptions to the rights of individuals must be justified by a solid case for such exceptions rooted in equal rights. Even though political institutions are valuable, they overstep their authority when they violate individual human rights without a corresponding clear and present gain in an unambiguous public interest. Collectively, human beings can accomplish more than they can do alone. And political institutions and values play a proud and effective part in that collective heritage. Nevertheless, we want to ally our pride and support of political and governmental institutions with an idea of political values that recognizes and protects the linkage between individuals and their social environment. Political theory serves best when we remember that our political institutions ought to serve us as political animals and not vice versa.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

drives, instincts, reflexes, temperaments Various terms used by natural and social scientists to describe different aspects and degrees of allegedly innate human tendencies.

human nature Behavioral tendencies that humans are born with and cannot change.

human rights A set of moral claims that all people possess. They are held to be sacrosanct even above the claims of governments and are widely discussed in political theory and international politics. Many disagree about the specific content of them and how they ought to be enforced.

laissez-faire (French origin—literally, "let it be") A hands-off policy for government in the political economy.

nurture Term used by some anthropologists to signify the effect of the environment and conditioning on human behavior. It is usually contrasted with nature as a cause of behavior

political economy An integrated approach to public interactions that views them as involving both politics and economics. The study of alternative political and economic systems.

privacy right The moral claim that individuals have a right to go about their business (as long as it does not harm others) secure from snooping or interference from government or other groups.

public interest A term used to summarize institutions, policies, and so forth that are in the best interests of the public. For some it is more important than individual claims or needs.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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NOTES

1. Aristotle, *Politics,* trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Modern Library, 1943), Book 1.
2. Mulford Sibley, *Political Ideas and Ideologies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), Chapter 5.
3. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract, Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts, Discourse on the Origins of Inequality,* in *The Social Contract and the Discourses,* trans. G. D. H. Cole (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1927).
4. Karl Marx's collected works are widely available. A good one-volume interpretation and explanation of them is Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963).
5. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Doubleday, 1958).
6. Albert Camus, *The Rebel* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956).
7. St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas were theologians who advocated a political system that served the needs of God and dealt with the depraved or imperfect aspects of human nature.
8. Sharia is the practice of using Islamic law, as found in the Koran, the Muslim holy book, as the basis for state laws and policies. It often carries harsh penalties for violation.
9. Utopian communities (usually but not always socialist) of various kinds grew up based on the idea that free communal association among liberated human beings would lead to cooperation and justice.
10. Thomas Hobbes believed that humans are selfish and only partly reasonable. Thus they need the police to keep them in line and preserve peace. John Locke felt that human beings are a bit more benign and he advocated a democratic state