Chapter 2: Social progress: A compass

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Summary:

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. Some of these dimensions are values, bearing in the first instance on the evaluation of states of affairs; others are action-guiding principles. Values can inspire and in that sense also guide actions. Principles aim to offer more specific guidance on how to rank, distribute and realize values. 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. Many of the chapters that follow will explicitly address only a subset of these values and principles: the ones most salient for their issues or areas; but in principle, all remain relevant.

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This chapter's principal contributions are its listing and interpretation of basic values and principles (set out in Table 2.1, immediately following this summary), and its defense, so far as space permitted, of the suggestion that each of these has basic or non-derivative importance.

Any use of these basic values and principles in guiding or assessing social progress should be guided by respect for the equal dignity of all persons (§2). The values of well-being and freedom are each of pervasive importance; each has also been interpreted in importantly different ways, which the chapter distinguishes (§3). Other basic values relevant to social progress include values directly important in individuals' lives—non-alienation, esteem, solidarity, and security—and values embodied in the environment and in human culture.

There are also principles of non-derivative importance in evaluating and fostering social progress (§4). We argue that respect for basic rights is the most uncontroversial principle of social justice. While libertarians argue that justice consists solely in respecting those rights, we present a set of 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.

These values and principles can be used to assess the social progress of a variety of different institutions, groups, and practices that embrace different sets of agents (§5). They can apply to civil society groups, nations, and to the global human society. It is also possible to extend their reach to future generations and to non-human animals.

 Attending to this variety of agents reveals the need to attend to additional principles that are not uncontroversially derivable from more generally applicable principles (§6). Some principles are especially applicable to governments, such as the rule of law and the rights of

political participation. Other principles are of special significance for civil society or for global institutions and transactions.

Despite their multiplicity, these basic values and principles can be translated into a set of concrete indicators relevant for specific policy domains (§7). Concrete indicators will always give a narrowed interpretation of the underlying objectives. Evaluating whether a change does or would constitute 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.

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

Security: §3.8

Basic Principles

Of general applicability :

Basic rights :   §4.2

Distributive justice :   §4.3

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

1. The compass for this report

This full report is an ambitious attempt to assess social progress along many dimensions. The idea of social progress implies a positive development, a change for the better. Our report is predicated on accepting that the idea of progress makes sense: e.g., that the abolition of slavery is a good thing. Nonetheless, a person can embrace the ideal of social progress without accepting it as a fact. That is, she can be skeptical about the extent to which current conditions constitute improvements over past conditions. She may also disagree with others with respect to what social progress consists in.

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 is the relevant measure of social progress. 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.

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 social policies and institutions. The subsequent chapters of this overall report further elaborate the various elements of social progress in ways appropriate to specific arenas of social life. Our hope is that this chapter contains the main elements from which these more specific elaborations take guidance. A second purpose of this chapter is 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?

Further, the very idea of progress entails that we can identify a general line of direction. It is here that we hope the metaphor of a compass can be illuminating. A compass helps you understand where you are in the space around you. 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, the goal of this chapter is to set the general line of travel. 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.

The best path forward is often a winding one. 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. Indeed, some improvements may lie off all already given paths.

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. 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). And 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. Societies vary in the challenges they face and in their resources for meeting those challenges. Feasibility constraints also differ: what is possible in one society may not be possible in another.

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 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.

Box 2.1: The history of the idea of progress

Our simple conception of progress as an improvement over time should not be confused with the Enlightenment conception of progress, which implied 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.

This idea of progress's irresistible forward march arose from the idea that history has a meaning and a direction. This idea is found in many thinkers, including 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 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

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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 and peoples to live peaceably together. The claim that progress is guaranteed by some deep dynamic underlying human affairs has become less plausible. For example, 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. 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.

2. Building blocks of the analysis

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.

2.1 Values vs. principles

The moral compass we set out rests on a distinction between values and principles. Values refer to those states of affairs, or aspects of states of affairs, that (other things equal) we have reason to realize. Human well-being, freedom, a non-alienated life, social solidarity, a healthy sustainable environment are items that ought to be promoted or respected. By contrast, principles give agents—individuals, civil society groups, political communities, and

global institutions—more precisely specified norms to guide their conduct. For example, societies and global institutions ought to respect principles for the fair and efficient distribution of benefits and burdens; governments ought to be transparent, follow the rule of law, and respect citizens' rights. Before setting out the various values and principles that inform our compass, we offer some general remarks about the evaluation of states of affairs and the moral norms that limit our pursuit of them (2.1). We then draw a distinction between basic and derivative values (2.2) and specify two moral ideas—equal dignity and respect for pluralism—that are the foundation of the compass (2.3).

2.1.1 States of affairs

Assessing the nature and extent of social progress often takes the form of evaluating states of affairs, the way things are in the world. For example, other things equal, lower infant mortality is generally regarded as better than higher mortality, because infant deaths are bad. We typically judge different states of affairs by assessing the extent to which good items are present and bad things are absent.

Two observations are important in evaluating states of affairs. 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 B (worse than S), but we are uncertain which, then we need to know the differences between A and S and between B and S to have a sense as to whether that action will be desirable. Second, it is important to acknowledge that, because certain items have such different characters, outcomes might be incommensurable (cannot be placed on a cardinal scale of overall value) or incomparable (cannot be given a determinate place in an ordinal ranking) (see Chang 1998).

2.1.2 The need for principles: moral constraints and options

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* of goodness and badness. Nevertheless, as important as it is to attempt to compare different states of affairs, we should not equate social progress with the realization of better states of affairs. For one thing, 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 with maintaining its freely chosen path.

In addition, sometimes, although an outcome, A, is better than a different outcome, B, it would be a mistake to try to achieve A because doing so would violate *moral side-constraints* that forbid certain kinds of action. For example, although reducing infant mortality is an important goal, that does not imply that one is morally permitted to steal others' money to pay for medicines to serve that goal. Certain kinds of action 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.

To assess social progress solely by evaluating states of affairs would also be to overlook the importance of *moral options*. To give a simple example, many hold that a political community is sometimes morally permitted to choose not to pursue policies that it has most reason to pursue: it may host the Olympic Games even though it would do more good if its resources were 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 fail to realize it.[4]

Taking these thoughts about moral constraints and options together, we distinguish between two 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—e.g. whether they were the result of democratically adopted policies. Our view is that anyone assessing a society's progress should take into account both substantive and procedural elements. 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.

2.2 Basic vs. derivative values

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 explained by a concern for individual well-being, the common view being that increased income means increased preference satisfaction

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[4] The terms 'moral constraint' and 'moral option' were, so far as we are aware, coined by Kagan (1989).

and that preference satisfaction is the metric of well-being. On this view, it is individual well-being that matters, normatively, not GDP/head. If increased GDP/head involved *reduced* preference satisfaction, or increased preference satisfaction involved *reduced* individual well-being, there would be grounds for modifying the use of GDP/head as an evaluative tool for those cases.

It is 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 are derivative and which non-derivative. 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 have non-derivative normative importance. Thus, for example, we treat as distinct the basic liberty to choose one's diet and the health-related well-being that ensues from one's choice.

Many items that have derivative value are instrumentally valuable—valuable because they are productive of a basic value. 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). 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 promote. As Milton Friedman observed, disagreements about the free market are often not primarily disagreements about values but about facts – facts concerning how markets operate and the effects they have on well-being, liberty or individual virtue. These are matters of fierce ideological contestation. But in principle they are matters resolvable by appeal to evidence and debate among people of goodwill.

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.

In addition to keeping in mind the distinction between non-derivative and different kinds of derivative value, it is important, when we evaluate social progress, to recognize that 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.

It seems clear that in the arena of action, these institutional pointers will occupy an important role. We assess societies by reference to whether they embody well-functioning democratic political systems or deliver tolerable economic outcomes for citizens. We do this recognizing that such assessment is partial, provisional, and always susceptible to challenge on factual grounds – and always answerable to the basic values and principles.

2.3 Two foundational ideas

2.3.1 Equal dignity

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). Two elements of equal dignity are worth spelling out. The first is the claim that every human being matters.[5] It is not enough

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[5] This is not the claim that only human lives matter: see Sec. 3.6.

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.

The second is the idea that humans enjoy *equal* dignity. On the most demanding interpretations of equality our attention is *comparative*: however we treat individuals or groups, we must not treat some more favorably than others (Dworkin 2011). 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).

Affirming equal dignity does not deny that individuals have special obligations to particular others such as their own family or their co-citizens. Rather it serves to prohibit certain attitudes and activities—racism and sexism, for example—that 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.

2.3.2 Respect for pluralism

Any account of social progress must acknowledge 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 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: there are 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.

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. The worry about this approach is that it can be alienating. Part of the role of a compass is to give individuals a conception of social progress that they can understand and embrace as their own, and to provide a basis for social unity (see Rawls 2005). For these reasons, the values and principles of the compass should be ones that reasonable people can, in good faith, regard as their own—as ones that follow from or, at least, are not inconsistent with their deeply-held convictions.

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 it would be wrong for our compass to be presented as mandating the acceptance of a particular religious doctrine, since people can reasonably differ in their religious beliefs and attitudes.

3. Basic values

For many people, social progress just means an increase in average or total individual well-being (and perhaps an improvement in its distribution). But people also care about how their well-being is produced: they care about their freedom of choice and about their social standing. In this chapter, we treat such values as freedom and esteem as independent basic values.

3.1 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?' 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).

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."

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 purpose 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).

3.1.1 Multidimensionality in well-being

What dimensions of well-being should be included in our analysis of well-being, once we grant that there is a distinction between how the concept functions for an individual and how it is to be used for social assessment? The capability approach "concentrates on the capabilities of people to do things—and the freedom to live lives—that they have reason to value" (Sen 1999, 85). But which capabilities? Consider how proponents of that approach answer this question. Nussbaum (2000, 2006) proposes as universally valid a list of ten "central capabilities." Sen (1999, 2009), on the other hand, argues that the list should not be defined by theoreticians, but should be drawn up in a participatory process through public reasoning.

A 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, 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?

3.1.2 Different conceptions of well-being: happiness, capabilities, preferences

In this section we compare four different conceptions of well-being: a resourcist conception, a hedonistic conception, the capability approach, and a preference based conception. The first three of these are "objective" in that they offer substantive and unvarying components of well-being. The preference based view is "subjective" in that it gives only a formal characterization of an individual's well-being, allowing each individual to fill in the content differently. These relationships are summarized in the following table:

Table 2.2: Conceptions of well-being

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

Resources

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 freedom to use these resources as they choose. There are a few difficulties with this equation of resources with well-being. In the first place, not all relevant dimensions of well-being can be bought on the market—think about health or the quality of the natural environment. Second, differences among people will mean that the same level of resources will not provide equal opportunity for 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. Providing someone with serious disabilities with equal resources as someone without those disabilities is unlikely to result in their having equal opportunity for wellbeing.

Utility and happiness

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. 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.

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.

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). 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.

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.

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, just not the only dimension.

Functionings and capabilities

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. 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.

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 suggests that well-being be understood in terms of capabilities (Sen 1985b, 200), defined as the set of functionings vectors that are accessible to the person, i.e., the set from which (s)he can choose.

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

interferences and complementarities among the different dimensions can no longer be neglected. Functioning in domains facing risk is associated with 'corrosive disadvantage', where a disadvantage in one domain is likely to spread its effect to other domains – from hunger to unbearable debt for instance. By contrast, functionings are 'fertile' when achievement in one domain carries over benefits to another domain. Friendship helps people to secure their health and also their jobs. The most disadvantaged in society are those who experience a clustering of several disadvantages and who therefore find it most difficult to get out of poverty unless the ties among these disadvantages are broken.

Preference-based well-being

The most popular version of preferentialism is the economic view of respect for (consumer) preferences as revealed in choice behavior. The booming literature on behavioral anomalies has undermined 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.

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 poor people who report high levels of satisfaction because their aspirations have adapted to their situation. A preference-based notion of well-being should respect individuals' well-informed ordinal preferences about what constitutes a good life, but correct for differences in aspirations. 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. In general, the difference between the income and the equivalent income measures the loss in well-being that results from deviations from that reference level, and this loss is dependent on individual preferences.

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.

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 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.
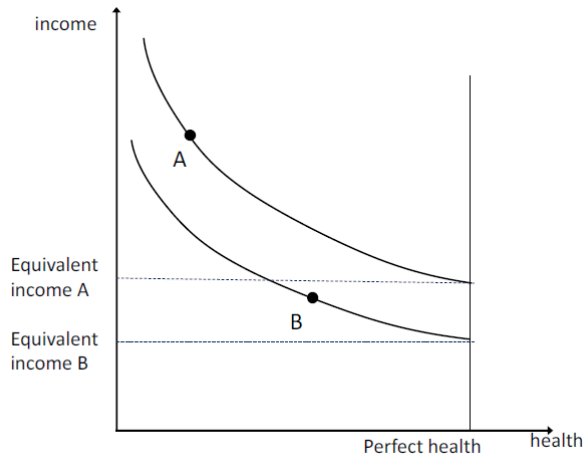

In the situation depicted in this figure, both the individual in life A and the individual in life B agree that the life in A is better than the life in B. Yet it is possible that the individual in life A has high expectations and aspirations and therefore attaches low satisfaction scores to both situations, 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.
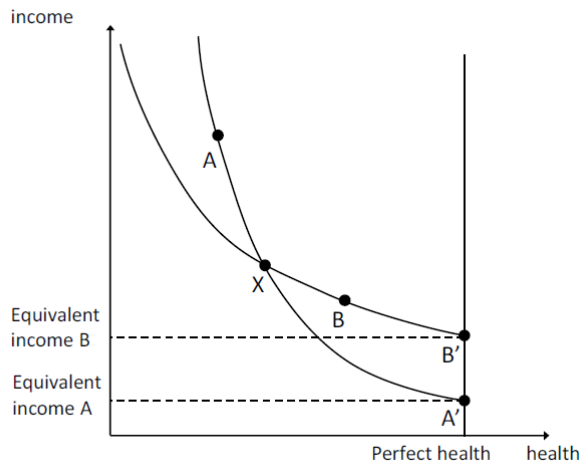
Consider now the individuals in A and B. According to their preferences, the individual in A is equally well-off as in A' and the individual in B is equally well-off as in B'. Given that we can evaluate the lives A' and B' on the basis of the incomes, we can also evaluate A and B on the basis of these incomes. These hypothetical incomes for A and B have been called "equivalent incomes".

3.2 Freedom

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. 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 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).

However, quite different and to some extent incompatible ideas have been associated with the concept of freedom. We can make some initial headway by asking what the opposite of—or the key obstacle to—freedom is. Some possible candidates:

- *Coercion*: I am unfree when someone coerces me or I am coerced to do something;

- *Heteronomy*: I am unfree when I am not self-determined—when I do not govern my life autonomously or "by my own law";

- *Alienation*: I am unfree if I am 'foreign to myself' in anything I do, when I do not experience my own activities and plans *as* my own.

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).

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 I pursue 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: isn't who can do *what* also relevant? Mustn't we assess the goals and the relevant hindrances? 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 speak of freedom without considering the material preconditions of realizing

freedom and thus also the social conditions in which people act. Philip Pettit (2001) has argued that it is not enough that one happens not to be interfered with, for it matters that one remain protected against interference even if others' attitudes towards one changed.

According to some philosophical perspectives, freedom is a more fundamental and demanding basis for assessing social progress than is well-being. To exemplify how a conception of freedom that could play such a role might be built up, we will briefly set out a multi-level analysis based loosely on Hegel. It casts negative and positive freedom as complementary aspects of a more complex ideal. We can build this idea up in a series of steps, understanding freedom, successively, as:

1) not being hindered from doing what I want (negative freedom, absence of external coercion);

2) doing what I want *most* (which already calls on us to set our valuational priorities and rules out manipulation and internalized coercion);

3) doing what I *really* want, i.e. which corresponds to who I really am (drawing in the idea of authenticity; see Taylor 1985a, 15-44);

4) doing what I can *rationally* want (an idea that may correspond to Kant's conception of freedom as rational autonomy or self-legislation);

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).

Whereas 1) describes negative freedom and 2) represents a transitional step, 3), 4) and 5) represent positive conceptions of freedom. 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. This fifth conception thus integrates individual and social perspectives on freedom. I am free in this role precisely because I can

realize something that is important to the social institutions that undergird my freedom. Much more would need to be said about what it takes for social institutions to undergird freedom in this sense. It should be plain from this sketch of this conception, however, that the idea of freedom, so developed, states a demanding standard for assessing social progress.

Seen in the light of these arguments, a purely negative conception of freedom seems peculiarly thin. In response, advocates of liberalism such as Berlin and Taylor (1985b) object that the positive notion of freedom is not only vague but courts paternalistic if not authoritarian and totalitarian consequences. It would allow us to mask efforts to force people to live in accordance with reason as promoting their positive 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 reason or of social convention. 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. 6.2.4). The moral of this criticism of negative freedom cannot be that we should throw it overboard, but rather that we need to situate it in a broader context in which the complementary meaning of positive freedom can also emerge. 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.

3.3 Non-alienation

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—with oneself (Jaeggi 2014). An alienated world presents itself to individuals as insignificant and meaningless, as a world that is not "one's own," in which one is not "at home". For instance, Karl Marx argued that workers experience their labor as alienating. 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.

Another characteristic of alienation is that one can be alienated only from those things or relations that are nonetheless in some sense "one's own." 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 alien to us are the same institutions that we have created and that we reproduce.

Alienation weaves together two different elements: firstly, a *loss of power*: alienated relations are relations in which we as subjects are – or at least experience ourselves to be - 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. 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, overcoming alienation is a precondition for realizing freedom.

3.4 Solidarity

As the African proverb reminds us, "rain does not fall on one roof alone" (Manser 2007). "Solidarity" refers to a certain sense of belonging or togetherness. If, with the sociologist Émile Durkheim (1964), we understand "solidarity" as "what prevents the breakdown of society," our compass need not include it, for the breakdown of society will register losses in many other values. If instead we understand "solidarity" as referring to widespread dispositions to act in a way that reflects one's mutual attachments, its significance is controversial. One could argue, for instance, that the transition away from reliance on community-based, solidaristic dispositions and towards welfare-state arrangements informed by principles of justice constitutes social progress. Yet some invoke solidarity 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 1999a; Brudney 1999).

Without denying that solidarity can have such instrumental value, this section argues that solidarity can also be seen as a basic value, i.e. that an improvement in solidarity is an independent parameter of social progress. Solidarity so understood is associated with the widespread acceptance of the idea that we somehow 'owe to each other' certain ways of acting.

Solidarity, so understood, is distinct from other kinds of social relations. Like friendship, solidarity can be based on a mutual and mutually recognized feeling of attachment, identification, and bonds of obligation. But friendship is a close face-to-face relation between individuals, whereas we can form solidaristic bonds with distant people, with large numbers of people, and even with strangers.

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. 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. Moreover, many of the attitudes that we consider solidaristic don't seem to be directed to realizing individual self-interest.

Solidarity 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.

If we think of solidaristic motivations as an expression of common goals, shared projects, or a common fate, they are also distinct from compassion in two significant respects (see Sec. 4.5 on beneficence and generosity). 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. In contrast, solidarity is, at its core, a symmetrical, mutual and reciprocal relation.

This is not to deny that solidarity has an altruistic aspect. Solidaristic action generally expresses 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.

Solidarity 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 involve a commitment to that cooperation for its own sake. Achieving solidarity, then, 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.

Box 2.3: Social relations

Confirming what we have learned from behavioral economics, neuroscience, epidemiology and evolutionary biology, recent studies on human happiness have indicated that 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,

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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 2013; 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 arises from changes in human relationships: an increase in solitude, distrust, familial instability, and generational cleavages and a decrease in solidarity, honesty, and social and civic participation (Bartolini et al. 2013; Bartolini and Sarracino 2015). The second 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 (Brockmann 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 (Bartolini and Bonatti 2008).

There is thus a possible dark side to economic growth. Relational goods that are free for one generation become scarce and costly for the next generation and eventually luxury goods for the generation following that. From this perspective, it is crucial to account for the relational goods enjoyed in a society separately from accounting for its economic growth. Economic growth that seriously undercuts human social relations may not count as social progress overall.

3.5 Esteem and recognition

People generally like to be approved of by others; and will do much to avoid being disapproved of. 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 are general objects of desire.

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. 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. 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.

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. 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. 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).

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. 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. There is something arguably even worse for someone than to be disesteemed: the situation in which one is non-estimable. The Dalits (formerly "untouchable castes") in India have historically suffered such an extreme fate, and despite punitive legal provisions against it, continue to suffer discrimination. Short of invisibility is failure to be recognized as an equal. While servants can sometimes be esteemed in some ways by those they serve, they are not treated as having equal moral standing. Recognition in this sense is, we think, also an element in well-being, but it also 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).

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. Wider such recognition (in both dimensions) is something to be pursued under the social progress agenda.

Box 2.4: Gender equality

Esteem and recognition matter to everybody. They are, however, particularly important for undervalued groups—even those, like women, that are not numerical minorities. Members of such groups typically have to work 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 deliberate, self-serving bias on the part of the dominant group but also "implicit bias" (Brownstein 2016) on the part of anyone. This sort of bias can extend to members of the disvalued group itself. A lack of protest, then, is not always a sign that the group's current treatment is acceptable.

Women can suffer extreme forms of aggression, including battery, rape, trafficking and slavery. More frequently, like other members of oppressed groups, they also suffer systematic "microaggressions" (Pierce 1970) such as interruptions, dismissive, disrespectful or aggressive replies, or mockery, which 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 their performance (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, Chs. 3 and 8). Women are also paid less than men for equal work, are underrepresented in leadership positions, and bear disproportionate burdens in child-rearing.

Some argue that attempts to break this vicious circle by deploying affirmative action or quotas is self-defeating, as it can cause everyone to think of the benefit of these policies as falling on the undeserving. However, the history of affirmative action *for men*, particularly white men, shows that it was extremely beneficial to them, and that the status quo is not and has never been a pure meritocracy (Gheaus 2015). As Catharine 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. …."

By contrast, affirmative action *for women* and other minorities has proven effective at creating new role models, challenging stereotypes, integrating elites, and incorporating their perspectives. Allowing women into traditionally male positions has also allowed us to see more clearly the difference between *sex*, the biological difference between males and females, and *gender,* a social construction including stark distinctions and stereotypes, differentiated roles, biased perceptions, power imbalances and arbitrary allocations of resources and tasks (Haslanger 2012).

The arbitrariness of gendered divisions—which can be oppressive for both women and men trapped into rigid roles (Hearn 2015)—is perhaps more obvious than that of sexual distinctions. Men and women, however, cannot be neatly separated in two groups even from a purely biological, anatomical, hormonal, chromosomal or behavioral perspective. Like sexual orientation, sexual identity can be a matter of degree, and such identity has varied across time and space.

Sexist biases are not only unjust, but deprive society as a whole from the contributions of many of its members. Research continues to show that policies of inclusion have benefits for problem solving (Page, 2007).

3.6 Cultural goods

The progress of human societies is not adequately measured solely by looking at the achievements of 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 (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 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.

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 (2003), "A people without memory are in danger of losing their soul." 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.

In addition to working to protect and preserve the knowledge and the cultural forms and achievements bequeathed to them by the past, societies must also 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.

3.7 Environmental values

For most mainstream ethical traditions of the West, humans are the main focus of moral consideration. 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, they themselves have adopted a human-centered approach to social progress. In 1969, the UN General Assembly stressed that "each Government had the primary role and ultimate responsibility of ensuring the social progress and well-being of its people" (Declarations on Social Progress and Development, Article 8).

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.

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).

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. Biocentrists go farther, as they hold that all living beings have intrinsic value and that everything that is intrinsically valuable ought to be the object of moral concern. Creatures that lack feelings have the capacities to grow, flourish, reproduce and self-repair. Other environmental ethicists have extended the attribution of intrinsic value even beyond living things. For ecocentrists all natural entities are morally considerable. Some of them ascribe nonanthropocentric intrinsic value also to species and ecosystems (e.g., Rolston 2002).

Eugene C. 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 that the value of animals, plants, and nature is not merely 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.

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. Arguably, a monkey has more intrinsic value than an ant because of having more sophisticated capabilities. Indeed, it may be 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. 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.

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 considering animals for their own sakes can also result in a better life for humans.

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. These communities recognize both the instrumental and intrinsic value of the natural environment—a position that, as stated above, is perfectly consistent.

3.8. Security

In addition to caring about what goods they enjoy and which they are capable of enjoying, people care about the security of their enjoyment of basic goods and of their capabilities of enjoying them. "Security" is at least roughly the contrary of "vulnerability." We may think of it as consisting in there being a variety of protections in place that would enable people to hold on to the goods and capabilities that they need even when circumstances sour. So understood, as involving a kind of "counterfactual robustness" to the goods and central capabilities one enjoys, across possible variations in the circumstances, security is a good whose value does not wholly derive from that of these goods and capabilities. Establishing the security of a given type of good is not the same as maximizing people's chances of enjoying it; rather, security limits the kinds of risks people face by putting in place certain protections—potentially rejecting maximizing strategies that are too risky.

A wide range of thinkers agree that assuring security of this sort is a central function of government. Thomas Hobbes characterized it as "the end for which [the rulers were] entrusted with sovereign power," covering not merely "bare preservation, but also all other contentments of life" (1994, II.xxx.1, p. 219). Martha Nussbaum (2006) has argued that governments must put in place constitutional guarantees that secure each citizen's enjoyment of a decent minimum of each of ten central capabilities. Influentially, the *Human Security Report 2005* emphasized the importance to security of the "responsibility to protect" (Human Security Centre 2005). Given the variety of goods and capabilities whose security is important to us, the means to providing the relevant types of security are quite diverse. Whereas constitutional checks and balances are crucial to securing liberty, a whole panoply of other measures are needed to provide food and water security, of life-and-death concern to much of the world's population. Many of these issues are treated in the following chapters, which discuss many of these areas in which security is needed.

Here the point is that security with regard to important goods and capabilities is an important good in itself. It is one thing to supply a community with potable water and another thing to supply it with a secure source of potable water. The former can be done by regularly airlifting in bottled water—a practice that could be stopped at the whim of the authority funding the effort. It is another thing to provide a community with an adequate system of reservoirs and a reliable, sustainably operating filtration system. The relative security against shifting circumstances afforded by the latter is an instance of the good of security, in this case as something over and above the good of the water itself.

4. Basic principles

Having elaborated the different values that we take as relevant to the assessment of social progress, we now turn to the relevant principles. As we argued in §2.1.2, principles need to be considered because they 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 (see 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.

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.

4.1 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.

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. 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.

4.2 Basic rights

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.

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.

Human rights are a powerful framework for evaluating social progress. There are two 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. 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.

4.3 Distributive justice

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).

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.

4.3.1 Libertarianism

Libertarians argue that securing basic rights (see §4.2) suffices to generate an adequate account of distributive justice, or "justice in holdings" (Nozick 1974, 150). They claim 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 those, such as Nozick, who hold that the right to private property is a fundamental moral right and those who argue for the protection of private property because of the beneficial consequences that arise from individuals securely holding, using and exchanging it (Friedman 1962; Tomasi, 2012). Here we focus on the former, non-instrumental, defense of property rights.

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; their emphasis is on preventing certain kinds of interference by the state or individuals. If an individual voluntarily works in exchange for income, 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 extreme view, income taxation is equivalent to a kind of forced slavery (Nozick 1974, chap. 7). In fact, 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 anyone illegitimately interfering with their rights.

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 provides one justification for a so-called basic income: an income which is granted to everybody without any work condition.

4.3.2 Basic needs and a decent minimum

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.

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.

4.3.3 Equality of opportunity, luck egalitarianism, equality of outcomes

There is near consensus that open discrimination cannot be tolerated in a good society. Nobody should be denied access to education, jobs, or health care on the basis of ethnic origin, gender, etc.

Non-discrimination is the narrowest interpretation that can be given to the notion of equality of opportunity. It entails equality before the law. A more substantive interpretation would require 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.

Should society go further? 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).[6] For others, it is not obviously fair to allow those with greater talent and ability to reap greater rewards (an issue Rawls treats under the heading of the distribution of advantage).

Ronald Dworkin (1981a, 1981b) introduced a distinction between the goods or *resources* available to persons and their *choices,* which would lead to a degree of success in a plan of life. He argued that a person should be responsible for his choices, and hence it was important to *equalize resources* available to persons. However, Dworkin defined

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[6] Rawls thus does not treat his principle of fair equality of opportunity as bearing on overall outcomes.

resource bundles comprehensively – to include not only transferable resources like money and wealth, but also non-transferable ones, like the family into which a person is born, or even his genetic make-up. So equalizing resources consisted in finding the allocation of *transferable* resources (wealth) that would compensate persons properly for the inequalities in their bundles of *non-transferable* resources.

To decide on what the 'right' compensation is, Dworkin proposed a thought-experiment. He imagined that a veil of ignorance denied persons of the knowledge of the resource bundles that they would be assigned in the 'birth lottery,' and that behind this veil they could purchase insurance against bad luck in that lottery. In this hypothetical insurance market, persons used their actual preferences over risk, but were endowed with an equal amount of money with which to purchase insurance. After the birth lottery occurs, and the 'souls' who participated in the insurance market become persons located in families, transfers of wealth would occur to implement the insurance contracts that had been made.

Dworkin's scheme was ingenious, but it turned out to have a fatal flaw. John Roemer pointed out (in 1985) that unless everyone were very risk averse, the insurance market could result in the accumulation of *more* wealth by those who were 'talented' – it could result in transferring wealth from the 'handicapped' or disabled to the talented, or from the unlucky to the lucky.

In 1989, G.A. Cohen argued that Dworkin was correct to make a distinction between choice and resources, but that he had improperly placed the 'cut' between the two. The right cut was between aspects of a person's situation for which he should not be held responsible and aspects for which he should be held responsible. In particular, a

person should not be held responsible for choices that were induced by preferences that were induced by circumstances beyond his control.

Based upon this discussion, Roemer proposed (in 1993) a theory of *equality of opportunity*. He focuses on the distribution of final outcomes but distinguishes between factors for which individuals should not be held responsible ("circumstances") and factors for which they can be seen as responsible (their "effort"). The idea motivating the 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 super intelligent individuals should get the same outcome as less intelligent, provided they exert the same level of effort.

The list of circumstances could be quite comprehensive, or fairly small. A society will thus determine what equality of opportunity means by the choice of circumstances it wishes persons to be compensated for. Equality of opportunity is therefore a concept that is defined as *relative* to the conception of circumstances and responsibility that a society wishes to adopt. 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.

The sharpest criticism of this luck-egalitarian approach is formulated by philosophers like Elisabeth Anderson (1999), who argue that the concept of responsibility cannot bear the weight that luck egalitarians place on it. Even the negligent driver has a claim on society for aid in an accident. Other people have argued that ascribing some responsibility to individuals is just the other side of the coin of acknowledging their freedom (Fleurbaey 2008).

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4.3.4 Egalitarianism, prioritarianism, and maximin

Principles of distributive justice have also been developed independently of the idea of fairness of opportunity. One 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.

Egalitarian views must settle on the relevant "currency" or "currencies" of equality (Sen 1980). Candidates for what is to be equalized include resources, subjective well-being, capabilities, and preference-satisfaction. Equalizing external resources means neglecting differences in needs and other differences in the personal conversion factors, as described in section 3. We have seen that 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 redistributing 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 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 as well as has to face criticisms.

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 the relevant principle is 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. However, for policy evaluation the differences between prioritarians and egalitarians are minimal (Fleurbaey 2015).

A fundamental question arises if one aims at maximizing the advantage of the worst-off members of society and 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). Rawls's "difference principle" (Rawls 1999a, 53) (which is also known as a maximin principle), maximizes the resources of those who occupy the lowest social position. Taking into account feasibility considerations, mainly related to incentives, the maximin criterion may lead to very different social policies than pure egalitarianism (Cohen 2008).

4.3.5 Utilitarianism's distributive implications

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 and the average level of well-being. Utilitarianism, which has been extremely influential in economics,

advocates maximizing this sum or this average.[7] The term "utilitarianism" is often 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 utility levels by taking the simple sum or the average.

Some argue that maximizing 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 1979, 60-61).

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. It is clear that the assumptions needed to derive this outcome-egalitarian result are highly unrealistic.

4.4 Aggregate maximization, justice, and efficiency

The multidimensional nature of the compass we have been developing seems to pose a challenge to the idea that having a rational basis for choice requires having something to maximize (a maximand). Yet maximization approaches may propose a large variety of

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[7] 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 2.5.

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. 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. 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.

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).

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.

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 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.

4.5 Beneficence and generosity

The duty of beneficence calls for action to assist and support others in need; 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.

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 good (in the economists' sense) of security. At the same time, they 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.

5. Units of assessment

A compass for guiding our deliberations about social progress must provide a sense of the entities on whose progress we must or may permissibly 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. 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.

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? An account of social progress must also take into account the interests of non-human animals. But in what ways?

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.

5.1 Individuals

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.

It can be entirely unobjectionable 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 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).

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. 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).

It is fairly uncontroversial to say that if, in a society or the world as a whole, people's lives improve in *length* and *quality*, social progress has, *ceteris paribus*, been achieved. 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.

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. 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.

5.2 Civil society groups

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 except derivatively. 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 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; Jones, 2008).

At the present time, efforts at assessing social progress 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).

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.

5.3 Nations

It is very common to assess the social progress of a nation or national state. 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. This 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.

Suppose we argue that we should allow the free international movement of people. 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 market may help even things out. But 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.

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.

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.

To be sure, we should remain 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. Moreover, many people around the world are fleeing serious repression and human rights violations. These people deserve to be taken in. The general reasons to preserve nation-states are not reasons to preserve the status quo and all state boundaries exactly as they are.

5.4 The ethical status of future generations

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 exhaust 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?

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 the present generation ought to take steps to avoid or limit the damage we do to the Earth's atmosphere and the depletion of its resources. Beneath the surface of this consensus, however, lurk differences with respect to how we ought to understand the moral standing of future generations, and how demanding are our duties to them.

(i) At the threshold of these questions lies a stubborn conceptual obstacle to claiming that later generations can be harmed by anything we do. Doubts about whether those who are alive can harm future generations have 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, at least for those

who have lives worth living. 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. If she has a life worth living we cannot say that the previous generation's emissions have harmed Cari 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.

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. (Matters become more complicated once we acknowledge that the choices of the present generation can affect the population size of future generations—see Box 2.5.) On this view, morality is not exhausted by a concern for the interests of identifiable individuals.

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 (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).

(ii) Assuming that we have reason to take future generations into account when assessing social progress, how stringent are these reasons? Do 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.[8] 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.

How ought our compass for evaluating social progress to 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 2.8)- states that 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 to sustain 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) into a hybrid conception of our duties to future generations that includes a concern for both.

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[8] Though see Mazor (2010) for an argument for demanding intergenerational duties that appeals to the fact of *overlapping* relationships between contiguous generations.

Box 2.5: The problem of optimal population size

Optimal population size is the population size that maximizes value given constraints on available resources. In classical optimum population theory, the relevant value is economic output (Dasgupta 1969). Most contemporary discussions of this issue take the relevant value to be human welfare. The problem of optimal population size arises when policies that affect the welfare of future generations also affect the *number* of people that will exist.

If the current generation continues to consume resources at the expense of future generations, and population increases significantly, there could be an enormous population in which most lives are barely worth living. Suppose we could instead create a smaller population with very good lives. Intuitively, this smaller population with very high welfare levels is better than the much larger population with much lower welfare levels. However, many traditional moral theories violate this intuition. For example, per Classical Utilitarianism (CU) (see §4.3.5), we should maximize overall welfare. We can do this either by making people's lives better, or by increasing the size of the population with lives worth living. So, per 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.

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

those currently in the population are *even worse* than the added lives would be.

There are many ways to avoid the Repugnant Conclusion. They include: aggregating welfare differently; revising the notion of a life worth living; rejecting the transitivity of "better than"; and appealing to other values such as, for example, equality or desert (for overviews, see Arrhenius et al. 2010, Broome 2004, Blackorby et al. 2005). However, these ways of avoiding the Repugnant Conclusion have other counterintuitive consequences. In fact, several *impossibility theorems* demonstrate that no theory can fulfil a number of intuitively compelling adequacy conditions that, most agree, any reasonable theory of optimal population size must fulfil (Arrhenius forthcoming, 2000, 2011)—for example, the condition that one population is better than another if everyone is better off in the former than in the latter, and the condition that it is better to create people with a higher rather than a lower level of well-being.

Therefore, it seems we must either abandon one or more of the adequacy conditions on which these theorems are based or become moral skeptics. There is no easy choice here.

5.5 Humans and other animals

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. 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.

At the same time, humanity has come to realize that it is not only ourselves or our tribe that matters, and has 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. 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.

These developments draw on and extend the values and principles we have so far listed as important for assessing and guiding social progress—most importantly the value of well-being and 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 (McMahan 2002, Vallentyne 2006).

Others however have resisted this kind of extension of our principles or believe it needs to be qualified, because they think it overreaches. Not all living things, they argue, deserve consideration. For example, some hold that only higher functioning beings – persons – should be protected. On one construal, "persons" have a sense of themselves as intelligent creatures that persist over time and can think of themselves as existing in different moments and places (Locke 1998, II.xxvii.9). 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.

Death is particularly bad for persons because they typically have more to lose from losing their lives, they are more connected to their future and 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.

Although the abovementioned capacities explain why death or confinement may be worse for persons than for some 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 worse for persons than for any animals which can feel such pain. Even if there was such a reason, pain will still be bad for them, and so at least an important range of other animals 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.

6. Principles specially applicable to certain types of agent

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 are not reducible to the fully general principles set out in §4. 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 implausible to say that these other animals have any obligations, let alone that ecosystems would.

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).

Box 2.6: 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 allow 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. Perhaps pairs or trios of principles work together in

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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 honoring moral principles can help promote social progress.

Two of the best-known proposals about such a division of moral labor are found in John Rawls's theory of justice. 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 affect individual transactions by settling 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. 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). 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.

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). He argued (again, controversially: see, e.g., Barry 1973) that a more just society would result if legislative efforts to implement distributive justice were effectively 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).

6.1 The normative relevance of institutions

Human institutions are important for social progress both for their structural properties and for their motivational implications. We explicate each of these two features in turn.

"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).

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 affects many other people, other arrangements need to be sought.[9]

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.

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. 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. Second, it seems likely that institutional arrangements will affect motivations in various ways, and so will mold the people that grow up with them.

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[9] These new arrangements may include market-based mechanisms such as the creation of a market for emission permits.

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…" (Smith 1994, V.i.f.50). 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.

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. Additionally, any motivational changes are likely to have implications for the structural effects of other institutions. For example, if markets drive out altruistic behavior, that might have effects on our willingness to support democratic institutions.

In this way 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 about how democratic processes may moderate the worst possible distributional excesses of markets. Sometimes one institution may support (or undermine) 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.

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). 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 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.

6.2 Principles applicable to governments

6.2.1 The rule of law

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 original notion of the "rule of law" (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 and individuals will not be held in custody without charge beyond minimal limits.

An effective rule of law will require certain institutional features: a judiciary that is independent (an aspect of the so-called separation of powers) and non-corrupt, and compliance by the executive with the courts' determinations. Since these features of the legal process are normatively desirable for a vast variety of reasons, 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).

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. They emphasize the crucial role of the police. 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.

6.2.2 Transparency and accountability

"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.

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. 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.

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.

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. If the absence of a secret ballot in these arenas is desirable, it is because the importance of having jurors answerable *to each other* overrides the risk of intimidation.

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. Therefore, invasions of people's privacy in the interests of detecting criminal or terrorist activity imposes a loss on ordinary citizens. How much secrecy should shield the "secret police" is a question that ought to be an issue of public judgment and public knowledge.

The upshot of these thoughts is that a requirement of effective transparency applies at least to public institutions, bearing in mind that:

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.

6.2.3 Democracy

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 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):

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.

An elaborate democratic system—including checks and balances—was developed by the Oromo people of Ethiopia (Legesse 2000). The Oromo constitution has imposed a system of checks and balances long before the emergence of the so called modern democracies. Unlike in the Western democratic traditions, power is distributed across generations and age groups in the Oromo *gadaa* government. Elected leaders are required to test their knowledge before assuming power. The *gadaa* national assembly can remove the *gadaa* leader from power if he commits serious mistakes that endanger the peace of the Oromo people.

There 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. 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.

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. 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).

Each of these broadly instrumental modes of arguing for democracy has strong merits. 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 respectful and reasoned discussion, 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 and, therefore, 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.

The democratic principle that we have framed states that all governments should be democratic. There are two ways that this principle might be extended. Each builds on the observation that the core arguments for democracy center on the fact that governmental institutions have power and authority over individuals. First, at the global level, while there is not now a global government, there are many international organizations that wield authority. Working out how to adapt democratic ideals to cover these institutions is an urgent and ongoing effort (Archibugi et al. 2012, Valentini 2012). The second extension would make a case for democracy, or something like it, within a commercial firm or corporation—either by stressing the value of participation (Dewey 1969) or, again, by highlighting resemblances between a corporation's power and authority and a government's (Dahl 1985, Walzer 1983).

6.2.4 Giving rights determinate reality

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. 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.

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," 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.

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.

Governments must also take affirmative steps to give concrete reality to the core human rights, including the negative ones. 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). As common as these measures are, they are not strictly necessary means to realizing these rights, but time-tested sufficient means of effectively realizing these rights.

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).

6.3 Principles applicable to civil society

We have already characterized civil society as a heterogeneous collection of institutions, associations, and practices that are not properly characterized either as the market or as political institutions (§6.1.3). This sub-section elaborates additional principles that could be seen as applying distinctively to the domain of civil society and its treatment by political institutions, with many of these also reinforcing the basic principles set out in §4.

6.3.1 Toleration

Requiring peaceably accepting differences with others, such as religious ones, toleration is a principle most appropriately applied to the realm of civil society. Honoring principles of toleration is a prerequisite for any more robust and valuable respect 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).

In all free and democratic societies, 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.

Toleration should not merely be a matter of the powerful choosing to be indulgent or of people merely facing the necessity of getting along (Forst 2003). Rather, despite holding incompatible ethical beliefs and subscribing to different cultural practices, people can 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" (ibid., 74). The limits to justifiable toleration would flow from two criteria: reciprocity, which prevents us from claiming for ourselves a resource that we deny to others; and generality, which 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).

A plurality of conceptions of the good thus applies, *pace* Rawls, 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. Conceptions of the individual and the common good will clash even in a culturally homogeneous society, so long as it respects basic liberties. These are discussed and arbitrated, through the exercise of public reason in the public sphere—itself an important institution. (Habermas 1989; Richardson 2002, chap. 13)

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 protection of the freedoms of association and expression, civil society's many associations

can fruitfully interact, making possible the articulation of the common or public good. Civil society is thus a "source of both value and values" (Edwards 2011, 5) or, as Michael Walzer described it, 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.

6.3.2 Educating and supporting citizens

It is therefore pre-eminently in civil society that citizens are prepared for participation in public activity. Citizenship entails more than simply voting every few years, presuming a commitment to some notion of the common good that can motivate active participation in public affairs. This could take many forms: debate and disagreement; forming or joining associations that represent one's particular vision of the common good; or seeking public office. A society's educational institutions play a central role in creating citizens, especially in a democracy (Gutmann 1987).

Rights that are 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. In the extreme case of an unresponsive state, this may require movements and practices of civil disobedience which are viewed as legitimate if undertaken publicly and non-violently, with the willingness to suffer punishment for violating the law (e.g., Walzer 2007).

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 it is formal democratic institutions that provide the mechanisms 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.

6.4 Global justice

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). 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? This section looks 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?

6.4.1 The geographical scope of justice

Traditionally, theories of justice have taken the nation or the state to define the scope of principles of distributive justice. However, increasingly political philosophers have argued that they apply—also or instead—at the global level.

We can divide arguments for global justice into "associational" and "non-associational" approaches. The former hold 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 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.

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 2.6). 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. 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. This position receives further support once we consider global environmental interdependence, dramatic in the case of climate change.   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.

A related reason for endorsing global principles of justice has been proposed by Thomas Pogge.   Pogge's argument has two key elements.   First, he holds that "any institutional design is unjust when it foreseeably produces an avoidable human rights deficit" (2008, 25). He 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.

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 global trade rules that enable them to further enrich themselves, often by colluding with unjust and repressive states (Pogge 2008, 119-121; Wenar 2016). 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.

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. 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.

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.

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).

Others go further. Some 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). Or they adopt an egalitarian approach, and hold that global inequalities are unjust (Caney 2005). 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).

Yet in all these approaches the central cosmopolitan point remains: the core tenets underlying standard accounts of justice—whether associational or non-associational—suggest that those accounts should apply at the global level.

6.4.2 Three kinds of association

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.

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).

Second, some argue that the state is a morally distinctive kind of relationship because it exercises coercion. Michael Blake (2013), for example, 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.

However, 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.)

6.4.3 Different principles for different issues?

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) the nature of global trade, the distribution of burdens and benefits in combatting climate change, migration and free movement, the regulation of international financial markets, international labor rights and rules concerning sweatshop labor. 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.

However, 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. 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.

7. Looking ahead: using the compass

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).

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.

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.

7.1 Evaluating social progress and regress

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 well-known relationship between health and the distribution of material welfare. Yet, for all practical purposes, there is a division of labor with different actors responsible for action in different domains (§4 *init.*; Box 2.6). 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 illustrate how to apply our normative framework with a specific domain in mind (e.g. climate change, income distribution, gender relations, democracy).

The *first* challenge is then to determine which of the *values and principles 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.

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 §6.4.2). 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 matter and must be made explicit at the start.

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.

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?*

The first step in this process is to make explicit how one interprets the principle. It is not enough to say that one is in favor of "distributive justice" or of "freedom", because the ideals of distributive justice or 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. 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 interpretations of this value that appropriately take account of new obstacles to and opportunities for human interrelationship that the newest social media provide.

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. Suppose we care about the environment (§3.7). How to determine in which social state it is better honored and protected? 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, different inequality measures may evaluate a change in the income distribution differently.

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.

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.

Table 2.3: Example of domain report card

PRINCIPLE OR VALUE X	Evaluation unit and period	…	Evaluation unit and period
Indicator 1			
Indicator 2			
…			

Indicator n

Summary evaluation

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 that may be at play. For example, inequality, freedom, and esteem may each be relevant to evaluating changes in the income distribution. Assessing 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).

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.

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.

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.

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.

Table 2.3: Synthetic report card

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			

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*"? 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. Even without explicit weighting one can get interesting insights by exploiting the assumption that a specific outcome becomes relatively less important as we have more of it. We illustrate this possibility further in box 2.7. Yet, the ultimate evaluation of whether there has been social progress will have to follow from an informed and democratic deliberation procedure.

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 on 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.

Box 2.7: 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.

Suppose we 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. 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, 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 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, other things equal, 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.

7.2 From principles and values to action

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.

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.

Thinking about policies requires taking into account feasibility. In this chapter, we have set out many values and principles that have a claim to non-derivative importance. 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).

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.

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 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.

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.

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. The actions they each should take will differ, but will influence each other and must therefore be considered together.

This sort of analysis may finally result in a "toolkit table" that could look as follows:

Table 2.4: Toolkit table

	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"
…				

One could of course go further and add 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.

Box 2.8: 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 (4.3.2)
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	Basic needs (4.3.2)
3. Ensure healthy lives...	Basic needs (4.3.2)
…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 (4.3.3)
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	Equality of opportunity (4.3.3); Gender Box 2.4
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	Basic needs (4.3.2)
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	Basic needs (4.3.2)
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 (4.3.2)
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	(these are means to

and marine resources for sustainable development   sustainability)

15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of   (these are means to
terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat   sustainability)
desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and
halt biodiversity loss

16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for   Solidarity (3.4); Justice
sustainable development, provide access to justice for all   (4.1, 4.3, 6.4)
and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions
at all levels

17. Strengthen the means of implementation and   (these are means to
revitalize the global partnership for sustainable   sustainability)
development

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.

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.

Box 2.9: 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

Contested or banned markets	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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