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Within any nation there will always be contests arising not only from conflicting interests, particularly economic interest, but also from competing moral outlooks and entrenched beliefs. There is one overriding moral principle that every citizen has good reasons to accept and to honor in practice: that is the principle of institutionalized fairness in procedures for the resolution of these conflicts. These fair procedures, political and legal, constitute the cement that holds the state together, and supply a common ground of loyalty shared by the citizens who recognize this institutional bond between them: usually weaker in sentiment than the bond of a whole shared moral outlook, or the bonds of kinship, but still a bond that makes itself felt when there is a conflict of loyalties, and when the state has by fair processes arrived at a decision that is morally repugnant to some individual citizens. Domination, the suppression of conflicts by force or by the threat of force, is a great political evil that any citizen may be expected to feel as evil, even if he does not agree with the particular priority
given to it among the great evils by his fellow citizens. Even those men of religion who are disgusted by the easygoing tolerance of secular liberals will have a rational ground for respecting the institutions that enable such liberal attitudes and practices to survive alongside their own. The rational ground of respect is rationality itself, the habit of balancing pros and cons in argument, a norm that they cannot without disaster discard in their own thinking.

If I claim that poverty, like disease, or the wounds of war, or imprisonment, or public humiliation, is one of the great evils that afflict human beings, this moral claim will be defended through reference to the actual experience of poverty and to feelings of sympathy and of imaginative identification. This high priority accorded to poverty among evils to be avoided is certainly not universally acceptable, as the canons of rational procedure can be. It is part of a particular moral outlook that many moralists of many different persuasions will reject. If I am addressing someone who has not experienced poverty and who cannot imagine the experience of it, or who has no strong feelings of sympathy, my claim will be either denied or

brushed aside as politically irrelevant. Such a respondent will agree that poverty is something to be avoided and is so far evil, but that, considered in the context of political action, the avoidance of it does not have a high priority—partly perhaps because the defense of the state and of individual freedoms ought to have a much higher priority, and partly because poverty is essentially a natural, and not a man-made, evil, and therefore is largely outside the proper scope of political action. Politics is the domain of public and responsible choice, and we typically have to choose between war and peace. But it may be argued that we do not choose between famine and plenty, or between the plague and good health, or between sanity and madness. In the centuries of the Christian era before 1848 and the Communist Manifesto, these latter contrasts between good and bad in human experience were taken to lie outside, or at best on the margin, of effective state action or of social planning, and hence outside political argument. Obviously there were at all times glancing sympathetic references to the sufferings of the poor, to famine and disease, and to the moral and theological questions that they suggest. So
in Swift's "A Modest Proposal" or, surprisingly, in *Les Caracteres* of La Bruyere in the seventeenth century, or later in Samuel Johnson's reported feelings for the poor, there is a vivid sense of the great evil of poverty, but much less sense of the evil as a political reality, comparable with the evils of tyranny and of lawlessness. Then with Jacobinism and Napoleon's social policies and with Bentham's utilitarian philosophy, the age of proactive politics began: the proper range of political argument was being gradually extended throughout the nineteenth century.

The aim of the socialist movement throughout the century, and after the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, was to extend the recognized sphere of political action to include the whole of "the condition of the people," as the current phrase went in Britain: the poverty and deprivation of the unprivileged, the conditions of work in factories and farms, child labor, public health and nutrition, standards in housing and education. Over the years all these elements in the quality of life of working people were to be moved into the public domain and to be made a field of political conflict.

The essence of socialism as a moral and political theory, discernible in all its many varieties, is the commitment to political agency far beyond the domain recognized in earlier centuries and in other political philosophies. Political institutions and political actions must in the modern world become the first resource for counteracting the great evils, in the place of religious institutions and their charities. The original appeal of socialism in the work of Karl Marx was to an aggressive and more practical humanism, which intended to redraw the boundary between natural and man-made evils, and to bring many more of the sources of human suffering and frustration into the political domain. The political forces resisting socialism have always tried to defend the previously recognized boundary between natural and man-made evils, arguing their case with an ideology that stresses the freedom of the individual and the threat to freedom of enlarged powers for the state. Phrases such as "the nanny state" are now used by those advocating a morality that gives priority to the autonomy of the individual and to the virtues of self-reliance and of enterprise at the expense of organized public benevolence.
Both sides in this clash of moralities, long-running in the developed world, call upon a supporting ideology, each invoking different conceptions of freedom. The adversary reasoning engendered by these competing moralities with their attached ideologies has been the stuff of democratic politics in the twentieth century. From the point of view of a liberal democrat, this may be a reason for complacency as long as fair procedures of dispute and conflict are preserved. Within a person's morality as a typical liberal, as opposed to a conservative or a socialist, the fact that a particular set of policies—for example, those establishing the welfare state—has emerged victorious from a fair political battle is sufficient ground for affirming the acceptability of these policies. For a typical liberal democrat, as I interpret him, the fact that a particular policy is the outcome of a fair process of democratic conflict is both a necessary and a sufficient condition of its acceptability. For a democratic socialist, and for typical British conservatives, that the policy is the outcome of a fair and established procedure of conflict resolution is a necessary, but certainly not a sufficient, condition of its acceptability. If the finally chosen policy seems to me extremely and evidently unjust in substance, it will often be in my view unacceptable. When a policy seems to me unacceptable, what form my opposition to it should take is a separate moral question, to be determined in the particular circumstances and in view of the extent of the evil.

The arguments around the extended role of the state, and about the scope of collective and political action, raise issues that are properly philosophical, if they are pressed far enough. Those who want to give priority to the autonomy of individuals, and to their unfettered control over their own lives, probably do not think of persons as entirely natural objects whose activities are to be wholly explicable in terms of natural causes. For them the absolute value of human life, peculiar to this unique species, resides in a person's power of thoughtful self-direction. If we do not give free play to this power before everything else, they will argue that we are left with no absolute value to be recognized in the world, and that therefore we must fall back on the various values that different cultures and different persons, subject to ascertainable influences, now happen to accept.

This is a coherent argument, more power-
fully stated by Kant, but also, in different forms and with many modifications, widely disseminated and recognized in pre-philosophical opinions. Christian moralists, and other monotheists, insist on the responsibility of human beings for the evil that they do and that they consequently suffer, a responsibility that is unique, and that sets them above and apart from other creatures in the natural order.

This is a philosophy that accords overriding moral priority to individuals and to the authority of their practical reasoning. Of lower priority are the collective decisions of institutions and of social groups, as opposed to individuals, and of lower priority also are the sentiments, desires, and interests that a person happens to have, as opposed to the supposed universal moral principles by which any truly rational person will be guided. This appeal to universal principles has been one of the philosophical backgrounds to liberal attitudes in politics, and it stands in direct line of descent from Protestant stress on the individual citizen's conscience as the principal arbiter under God in all moral issues, private or public. A contrary philosophy of mind and of personality, one of many, assumes that the sentiments and desires, reflective and unreflective, of persons determine their conduct together with the calculations that occur in their practical reasoning. Their sentiments and desires may be considered admirable or the reverse from one or another moral standpoint, and their practical adversary reasoning may be reasonable or unreasonable. But no claim is made for the autonomy of the individual's will as something that stands outside the natural order, and that has a unique and absolute value. This philosophy asserts that no feature of personality stands outside the natural order, and that natural sentiments and emotions, refined both by reflection and by specific customs, are the source and the ground of substantial moral values. Only the principle of fairness in settling conflicts can claim a universal ground as being a principle of shared rationality, indispensable in all decision making and in all intentional action.

From this naturalistic standpoint the interferences of a socialist state in the lives of its citizens, and some loss of self-direction, have to be weighed, as being so far negative, against the gains in welfare and a sense of security. We naturalists argue that there are no absolute
values involved in this conflict, and that the work of practical reason is the balancing of the different evils to be avoided. The line separating man-made evils from evils that come from the nature of things is a fluctuating line and is determined as much by our actions, and by our conceived possibilities of action, as by our observations. If we successfully develop the social practices and the technologies that will anticipate and prevent the occurrence of famines, famines are moved into the column of man-made evils, insofar as, on particular occasions, a famine is traceable to avoidable faults in these practices. Once the national health service exists, and cosmetic surgery is among its skills, then harelips and squints, common in earlier populations, become more than natural misfortunes, to be acquiesced in. They become a politically accepted cost in some preferred allocation of resources, if they are not corrected.

The socialist program in the nineteenth century required a new aggressive political consciousness engendered in the mass of working people, and it required also fitting institutions, conspicuously trade unions, that would incorporate this new agency and would assume leader-

ship. Unlike the leading thinkers of the Enlightenment, socialists were not thinking of themselves as solving social problems objectively defined, and presented by the condition of the people, but rather as creating for workingmen the best attainable conditions of life and work through consolidating their mastery of political processes. It was their duty as socialists to cause urban and rural poverty to be seen as an immediate problem for politicians, rather than as a misfortune that occurs naturally, like bad weather. They should think of themselves as organizing their supporters for conflict, because tolerable conditions of life and work would never be conceded to them without a political conflict. The end and purpose of the conflict, which was the emancipation of the workers, would emerge from the conflict itself. It was, they thought, an illusion to suppose that some general principles of distributive justice could be effectively invoked to settle disputes about fair wages and decent conditions of work. This was the liberal hope, at once false and debilitating: false, because no universally accept-able premises exist from which the alleged principles can be deduced; debilitating, be-
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cause such a hope will undermine the need for aggressive political organization in readiness for conflict when consensus has predictably proved unattainable.

The inevitability of political conflict over distributive justice and fair conditions of employment is from the beginning assumed in socialist theory. In any exchange and whatever the commodity exchanged, the buyers and the vendors have conflicting interests in settling the price. This remains true when the commodity in exchange is labor, and when the buyers are those who have access to capital and those offering their labor do not. The resulting conflict over labor costs is expressed at a political level in adversary arguments circling around principles of justice and fairness of reward. The rival notions of justice and fairness are not a priori stipulations; the arguments on both sides are con-strained by customary and previously known, even if disputable, notions of distributive justice, each side selectively quoting in debate those already accepted notions that support its case. At the level of political argument, within the institutions serving the purpose, each side presents its claim under the heading, and in the guise, of notions of fairness, rather than as un-adorned self-interest. For example, the capitalists will point to the unfairness of inadequate compensation for financial risk, and the workers will point to the unfairness of inadequate compensation for the hardship and the monotony of the work.

Those who have access to capital and to wealth in excess of immediate needs will tend to support the conceptions of distributive justice already prevailing in their society. They will tend to see these conceptions as timeless truths or self-evident principles of justice, even though the timeless truths in fact emerge from earlier contests and from temporary settlements. On this conservative side advocacy will point to the value of stability and to the authority of customary moral ideas, including ideas of distributive justice, while advocacy on the reforming side will point to the contingent history of these ideas. Reformers will usually argue that the distribution of advantages in accordance with prevailing notions of justice is perpetually in need of revision and criticism, if only because the perceived social roles of different classes and groups in society are constantly changing. To
take a drastically simplified example: when the survival of a society or state was perceived to depend on the successes and efforts of a warrior class, it would be accepted as fair that members of this class should as a reward have exceptional advantages and privileges. When this service becomes only a memory, the privileges come to seem unfair and unjustifiable. But no general principle of fairness can be formulated linking the vastly various types of service to the vastly various types of acceptable re-ward. One can only observe in history that privileges often come to be resented, and to be felt to be unjustifiable, when the social role with which they were associated has disappeared, or when for other reasons it is no longer respected. The inequality is then felt to be unfair. This is an observable natural tendency of reflective sentiment, which affects the fate of monarchies and of aristocracies and of elites of other kinds, including the agents of colonial powers.

Fairness in distributive justice is recognized when there is a rough convergence of reflective human feeling, a convergence that is never perfect, and that always leaves exceptions and un-
step out onto the political or legal stage and to argue his case. He has already rehearsed the fairness of a statement followed by a rebuttal, followed by restatement, in his own thinking. If he and his adversary abstain from force, they both know the rational procedure that remains.

Rationality is a bond between persons, but it is not a very powerful bond, and it is apt to fail as a bond when there are strong passions on two sides of a conflict. What sentiment can reinforce the bond in a conflict where there are passionate loyalties on both sides? What could possibly be an overriding loyalty that will preserve the institutions of fair adversary reasoning when they are tested in a bitter conflict of values? It seems that any political philosophy needs to have an answer to this question, not least a philosophy that stresses the inevitability and desirability of political conflict. Within the limits of my argument the answer can be found only in institutional loyalties and in deep-seated habits of living together and arguing together. Famously, family conventions and habits of conversation and family understandings can often survive appalling moral conflicts, and families are the model to which other quasi-intimate insti-

tutions are expected to approximate: churches, clubs, colleges, schools, tribes, parishes, each with its traditional customs and loyalties. For the modern nation-state the nearest, but still very distant, equivalent is the inherited constitution with the more prominent, and the longer-established, institutions that are long-lasting parts of the constitution. In the United States very bitter conflicts of moral principle, involving substantially different conceptions of substantial justice, have been resolved argumentatively by the Supreme Court of the United States, and the Supreme Court has been both the setting and the mechanism of the conflict resolution. The Court and its procedures have in fact acquired authority and have established a tradition of respect among bitter adversaries contesting substantive issues of justice. No one is expected to believe that its decisions are infallibly just in matters of substance; but everyone is expected to believe that at least its procedures are just because they conform to the basic principle governing adversary reasoning: that both sides in a conflict should be equally heard. The procedures by which the justices are originally appointed are the ordinary pro-

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cedures by which officeholders are usually appointed in a democracy, and they make no special claim to be just procedures. But the conventions that govern the advocacy on both sides in a case before the Supreme Court arise from a specific conception of justice: that arguments, to be persuasive, must appeal to commonly and customarily accepted ideas of substantial justice relevant to the case, but also to relevant precedents in past decisions of the Court. The persuasive force of this appeal to precedent is a natural consequence of one-half of the composite notion of procedural justice; the other half, equality in adversary reasoning, is secured by the constitution of the Court itself as a deliberative body.

In parliaments, councils, and governmental bodies of all kinds, the two elements of procedural justice are differently balanced. The requirement that both sides in the conflict should be equally heard always needs to be stressed because it is not obviously guaranteed, as it is in a court of law. Conflicts that are resolved in parliaments and governmental bodies of all kinds normally involve political and ideological enemies arguing against each other, and not professional advocates who at the same time acknowledge a common allegiance to the law of the land. Every appeal to precedent in a political procedural dispute, and every appeal to equality of access, is open to dispute, if it is not already guaranteed by the undisputed law of the land. So disputes about the just and fair political procedures and institutions will continue indefinitely, punctuated by occasional compromises. No finality or conclusiveness in this historical process is to be expected. Although many of the procedures of political conflict resolution are laid down by law in the American written Constitution, it is evident that some procedures of conflict resolution do in fact significantly change from decade to decade as a consequence of the political conflicts, and also because of changing circumstances. This is also true of Britain’s unwritten constitution, although it still embodies parliamentary methods of conflict resolution that have been remarkably slow to change over the last half century.

The two elements in procedural justice—a universal rational requirement of two-sidedness and respect for locally established and familiar rules of procedure—are linked as two natural
forces of our minds in their practical and political workings. If either the rational requirement or the respect for custom breaks down and ceases to operate, we should expect catastrophe. Conflicts will then no longer be resolved within the political domain but will be resolved by violence or the threat of violence, and life will become nasty, brutish, and short. Whatever one’s conception of the good, such anarchy will generally be reckoned a great evil, alongside starvation and near-starvation, disease, imprisonment, slavery, and humiliation.