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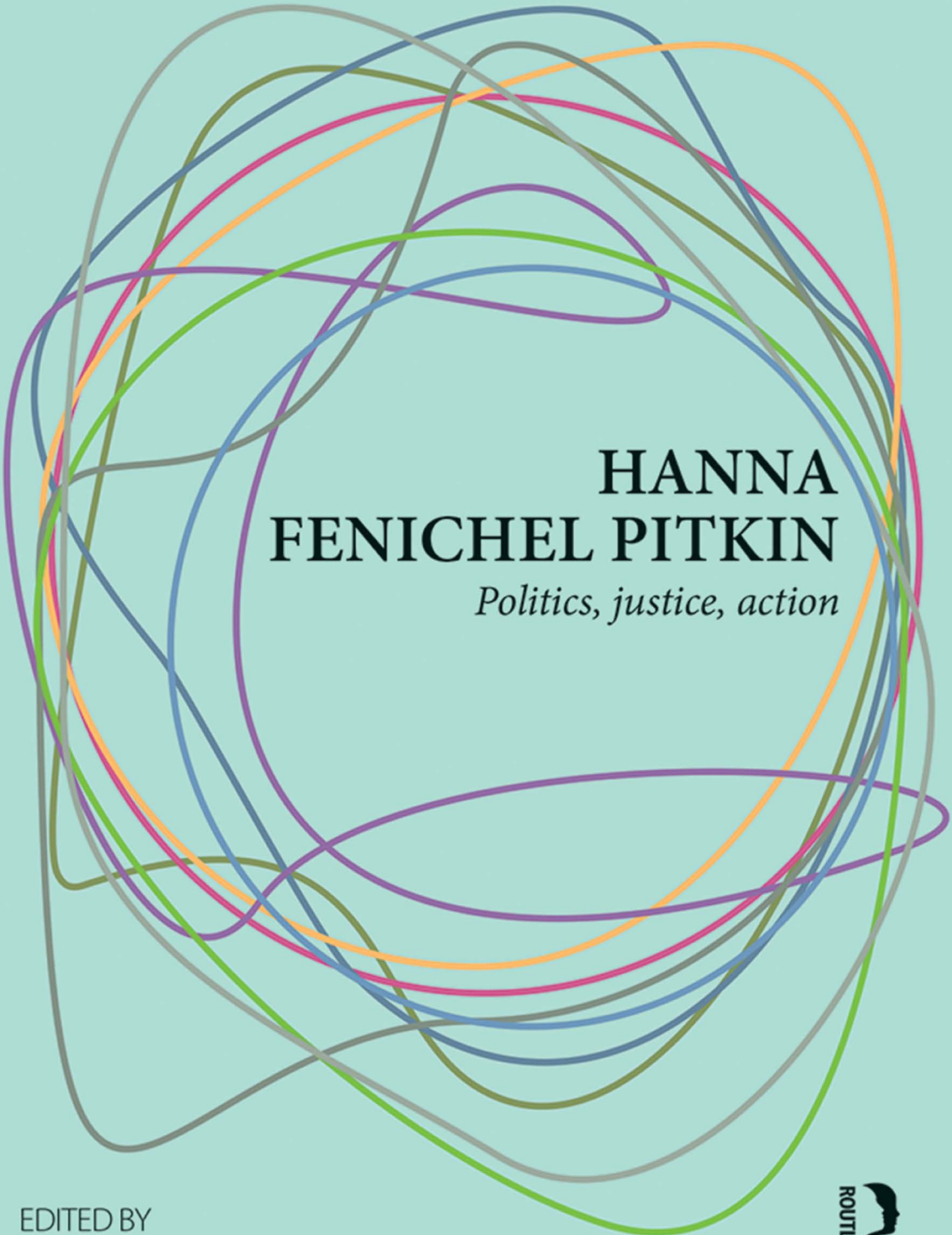

HANNA FENICHEL PITKIN

Politics, justice, action

EDITED BY
DEAN MATHIOWETZ

ROUTLEDGE

HANNA FENICHEL PITKIN

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin's political theorizing confronts the sense of powerlessness and alienation that marks the modern condition. It does so by embracing plurality, ambiguity, and contradiction, and by remaining attuned to embodiment, needs, and differences – aspects of the human condition that political theorists have, she argues, too often sought to escape or deny. The insights generated by Pitkin's theorizing not only point to the challenges we face in marshalling our deliberative and shared powers, but also makes accessible to us conceptual and practical tools we can use to address our troubling times.

The editor has focused on work in three key areas:

- Politics: Pitkin's work on the problems of autonomy, moral action, consent, and obligation examines in nuanced ways how persons relate to political collectivities. She explores our tendency to imagine autonomy in ways that deny our interconnectedness and instead project dominance over others, and she limns alternatives to these immature and masculinist conceptions of agency. Drawing out these themes in her readings of literature and classics of political theory, Pitkin illuminates problems of political agency in late modern life.
- Judgement: Pitkin's path-breaking work with the language philosophy is most prominently displayed in her work on justice. In selections from this work and others, Pitkin brings together questions of responsibility, the insights of moral philosophy, and even pedagogical practice. Blending ordinary language philosophy and textual study, she offers a complex and subtle set of observations about justice and judgement which open to questions of action and responsibility in the exercise of political freedom.
- Action: Pitkin's political thinking draws out images of political action that best heed the ambiguities and complexities of co-action with strangers. Pitkin's work in these selections reflects upon the ways that people co-create complex, large-scale problems by way of their participation in social norms, their attribution of agency to "the market", the problem of false necessity, and so on. She diagnoses these problems as a reflection of our alienation from our own shared and collective powers, and offers suggestions for their redirection.

Dean Mathiowetz is Associate Professor of Politics at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He is the author of *Appeals to Interest: Language and the Shaping of Political Agency* and several essays on conceptual history, political economy, and citizenship.

ROUTLEDGE INNOVATORS IN POLITICAL THEORY

Edited by Terrell Carver, University of Bristol and Samuel A. Chambers, The John Hopkins University

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HANNA FENICHEL PITKIN AND THE DILEMMAS OF POLITICAL THINKING

Dean Mathiowetz

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin's work takes us to the heart of why politics matters, situating political thinking within the sense of powerlessness and alienation that marks the modern condition. Pitkin outlines this condition by observing that social structures and processes have become so large in scale and so regular in their operations that they appear beyond our intervention. As they grow in complexity, they seem increasingly independent of our collective participation in them; so "objectified," their effects seem ever more inevitable, and even natural. We thus become subjected, as it were, to our own everyday actions, unwilling to act otherwise, or blind to our power to do so. In such a condition, we both suffer by and are alienated from our collective powers in myriad domains of our lives: work, consumption, political institutions and movements, gendered relations, and so on. Deepening our plight, as we become more subject to broad, systematic effects, we increasingly lionize and fetishize an isolated and isolating individualism—and call it "freedom." Our capacity for co-action and willingness to accept its responsibilities are thereby further diminished.

Some are prone to thinking about these problems in terms of human nature or as effects of institutional intransigency. Others find some person or group, powerful or hidden or both, to blame for them. These approaches, Pitkin notes, tend only still further to diminish our sense of our power over and responsibility for these problems. Pitkin instead characterizes these problems as resulting from a "drift" in our activities toward troubling ends. This drift appears in various guises as "we watch with horror the approach of nuclear war, of ecological disaster, of world famine. Yet," she points out, "these disasters are not approaching us, it is we who are approaching them by our continuing activities. To avert them we only have to stop doing what we do." Thus she frames the solution as one of changing our activities, our institutions, and these troubling ends, "deliberately, in accord with our intentions, to achieve certain goals" (Pitkin 1987b, p. 283). The question,

then, is whether and how we *can* marshal our collective and deliberate powers to address the problems. Answers to this question will raise further ones about who "we" are, how to act, and with whom in mind—all of which demand we exercise our capacity to judge. While science, philosophy, and theory can help us to distinguish those things that are open to our intervention from those that are not, our judgments must be further informed by political thinking that reflects our practical concerns and shared experiences.

In addressing these problems, Pitkin's work calls for and models a distinctive approach to political thinking, one that is both radical and democratic. A classical approach to political theorizing, exemplified in many "canonical" texts of political theory, leans on broad, systematic generalizations that ultimately distort the subject matter of politics. According to Pitkin, as political thinkers we instead ought to embrace plurality, ambiguity, and contradiction. Our work must speak to concerns that affect not only a small group, but also other people, some of whom may be quite distant strangers to us, whose lives are none the less connected to our own. In order to be political, our thinking must not only speak to matters that affect these wider communities, but also support a community's participatory action on behalf of its common interest. Pitkin thus presents a wide constellation of concerns as intrinsic to political thinking. Only by keeping this constellation in mind—contradiction, plurality, and particular contexts on the one hand, widespread connectedness on the other—and only by recognizing tensions among these concerns, can we support the kind of judgment and action that makes political thinking a truly public endeavor.

Staying with ambivalence, but always attuned to the need for thinking to enable and inform practical judgments about what to do, Pitkin reveals the dilemmas of theorizing as relatedly conceptual, historical, and psychological. Her close textual and historical analyses of canonical works seek not only to get at the meaning of texts, but also to explore ways that the tensions underlying and supporting public engagement are intrinsic to political thinking. She furthermore explores sources of these tensions in the fundamental human experience of growing up, with its dual tasks of developing autonomy and learning mutuality. She studies the temptation presented by theoretical writing to flee from the ambivalence engendered by these many tensions and to ignore the dilemmas they present for political thinking. For Pitkin, and for others inspired by her work, political thinking is the activity of exploring the tensions in the shared dimensions of our lives while staying with the inevitable multi-sidedness of our attempts to do so. This, according to Pitkin, is the kind of thinking suited to the political radicalism that can address the modern condition. On this note, Pitkin explains that:

> Our thinking must be . . . radical, cutting through conventions and clichés to the real roots of our troubles, seeing social arrangements large-scale and long-range, as if from the outside . . . Yet the thinking must also be political, in the sense of oriented to action, practical, speaking in a meaningful way to those capable of making the necessary changes.
>
> *(1987b, p. 288)*

Pitkin's work exemplifies the task of the political thinker to meet this paradoxical demand.

The heart of Pitkin's significance as an innovator lies in her work on language and her use of semantic analysis. Throughout her writings, Pitkin demonstrates that the problems arising in political theorizing must be understood in relation to concepts that reflect the everyday problems of political life. Her book on representation shows the beginnings of her interest and effort in this direction, and her groundbreaking study on Wittgenstein and ordinary language philosophers applies their ideas to politics. Working through and extending these thinkers' influence, Pitkin repeatedly confronts ways that theorists have written as though they could resolve the tensions of political life by defining terms and stipulating meanings—in other words, by attempting to exert control over the concepts that reflect the tensions. Pitkin demonstrates that and how such attempts undermine readers' judgments by driving their objections underground. These attempts thus shut down the pedagogical and political potential in drawing upon what readers already, perhaps only tacitly, know. She similarly views a theorist's more casual deviations from words' everyday usage not simply as effects of carelessness, but instead as marking and masking real problems in his or her argument, and real tensions and problems in our condition. So too with the jargon of philosophy and political theory, which not only limits the accessibility of political thinking, but obscures basic tensions and problems by inventing or deploying language that, because it is alien to everyday ways of speaking about and engaging in politics, is often distant from the ways that problems manifest themselves in everyday situations.

Pitkin's pedagogy is similarly marked by her commitment to ordinary language as a technique of analysis and writing. As a teacher, Pitkin's way is to open paths for students' shared engagements with texts, by encouraging close reading and attunement to tensions and contradictions as points of departure for political thinking. She demands rigor and care not as matters of pedantry, but rather as enabling students to see the tensions and ambivalence in their own thinking. So enabled, students can explore these tensions and contradictions for what they reveal about politics, as well as about the students, to themselves and each other, as political thinkers. Thus Pitkin's ways of reading and teaching are not only radical, in the sense sketched above, but also democratic, in their commitment to invite everyone to the shared task of political thought and action.

Radical politics

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin was born in Berlin, around the time of Hitler's rise to power, to a family of Jewish origin. Her family emigrated to Los Angeles when she was six years old. Her father, Otto Fenichel, was a psychoanalyst. Her mother, Clare (née Nathansohn) Fenichel, was an engineering draftsperson; she also had a vocation that she called body work, a kind of therapy quite different, however, from what is usually meant by the term today.[1] Her parents were political radicals as well; hence Freudian psychoanalysis, humanist Marxism, and radical politics

permeated her upbringing, and these influences have remained strong throughout her life and in her work. She enrolled at the University of California at Los Angeles for her bachelor's degree, completed three semesters at the University of California, Berkeley, before graduating from UCLA, and moved back to Berkeley shortly after earning the degree. She began graduate study soon after, completing her PhD in Political Science at Berkeley in 1961. After short appointments at San Francisco State University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, she joined the political science faculty at Berkeley in 1966, where she continues to teach as professor emerita (see the interview on pp. 278–290).

In light of Pitkin's long association with Berkeley, it is no surprise that academic lore frequently connects her work to a "Berkeley School" of political theory, said to have flourished in the 1960s and 1970s. One version of this story depicts "the Berkeley School" as centered on theorizing a distinct sphere of life called "the political," a notion meant, among other things, to counteract political science's move toward "scientific" models for the study of politics that imitate psychology, economics, or the natural sciences (Hauptmann 2004). A related story about "the Berkeley School" points to the direct political action taking place in Berkeley at that time—the Free Speech Movement, Students for a Democratic Society, and the People's Park protests, including the students' participation in, and University's response to, these events—as centrally informing the political theory teaching and scholarship at Berkeley (Disch 2012).

Pitkin herself denies there having been such a "School," stressing the diversity of views and topics within the group of Berkeley political theorists (see pp. 285). But setting aside the question of a "Berkeley School," can or should we seek the influence of these famous and doubtless significant events at Berkeley in the 1960s in Pitkin's work? In approaching this question we must bear in mind that Pitkin was in Madison, Wisconsin, not Berkeley, in 1964–1966, though by her own account, she was all too aware of what she was missing back in California. (The Free Speech Movement protests and Sproul Hall sit-ins began in the 1964–1965 academic year; see Schaar and Wolin 1970.) Her writings do not address those events directly, a fact that some have interpreted as reticence, quiescence, or lack of interest (Disch 2012). But seeking influences or intentions leads us away from, rather than into, the significance of Pitkin's work in relation to its context. Too much focus on the Free Speech Movement can lead us to miss the other forms of radicalism in Berkeley in the 1960s, and before, in which Pitkin *was* involved. For example, from the late 1950s until 1960 she was a news volunteer at KPFA, the first listener-supported radio station in the United States, known for its controversial political and cultural programming. While still in high school, she was a member of American Youth for Democracy. Later she served on the editorial board of the short-lived periodical *democracy*, whose masthead was "a journal of political renewal and radical change." The kind of radicalism we see throughout Pitkin's political and intellectual engagements is a style of thinking and action that goes to the roots of our problems and remains grounded in people's genuine needs and everyday activities, while grasping the significance of long-range, broad-scale connections for this thinking and for action.

With all of this in mind, Pitkin's intrinsic orientation toward radical politics makes her work useful for reflecting on the direction and fate of the Berkeley students' attempts to radicalize the campus, and later, to radicalize their own education. More important, the radicalism in her writing can inform political thinkers' response to such attempts among students and educators today, or among governors and the governed more broadly. Perhaps the most illuminating way to tie Pitkin's work to Berkeley in the 1960s is heuristic, in the sense that the events draw our attention to certain features of Pitkin's work from the time; we may then explore how the work responds to questions raised by the Berkeley rebellion and its immediate and more recent successors. From this point of view, the connections are rich. For example, her essay on obligation and consent (written, incidentally, during her time in Wisconsin), restores our appreciation for resistance and rebellion by asking how consent theories, which set out to understand when such resistance is justified, end up justifying total obedience instead (see Chapter 4). The essay draws us back to the ways that unacknowledged (and unresolved) problems in consent theory highlight the diverse circumstances in which questions of rebellion and obedience arise—thereby strengthening our sense of how to navigate such questions when we meet them in our own lives, whether as dissidents or as people in positions of authority.

Pitkin's exploration of themes related to political freedom can further inform our thinking about radical politics, as it emerged in Berkeley in the 1960s and as it appears (or fails to appear) today. In Pitkin's view, political freedom demands a kind of "growing up," involving the acknowledgement of mutuality, interdependence, and shared responsibility—a theme she has explored in her work on Günter Grass's novel, *The Flounder* (Grass 1978 [1985]), in her book-length study of Machiavelli, and elsewhere. Like humans growing up, political freedom entails taking responsibility for and improving the cultures within which we live, and which constitute the self and the community, but without losing our sense of play and of creativity about addressing our serious problems. Retaining that sense of play, we can become more effective and less neurotic, recognizing interdependence as the basis for freedom, and acting on that basis. We therefore abandon aspirations toward a false, childish, or individualistic autonomy that perceives interdependence as a threat to greatness. "Grown up" freedom entails, by contrast, recognizing the importance of our bodies and needs; it means bringing their interdependence (and, therefore, ours) into public life and deliberation; it means keeping sight of our needs while learning to practice judgment and articulate compelling and inclusive standards of justice. If our action is to be radical, it must be so in the sense of transforming our condition by going to the roots of our problems, while remaining grounded in our real needs and everyday activities.

Radical theorizing

Many readers will come to Pitkin's work seeking traces of Berkeley in the 1960s and 1970s. Fewer are primed for how Pitkin's thinking, from the beginning of her

career, has been rooted in Marxist and Freudian perspectives akin to those that have animated critical theory for more than a century. These influences are nonetheless quite direct; looking at them sharpens our understanding of Pitkin's contributions to and innovations in political thought.

To say that Marx and Freud were essential influences on Pitkin's thinking from the beginning may surprise readers of *The Concept of Representation* (Pitkin 1967). This is not only because these thinkers' names appear nowhere in the book, but also because the work is very much addressed to the discipline of political science, which is nowadays quite distinct from critical theory. While working on the dissertation that became this book, however, Pitkin was optimistic (as were many political theorists at the time) about the possibility of political science as a kind of *Wissenschaft*—a systematic way or craft of knowing, involving teaching, learning, and research. Marx and Freud, of course, were themselves social scientists in *this* sense, and Pitkin brought to the debates of mainstream political science at the time a perspective informed intellectually by these thinkers. Her contribution in *The Concept of Representation* is supported by their shared desire to liberate people, and to foster people's genuine autonomy by examining what gets in the way of it. This amounts to a tension between action and explanation, a tension which Pitkin's work on representation explicated for political scientists concerned mainly with the "democratic" institutions of modern government. For Pitkin, the tension between perspectives emphasizing causation on the one hand, and action on the other, reveals us to be paradoxically both unfree and free-to-become-free; this paradox becomes an invitation to think about what it means to act. Although these are terms in which Pitkin expressed the issue only later in her career, *The Concept of Representation* stays with this paradox (noting, for example, the ways that notions like purpose or intention bring the two sides together), even as the work's ongoing audience has become ever more focused on questions of causation and neglectful of action.

Sustaining such a balance between ideas in tension is a path that the works of Marx and Freud opened for Pitkin, and in that sense their influence is defining for her work. In all of her writings, she is careful to stay with multiple tensions that she finds not only intrinsic to theorizing and endemic to philosophy (no matter the lengths to which theorists and philosophers will go to skirt them), but also, and more importantly, within each of us. The tensions are here when we ourselves engage, or fail to engage, as citizens and as theorists, in social and political issues. Moreover, the modern condition is revealed in the multiplicity of such tensions, as are its drift and its openness to action and change. Adding another example to the one cited above regarding causation and action will draw out this point. In her writings, Pitkin invites us repeatedly to think about how we relate nature and culture. The tension here is not a simple one of opposing forces: Pitkin reminds us that, among other things, a culture is a cultivation of nature, and that culture becomes "second nature." When we begin to acknowledge this kind of tension alongside others, Pitkin reminds us not to settle into illusory parallels, like simply correlating nature to explanation and culture to action. Instead, she urges us to explore where and how they do not line up, and thus to appreciate how a second

pair complicates the first. Further tensions, like those between views that emphasize individuals and those that emphasize social formations (in other words, between "parts and wholes"), as well as between body on the one hand, and mind on the other, are important, too. They reflect the complexity of our lives and of our language, and thereby must add to the complexity of our political thinking.

Throughout her many encounters with tensions like these and the dilemmas they present in thought and action, and across diverse themes and texts, Pitkin demonstrates that a theoretical framework that emphasizes one side at the expense of the other is insufficient for making sense of politics. This is not merely because each side implies the other, but also because the tensions are within each of us, and are intrinsic to politics. They already shape our lives, and ought therefore to inform our thinking, our judgment, and our action. With this in mind, she takes philosophical programs or political ideologies, like conservatism, utilitarianism, or liberalism, to task in terms of their failures or refusals to respond to the dilemmas of political life and thought (on conservatism, see Pitkin 1973; on utilitarianism, see Chapter 4 in this volume). According to Pitkin, to turn our thinking away from these tensions yields naïve, misleading, and possibly even dangerous conceptions of membership, judgment, autonomy, and so on.

Of course, circumstances often demand that we act, and to act, we must choose. Sides must be taken; decisions must be made. The importance of agency and free citizenship to Pitkin's thinking recognizes and foregrounds this fact, with the additional questions it raises about how theorizing and politics intersect. How shall we distinguish the sorts of questions about which we must *stay* with both sides from those which demand choice and action? Once we have done so, how to choose and act? With questions like these, we encounter the role of political theorizing as a support to our capacities for making practical sense of the dilemmas we face every day when dealing with shared or public problems. Of course, not just any choice will do justice to our situation. Judgment is needed; and in order to judge in matters of shared concern, we rely upon the concept of justice with its myriad entailments. Therefore, the concept of justice too reflects the tensions in our practices and in our thinking.

At this point we can bring Pitkin's abiding concern for dilemmas and tensions back to her most striking innovations as a political thinker, namely in the sensitivity and rigor her work brought to conceptual analysis in political thought. Pitkin's engagement with language is evident, of course, in *The Concept of Representation*, but becomes the direct focus of *Wittgenstein and Justice* (Pitkin 1972). In this text, she studies the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein alongside that of J.L. Austin and Stanley Cavell, bringing ordinary language philosophy to political thought in a defining way, particularly to the concept of justice and the problem of judgment. In that book and beyond, Pitkin has applied the techniques and insights of language and conceptual analysis to ideas central to political theorizing, including reification, obligation, constitution, justice, liberty, and freedom. She continues on this path in ongoing work on the concept of authority.

These many engagements blend grammatical analysis with etymology, philology, and conceptual histories in groundbreaking and exemplary ways. She finds within

each of these concepts a particular constellation of tensions, uniquely reflective of its role in political analysis, argument, or action. A few of her works focus on actual conceptual analysis, yielding results that are virtuosic, if highly technical. Her work on liberty and freedom, for example, deploys these techniques in order to argue that these concepts differ in substantive and significant ways: freedom being a broader, deeper, and riskier condition, less liable to be achieved within a system of rules or structure of controls (Pitkin 1988). More typically (and as exemplified in the chapters included in this volume), Pitkin's sensitivity to conceptual history and techniques of conceptual analysis saturates her reading of a text or engagement in intellectual or political debate (see Chapters 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, and 11 in this volume; Pitkin 1967; Pitkin 1987a).

With techniques of conceptual analysis at the fore, Pitkin's work engages many prominent political theorists from the Western tradition, yielding arguments and discussions that remain influential in the ever-evolving teaching of and scholarship on canonical political theory. So, for example, Plato figures prominently in *Wittgenstein and Justice*, and Pitkin frequently discusses Aristotle, sometimes to articulate a collective version of Kantian moral autonomy (see Chapter 7 in this volume, and Pitkin 1984; for a discussion of Kantian moral autonomy not in reference to Aristotle, see Pitkin 1972, p. 345). Two other authors in particular merit mention here, for the importance of their writing to Pitkin's way of engaging the tensions and questions she understands as central to politics. Her works on these theorists particularly reveal Pitkin's strengths as not only an analyst and critic of political theory, but also a historian of political thought. They are Niccolò Machiavelli, whose concepts of manhood, autonomy, and of course, *Fortuna*, are the subject of Pitkin's book *Fortune is a Woman* (Pitkin 1984); and Hannah Arendt, whose concept of "the social" Pitkin studies in *The Attack of the Blob* (Pitkin 1998). Pitkin draws out each of these thinkers to illuminate, in various ways, the promise of free citizenship and the perils of theorizing that turns away from the dilemmas of political life.

With all of this in mind, the ongoing relevance of Pitkin's work to political thinking is clear. Here I mention but a few examples, not to prioritize themes in her work, but to suggest the variety of topics to which the work collected in this volume directly speaks. The legacy and future of the "linguistic turn" provides one example. Critics of liberalism in the last decade have been particularly worried that its philosophical defenders have overvalued the role of reason and rationality in politics (as well as in aesthetics and ethics), with the result that these liberals have given too flat or disembodied an account of the ways in which people actually form their political judgments. With so much emphasis in recent decades on Kantian deliberation, or Habermasian communicative competence and ideal speech situations, the linguistic turn in social and political thought has increasingly become identified with a flat, disembodied, or calculating rationality. Pitkin's work with concepts, and with language, is always informed by matters of embodiment, needs, and differences. Her way of engaging with these issues, in the essays that follow and throughout her writing, calls sharply into doubt whether political theory's attunement to language entails the "flat" rationality critics have seen in it, and also

stands as a challenge to political theorists to continue exploring the potential in attention to language.

Pitkin's engagements with embodiment in her thinking about shared agency provide a second example of the importance of her work for political theory today. Pitkin's work exemplifies ways of thinking about politics as a shared endeavor that respect the relevance of bodies, the everyday activities that sustain them, the ways that these activities shape our ideals and judgments, and so on. These themes are particularly salient in Chapter 2, "Food and freedom in *The Flounder,*" and Chapter 7, "Justice: on relating private and public," as I will discuss these works below. But Pitkin does not quarantine matters of embodiment to a few essays; instead she brings them forward throughout her work.

The concept of action offers a third example of Pitkin's ongoing contribution to political thought. Political theorists everywhere nowadays praise action and lament that there is not enough of it. We parse everyday resistance, study political movements, and scrutinize revolutionary moments as exemplifying aspects of action that seem missing from many authorized political channels. With these concerns in mind, we would do well to study Pitkin's way of handling the concept of action, both in her critical studies of Arendt and in her other works. In them, she raises subtle and cogent questions about action that political theorists must continue to consider: What counts as action? When does it coincide, and when does it contrast with conduct, behavior, or withdrawal? Where is it possible, and when is it warranted? How is it justified, and on behalf of whom?

These are only three examples of themes centrally important to political theory today that Pitkin's work addresses with particular sensitivity and insight. Readers of the selections in this volume and of Pitkin's other writings will find them rich in other themes as well: the politics of gender and sexuality, the problems confronting a social science of politics, the meaning of free citizenship, and so on.

The chapters in this volume are organized around some of the primary questions opened up by Pitkin's work regarding politics, justice, and action. Each part of this volume emphasizes one of these in turn.

Politics

In the opening Chapter 1, "Action and membership," Machiavelli exemplifies for Pitkin the political theorist who is both fraught with intense ambivalence and inspired to act. Machiavelli ultimately brings these together in an anxious, defensive, and misogynistic effort to model political autonomy on the image of the independent individual—a man free of origins, community or family ties, and obligations. Along the way, Machiavelli nevertheless develops ideas and explores possibilities that resonate with free citizenship, that is, acting in ways that both presuppose and create individuality and community. Pitkin explores the causes and conditions of Machiavelli's unhelpful turn toward a masculinist, individualistic conception of political autonomy. She finds this conception in many of the images, including "Fortune," that Machiavelli invokes in his political thinking. But she also opens up

the possibility of recovering Machiavelli's thought as a resource for confronting the dilemmas of political thinking in our own time from an angle that supports political judgment and action in concert. Pitkin thus presents Machiavelli as an exemplar of both the promise and perils of political theorizing—and brings to readers a number of questions that provoke their own thinking about politics in ways that support judgment and action.

In Chapter 2, "Food and freedom in *The Flounder*," Pitkin takes up the question of freedom, particularly as it touches on aspirations toward liberation, radical thought, and action. Reading Günter Grass's novel *The Flounder* (Grass 1978 [1985]), she explores where responsibility for domination lies, whether universal and abstract ideals or the concrete and particular are the foundation for radical change, and what ways of living and thinking about gender hold the most promise for liberation. Pitkin raises the question of what ways of living and thinking "promote a kind of . . . autonomy that is not isolation from others and a kind of power that is not domination" (see Chapter 2 in this volume, p. 49). She suggests answers to this question that engage our concepts of gender, power, and history, by way of thinking about relations not only between women and men, and rulers and subjects, but in relation to animals, food, and essential everyday activities like cooking.

Pitkin approaches the tensions found in the work of Jeremy Bentham in Chapter 3, "Slippery Bentham," illustrating in a quite different way the significance of ambiguity for political thought. It is one thing to recognize tensions or to feel ambivalent; it is quite another to be ambiguous while repeatedly ignoring—or denying—that the ambiguities are there. Pitkin delves into Bentham's utilitarianism, which, she notes, remains an influential idiom for policy and ethics in our time. With a reading of Bentham informed by her work on Wittgenstein, Pitkin argues that Bentham's utilitarianism is marked by repeated yet unacknowledged ambiguities. These ambiguities place him on both sides of each significant intellectual problem that his work approaches, and allow him to refuse to acknowledge that the problems exist. The result is what Pitkin calls a "Teflon theory," since none of our usual criticisms of utilitarianism seem to stick to his account. Pitkin asks what Bentham's ambiguities reveal about individual psychology and legislative power—and the moral action, individual responsibility, and politics that mediate them. What, she asks, does utilitarianism, with its ambiguities, obscure in its denial of this mediation? What, in our hopes for and dissatisfactions with the modern condition, accounts for the longevity of Bentham's "Teflon theory?"

Part I concludes with Chapter 4, "Obligation and consent." This is one of Pitkin's earliest publications, where one finds similar problems at the base of liberalism. Noting that theories of political obligation as resting in consent undergird modern political "common-sense" and liberal political order, she studies John Locke's *Two Treatises of Civil Government* of 1689 and the positions of some modern liberal. How, Pitkin asks, do contract theorists, setting out to offer a doctrine about when or why resistance is justified, end up with a theory that justifies total obedience? Pitkin herself begins by drawing out the multiple formulations of "*the* problem" of obligation that these theorists address. By subsuming these formulations into one

question, she argues, traditional consent theory ultimately abstracts from considerations that are, in practice, relevant for a citizen (or a revolutionary) deciding when (or whom) to obey, disobey, or resist. With this in mind, she explores how political obligation is like promising, an activity that belies the assumption of individual autonomy and separateness that traditional consent theory takes as its starting point. From this observation, Pitkin raises provocative questions about how the language of consent, promising, and law is connected to resistance, responsibility, and judgment.

The preceding chapters lay out Pitkin's perspectives on ways in which some familiar modes of political theorizing reflect, and may even foster, our unwillingness or inability to recognize and exercise our capacities for judgment. We turn now to scrutinize that concept.

Judgment

Part II surveys Pitkin's contributions to the question of judgment and justice, beginning with those inspired by her Wittgensteinian approach. In Chapter 5, "Two selections on Plato's *Republic* from *Wittgenstein and Justice*," Pitkin first explores the famous encounter that Plato depicts between Socrates and Thrasymachus, examining the contribution of Wittgenstein's approach for re-thinking usual terms (e.g. "ought" vs. "is") for parsing this famous debate. To her analysis, she brings the insight that the meaning of "justice" is learned by its use, and that learning this meaning is less about the shared characteristics of the things we call just, and more about the shared features of situations in which "justice" and related words are used. These situations include a range of actions: she cites "doing someone an injustice, doing justice to a delicious meal, getting your just deserts," and so on. Pitkin goes on to ask how a tension between substance and form in the uses of the word "justice" supports judgment and co-action in matters of judgment and fairness. Pitkin then brings conceptual analysis to matters in the *Republic* beyond the encounter between Socrates and Thrasymachus. She explores the "ideal society" that Plato presents in this text as designed to draw out the complex meaning of justice, and as illustrating problems, dilemmas, and ambiguities that we face when confronting the matter of equality and human differences, both natural and artificial.

Pitkin's exploration of judgment continues in Chapter 6, "Relativism: a lecture." Questioning the debate between moral relativism and moral absolutism, Pitkin notes that while this appears to be between irreconcilable positions adopted by different people, the precursor of the debate is ambivalence: each side, she argues, is already in each of us. By exploring the kinds of examples that people frequently marshal, she illustrates this ambivalence about when, how, and why to judge. She shows how the debate demands we extract such examples from the richness of their contexts and particularity of their consequences. The result of this extraction is abstraction: we become fixated on broad generalizations and forget the importance of contexts and consequences, and the role of judgment in weighing them. Pitkin's intervention is to point out that our practices of judgment, in their

everyday contexts, are various, and that the variation is itself significant. Good judgments always attend to contexts and consequences; their variability calls into question the usefulness and coherence of applying a doctrine, relativist or absolutist, to this practice. Pitkin's discussion in this selection makes visible to us the kinds of questions and sorts of considerations that judgment entails.

In Chapter 7, "Justice: on relating private and public," Pitkin reflects on the significance of our bodies and needs—matters often considered "private"—for the judgments we render in public affairs. Reading Arendt, Pitkin notes both that she (Arendt) sought to exclude the provision of human needs from her account of the public (under the rubric of "household" matters), and that she considered the incursion of these needs into public affairs (e.g. the poverty question) as the eruption of "the social." Arendt's reluctance or failure to engage judgment or justice as key concerns of public life becomes, for Pitkin, the question of the intimate relation of judgment to our bodies and needs. Pitkin sets herself the task of conceptualizing the public in a way true to its roots in human needs, and relevant to its consequences for privilege, power, and suffering. In this discussion, she elaborates true citizenship as the experience that teaches us, in ways inclusive of our needs, what justice is and how to exercise political judgment. She explores the dimensions of that experience that enable us to grow in understanding our connections to one another, and in our ability to take responsibility for the consequences of our actions.

Part II closes with Chapter 8, "Judgment and autonomy," a chapter from Pitkin's book-length study of Machiavelli. She examines Machiavelli's way of articulating human standards and ideas as two-sided. They are conventional, of course, but they are not arbitrary, insofar as they come out of and respond to human needs. How, Pitkin asks, does this two-sidedness of ideals support practices of judgment that are integral to citizenship? Exploring this question, Pitkin develops explicitly the theme of "growing up" into one's capacity for autonomy, and doing so in ways that support responsibility and political community. She explores Machiavelli's text for insights about how people can grow into free citizenship, while staying clear of self-defeating paths like the one Machiavelli himself took, extolling manliness rather than fostering capacities for mutuality and co-action.

Action

We turn now to a third guiding concern in Pitkin's work, action. As we do this, it's worth noting that in the first chapter of this part, as in other chapters above, Pitkin engages a theme that animates much of her thinking, but that this volume represents but incompletely: gender. In Chapter 9, Pitkin shows, as she did when interpreting *The Flounder*, how ideas of gendered hierarchy overtake us precisely where our situation calls for mutuality. Pitkin explores this theme explicitly in *Fortune is a Woman* (Pitkin 1984), and approaches it again from a different angle in *The Attack of the Blob* (Pitkin 1998). These works illustrate how gender anxieties block insights that might otherwise have emerged in Machiavelli's or Arendt's treatment of significant political and theoretical ambiguities. Given the complexity

of the theme, and Pitkin's characteristic care in elaborating her perspective, these insights unfold over many of the chapters in this volume, or are so woven into the larger works of which they are a part that excerpting them was not feasible. The student of Pitkin's work is advised to study these longer works in order to engage her encounter with the political life of gender.

Chapter 9, "The Citizen and his rivals," also from Pitkin's work on Machiavelli, explores a vision of "manhood" presented by Machiavelli that does not veer into the *machismo* and misogyny that besets his more famous images. Calling this "the fraternal Citizen" (and emphasizing the distinctiveness of the vision by capitalizing the C), Pitkin explores its relation to a free and healthy collective life, and its bold contrast with images of autonomy conceived in terms of sovereignty or of an isolated actor achieving individualistic goals. From within Machiavelli's contradictory remarks about what social conditions foster fraternal Citizenship, Pitkin draws out some of its essential attributes. She asks how mutuality might moderate inequality, what value fraternal Citizenship places on conflict and contestation, and whether and how unity may be provisionally achieved by principled interaction.

Pitkin's first work, *The Concept of Representation* (Pitkin 1967), brings similar thematic questions to the uniquely modern institutions and practices of representation, as we see in Chapter 10, "The mandate-independence controversy." Here Pitkin addresses the long-standing debate regarding whether a representative serves primarily as an agent for his or her constituency, expressing their already-stated will to the legislative body, or whether instead the representative acts autonomously on constituents' behalf. Emphasizing that representation is an activity, Pitkin notes that the concept of representation, as "making present something that is nevertheless not present," sets up contradictory imperatives, and that this paradox underlies and animates the debate itself. She goes on to explore the significance of this paradox for the political actions undertaken by representatives, in light of constituencies' internal diversity, the limited knowledge of constituents, and so on. She develops a conception of "responsiveness" that addresses this complexity, in particular by leaving latitude for representatives' judgments and occasions for justification—both of which must be informed by "metapolitical" considerations regarding what is good for someone and who decides. In these reflections, we glimpse the complexity of political action in the matters of modern governance, and the need for a deeper understanding of interdependence to inform how we are to act in the situations when we act for others—which more or less characterizes all situations of shared, participatory action.

Pitkin has returned to the concept of representation in recent work, situating it particularly in the context of the claims and hopes of a modern democracy, and within the modern predicament more generally. Chapter 11, "Representation and democracy: uneasy alliance," is an address that Pitkin gave when accepting the Johann Skytte Prize in Political Science in Uppsala, Sweden, in 2003. In this work, she raises questions about whether representation can facilitate democratic action in the troubled circumstances of our times. She explores this question first by disentangling the concepts of representation and democracy, drawing out their troubled

historical relations as a way of loosening the modern tendency thoughtlessly to equate them. With Jean-Jacques Rousseau as a touchstone, she argues that representative government has become a new form of oligarchy, and will remain so unless it is rooted in participatory democratic politics at the local level. After gesturing to Marx, she outlines what she understands to be the main obstacles to democratic politics today. Her reflections raise troubling and urgent questions about the prospect for democracy under conditions that many people today regard (sometimes wrongly) as natural or irreversible.

In Chapter 12, "Absent authorit[y]: Marx," Pitkin shows how Marx's writing has informed, and can further inform, our thinking about these obstacles. She illustrates this by way of Marx's unacknowledged influence on the writings of Arendt. As I noted earlier in this introduction, Arendt has long informed Pitkin's way of thinking about political life and its problems; reflections on Arendt, both brief and more extensive, appear throughout her work. From her first exposure to *The Human Condition* (Arendt 1958) in graduate school, Pitkin sensed the promise in Arendt's formulation of problems confronting political action in modern times. But Pitkin remained troubled by the fact of Arendt saying something that seemed (to Pitkin) so similar to Marx's ideas, while being so critical of him. The trouble was deepened by Pitkin's admiration for each of these thinkers. Coming to understand the sources of Arendt's misguided criticism, and how Arendt's concept of "the social" might have been more productive for Arendt's own thinking had she herself grappled productively with Marx's concept of alienation and with other implications of her own thinking, are among Pitkin's themes in *The Attack of the Blob* (Pitkin 1998). In this selection from that book, Pitkin's traces Marx's influence on Arendt's work, particularly in a concept that most reflects Arendt's denial of Marx's influence: "the social." Locating this hidden influence of Marx in Arendt, Pitkin explores the importance of his ideas for Arendt, and to themes that have been with Pitkin throughout her career. Thinking expansively through Marx's work, she explores the problem presented by a hugely, if sometimes subtly, complex social system of deep interdependence. Despite our own co-creation of this interdependence, it demands individual isolation, competition, and mutual exploitation. Cooperation and solidarity often seem ludicrous, impossible, or even dangerous to us, with the result that the social systems we have co-created confront us as an "external, coercive force by which [we] are all constrained" (Pitkin 1998, p. 137). Here Pitkin extends Marx's picture of market capitalism into a broader "modern condition" that is not solely economic but also psychological. In so elaborating and extending Marx's concept of alienation, Pitkin shows how Arendt's well-known criticism of Marx is not only deeply misguided, but also suppresses a crucial dimension of Marx's argument. Pitkin goes on to explore in detail how Arendt's distinctive thinking about the social might have been drawn out more productively had she acknowledged a debt to Marx. Pitkin thereby clarifies Arendt's own treatment of the vexing problems that the social represented in Arendt's work.

This brings us to Pitkin's own most recent characterization of the overarching political problem that the modern predicament presents to us today. Concluding

Part III, Chapter 13, "The social in *The Human Condition*," traces Arendt's concept of the social, and, in particular, the problem that Arendt meant this concept to address, even if her handling was ambiguous or incomplete. Pitkin shows that Arendt attempted to formulate "the social" as the absence of politics in a context where politics belongs. Arendt's own repeated associations of the social with biology and household affairs on the one hand, and with behavior on the other, suggest that (despite her critique of Marx along these lines, and her own occasional assertions notwithstanding) she did see economic concerns as appropriate grounds for action. Arendt likewise saw the social as the condition of our abdicating action to bureaucracies or markets. Exploring the insights and shortcomings of Arendt's development of this concept, Pitkin advances her own succinct account of the ways that action in concert can address people's pervading sense of powerlessness.

The final chapter of this volume presents an original interview with Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, conducted in the summer of 2013. In this discussion, Pitkin elaborates on her intellectual development in relation to her biography, describing for example the influence of her parents, her love of animals, and the milieu of Berkeley in the 1950s and 1960s. In terms of the latter, she offers an illuminating critique of the idea of a "Berkeley School" of political theory. She offers insight into her own writing process, considers the influence of Hannah Arendt's work on her own, and reflects, among other things, on pedagogy and on the value of public higher education in a democracy. Together with the writings collected in this volume, the interview offers a rich portrait of a remarkably innovative and influential political theorist whose central preoccupations are as relevant and perhaps even more urgent today than they were a half century ago.

Note

1 Hanna Fenichel Pitkin is not to be confused with Hanna (née Heilborn) Fenichel, her stepmother. Pitkin describes her mother's "body work" in the interview at the end of this volume; see page 278–279.

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PART I

Politics

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1

ACTION AND MEMBERSHIP (1984)

As a political theorist, Machiavelli is difficult, contradictory, and in many respects unattractive: a misogynist, frequently militaristic and authoritarian, uncomplimentary about human nature. What nevertheless makes him worth taking seriously is that his works contain an understanding of politics, autonomy, and the human condition, which is profoundly right in ways that really matter. That understanding consists of a set of syntheses holding in tension seemingly incompatible truths along several dimensions. It is therefore difficult to articulate and to sustain, and Machiavelli does not always sustain it. But the understanding is there, and even when he loses the syntheses he is a better teacher than many a more consistent theorist, because he refuses to abandon for very long any of the aspects of the truth he sees. Thus he manages to be both political and realistic even while articulating a theoretical vision of human achievement.

In this chapter, therefore, I frequently refer to the ideas of a thinker called "Machiavelli at his best" and offer an account of how and why the historical Machiavelli diverged from those ideas. In the process, this chapter also makes some suggestions about the relevance of those ideas for our time. For all these reasons, this chapter is more speculative and personal, less grounded in evidence, than the rest of this book (Pitkin 1999 [1984]: 285–306).

At his best, Machiavelli formulates an understanding of human autonomy that is activist without megalomania, insisting on our capacity and responsibility for choice and action, while nevertheless recognizing the real limits imposed by our historical situation. He understands the open-ended, risky quality of human interaction, which denies to politics the sort of control available in dealing with inanimate objects. Yet he insists that the risks are worth taking and are indeed the only way of securing what we most value. He also formulates an understanding of autonomy that is highly political. He assumes neither the solidarity postulated by organic theorists nor the atomistic, unrelated individuals postulated by social

contract theorists. Instead, he focuses on the way in which citizens in political interaction continually recreate community out of multiplicity. He formulates an understanding of autonomy, finally, that is neither cynical nor hortatory, but realistic: tough-minded about political necessities and human weaknesses without being reductionist about our goals and potentialities. Justice, civility, and virtue are as real, in that understanding, as greed and envy, or as bread and air (though of course people often say "justice" when they are in fact speaking of mere interest or expediency).

Although he rarely cites Aristotle and probably had only contempt for the Thomistic Aristotelianism he is likely to have encountered, Machiavelli's best understanding of politics is importantly reminiscent of Aristotle's teaching that man is a political animal, meaning not that people are always found in a *polis*, but rather that, first, politics is an activity in which no other species engages, and, second, engaging in it is necessary to the full realization of our potential as humans.[1] For Machiavelli as for Aristotle, this means that we are neither beasts nor gods, neither mere products of natural forces nor beings with unlimited power. We are capable of free agency, but always within the bounds of necessity. We are the products but also the makers of culture, law, and history. We develop our humanness only in the company of others, yet our sociability is never automatic but rather requires effort and care. Finally, for Machiavelli as for Aristotle, our political nature is a function of our unique capacity for judgment. The human being is the *polis* animal because it is the *logos* animal, capable of speaking, reasoning, distinguishing right from wrong, and thus of freely chosen action.

In terms of Machiavelli's conflicting images of manhood, the right understanding of human autonomy he offers is closest to the image of the fraternal Citizen. Yet it transcends the misogynist vision and manages to combine the commitment to republican, participatory politics with the fox's deflation of hypocritical and empty ideals, as well as the appreciation of authority, tradition, and generativity associated with the Founder image.

This best, synthetic Machiavelli holds in tension apparently incompatible truths along at least three interrelated dimensions of what it means to be human, political, and autonomous; dimensions so fundamental to these topics that any political theory must address them, if not expressly, then by implication. Autonomy is problematic for creatures such as ourselves in relation to the past, in relation to our contemporaries, and in relation to nature, both around and within us. It is problematic in relation to the past because we are the creatures of history. Our present situation and our very selves are shaped by the past. What can freedom mean for such a creature? Call that the dimension of action. Our autonomy is problematic in relation to our contemporaries because harmony among us is not automatic, as among the insects. We are distinct individuals with often conflicting needs and desires, yet we are also products and shapers of shared societies. Call that the dimension of membership. Our autonomy is problematic in relation to nature because we are both rooted in the natural and capable of transcending it, because we have bodies that need food and shelter and are mortal, and psyches, minds, or spirits that render us capable of distinguishing and choosing right from wrong,

good from evil, just from unjust. But what is the relationship between natural need or drive and standards of judgment, and what is the basis of those standards—convention, nature, or some transcendent source? Call this the dimension of judgment. A right understanding of autonomy requires synthesis along all of these dimensions, and that is what Machiavelli at his best has to offer.

Yet Machiavelli often loses the synthetic tension along one or another dimension and falls into that endless circling among incompatible alternatives which Hegel associated with "bad infinity" (Hegel 1969 [1812–1816]: vol. 1, 152–6, esp. 155). And the psychological and familial themes he employs, though they partly support, ultimately tend to undermine, those syntheses. To be sure, those syntheses are problematic and unstable also because each of the dimensions involves fundamental philosophical problems built into the very structure of our conceptual system, perhaps of our human nature. The dimension of action involves the problem philosophers sometimes call the "freedom of the will"; the dimension of membership, that of "universals and particulars"; the dimension of judgment, the problem of "value relativism" or "is" and "ought." These are surely among the most formidable, difficult problems ever taken up by philosophers. And Machiavelli was no philosopher; he was not interested in resolving such problems nor particularly self-conscious about them. This is both a strength and a weakness. Precisely because he is not a philosopher, Machiavelli never leaves political reality for very long; but by the same token, he is also not fully aware of the conceptual or philosophical difficulties that complicate his theorizing.

The syntheses are problematic not only philosophically, however, but also politically. Machiavelli demanded of himself that his theorizing be relevant to the political realities of his time. Politically, the dimension of action requires that theory guides us about "what is to be done," and helps us to delineate here and now those things that we must accept as "given" from those that are open to change by our intervention. The dimension of membership requires, politically, that theory speaks to power and plurality, that it not merely articulates abstract truths but makes them relevant to an audience that has—or could generate—the power actually to do what the theory suggests must be done. And the dimension of judgment requires, politically, that justice and right be tied, if not to expedience, then at least to possibility; what is truly impossible cannot be politically right. The political realities of Machiavelli's situation, as was remarked at the outset, were extraordinarily troubled and intractable. The real difficulties facing Florence, and particularly Florentine republicanism, were just about overwhelming, seeming to defy even the best understanding that political theory might devise. In demanding of himself that his theory address those realities, Machiavelli was sometimes forced into utopian fantasies and enraged distortions—the very kinds of theorizing he rightly condemned in others.

But even when allowance has been made for the philosophical difficulties of the subject matter and the political difficulties of his situation, it nevertheless remains true that Machiavelli's best synthetic understanding is frequently further undermined by the personal and familial themes he himself invokes. The very metaphors and images he employs to convey his insights repeatedly distort or destroy those

insights. Whether this is because of his own psychic needs and conflicts, or because of his effort to address the psychic vulnerabilities of his audience, must remain ultimately undecided. What matters is to understand the connections between political and psychological considerations in the texts.

★★★

Mankind is the species that makes itself, not just biologically as every species perpetuates its kind, but culturally, through history. Human beings are born less completely developed toward adulthood than any other creature. Thus their development is shaped more by the particular circumstances into which they are born; and those circumstances are less purely natural, more cultural and social than those of any other species. Using our capacity for language and abstract thought, and our opposed thumbs and ability to make tools, we produce a material and nonmaterial culture that forms the environment in which the next generations of humans grow up. Thus to be human is to be the product of a particular society and culture, which is the product of past history. Yet to be human is also to have a share in making history, transmitting, preserving, and altering culture, shaping society. It is we who enact the forces that shape us. As Hobbes said, man is both the "matter" and the "artificer" of "commonwealth," of community and civilization (Hobbes 1962 [1651]: 19 [1]).

Those facts pose a mystery, or rather, whole clusters of mysteries: philosophical, political, psychological. How can a product of causal forces also be a free agent capable of action, creativity, responsibility—to be praised and blamed for its choices and deeds? What does it mean to say that this person *did that*, is responsible for it, could have done otherwise? On what basis do we make such judgments? Every action has antecedents and every person a past, so is an action really different from an event, a person from an object? What will count as initiating something new rather than just continuing preexisting processes? Do these distinctions mark something objectively real in the world, or are they merely conceptual conventions that we impose arbitrarily and, in the end, inconsistently? These are among the questions with which social and ethical philosophers must deal.

But the political theorist is not merely, or not exactly, a philosopher. Philosophy investigates those aspects of the human condition that could not be otherwise and that are so basic we are ordinarily not even aware of them. But politics concerns matters that might well be other than they are; it concerns the question "what shall we do?" Insofar as it directs itself toward matters that cannot be changed, it is misguided and will fail. Politics is the art of the possible. To theorize about politics, then, is not exactly like philosophizing about the human condition or the nature of being. Political theory does teach us about fundamental necessities, not merely those that are given to all humans in all ages but also those that are merely inescapable for *us*, here and now; but it does so with reference to, and in order to distinguish them from, those other matters that are subject to our choice and power, with regard to which we might successfully act. Thus the political theorist is concerned not