

Despite the talk of globalization, current political discourse remains firmly anchored in the “age of nationalism” with concepts such as the national interest, national security, and gross national product (GNP) still defining the political agenda. This thought-provoking book challenges the hegemony of political nationalism, arguing that it is a false ideology that blinds us to the need for global political reform. This book proposes a new paradigm of “human political justice” to replace the current “justice in one country” approach. It forcefully reminds us that our human identity is more important than our national or religious identity and opens the campaign for a new “Human Union” to progressively replace the nation-state as the primary focus of political activity.

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Humanity or Sovereignty

LANG

Humanity or Sovereignty

A political roadmap for the 21st century



LYNDON STOREY



ADVANCE PRAISE FOR
Humanity or Sovereignty

“In this remarkable work Lyndon Storey has re-imagined ‘community’ as a concerned political scientist and placed the human one where it belongs—above all the others. Combining a keen and sure grasp of both Eastern and Western political philosophy, he makes a ‘Human Union’ sound more realistic for the long term than a unilateralist American imperium or any other contender for global salvation through national sovereignty. Read this book and be persuaded that your own best instincts about an appropriate format for the human future may be right after all.”

*Peter King, International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden University,
Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney*

“This book boldly develops a whole new political philosophy, based on the axiom that a legitimate political system should benefit all of humanity alike. It takes seriously the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,’ and it mounts a powerful challenge to our common preconceptions based on nationalism. It should be read by all those interested in the progress of humanity and the elimination of prejudice and war.”

Chris Hamer, President, World Citizens Association (Australia)

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Chapter One

POTENTIALISM

This book introduces a new political philosophy called Potentialism. It is called Potentialism as one of its core propositions is that political systems should, as much as is practically possible, allow human beings the chance to develop their potential.

Few people would disagree with such a proposition. Of course, most would say, that is obvious. The converse, the idea that political systems should stop us developing our potential is obviously unappealing. So why take the trouble to set out a whole philosophy based on a proposition most people would agree with anyhow?

The short answer is that when we develop the argument logically from these conventional premises we arrive at some extremely unconventional conclusions; conclusions that nonetheless are backed by the force of evidence and logic. The most unconventional of these conclusions, yet the one that will seem completely unavoidable by the time we have worked our way through the argument, is that most of the governments of the world are illegitimate. It is our illegitimate international political system rather than the wrongdoings of any individuals that cause global inequality and warfare. The only solution consistent with respect for our human identity is to concentrate our political endeavors on building a legitimate international political system.

Now, of course, the question becomes how can the argument reach such a conclusion? It takes the whole book to show this of course. But at the beginning there needs to be enough of an overview for the reader to get at least some idea of how the argument develops. I will start with a very brief summary, and then the rest of the chapter will give an overview of how the argument will be developed.

If we develop a philosophy based on respecting human potential one of the very first logical implications is that political systems which deny our common humanity are illegitimate. A political system cannot claim to be respecting human potential when it is denying rights to a class of human beings. Instead it is only respecting the potential of the class of people allowed more rights than their fellow human beings, be they white people, fellow religious believers, men or some other group. Thus, according to Potentialism, respecting human potential means respecting our common humanity. This in turn affects political legitimacy.

In brief, to call a government legitimate is to say that it is justified, or entitled to govern. A legitimate government, therefore, should not have to use force, or only use force infrequently, to maintain itself as it can appeal to whatever principle legitimizes it, to gain support. An illegitimate government, such as an occupying invasion force or a dictatorship, will have to use force far more frequently as it has no legitimizing principle to which it can appeal to encourage widespread support. Thus, when Potentialism argues that political systems that discriminate between classes of humans will be illegitimate, it is arguing that they will have to either reform or rely on force to stay in power.

This position turns out to be borne out by many events in history when oppressed minorities (or majorities) could only be kept down by force. Yet this proposition still seems to conform to the conventional wisdom of contemporary politics; we know discrimination is wrong and respect people who fight against it. But when Potentialism applies this logic of respect for our human potential and common humanity more systematically a new conclusion emerges. As discriminating between classes of humans is a source of illegitimacy the argument is able to demonstrate logically that a “national border” should make no difference. Sovereign states actually do discriminate between classes of humans; they put the benefit of their citizens ahead of other human beings. They are illegitimate.

So the argument arrives at this very unconventional conclusion; the illegitimacy of sovereign states, from a seemingly conventional starting point. I know from experience that most people have trouble accepting this conclusion. But, as the rest of this book will show; if you accept that we share a common humanity, as so many claim to believe these days, then you have no choice but to conclude that sovereign states are illegitimate political systems. We are still at an early stage of human history and need to make many reforms and changes to build a legitimate human political system. If we do not we will remain trapped in what is effectively a civil war of humanity. It is just as illogical to allow our national identities to override our human identities as it is to allow our religious identities to override our human identities. Killing our fellow humans to protect the interest of our “nation” is just as much a piece of subjective ideologically motivated violence as killing our fellow humans to protect the interest of our “religion.” The so called “legitimate governments” of virtually every country in the world are in fact illegitimate. All these points are set out and shown to logically follow from acceptance of our human identity in the course of the book’s argument.

I noted above that most people have trouble accepting these conclusions. That is why I have written this book: I want to show that far from being unrealistic, these conclusions are realistic. The emperor of our historical pe-

riod—the “sovereign state”—has no clothes, and all we need to do is open our eyes to see this.

These conclusions will seem less unconventional the moment we actually start to look at the world in a clear-sighted manner. As a political philosophy Potentialism is essentially a normative philosophy offering principles to guide political systems, such as respect for our common humanity. But it can also be used analytically to explain many of the political phenomena of today. Let us briefly look at two examples. Firstly, if national governments were illegitimate, they would have to rely on force to survive. In fact, almost every national government does maintain a military force and treats national security—using force to protect its benefits from other humans—as a key goal. When we look at the world from a Potentialist perspective, warfare can be explained as the inevitable consequence of an illegitimate political system rather than a mysterious outbreak caused by “evildoers.” The world’s excessive military spending makes sense from the Potentialist perspective as the consequence of an illegitimate political system.

Secondly, looking at the world from a Potentialist perspective helps explain another strange fact; that success in warfare does not bring security. Even though militarists and national leaders always proclaim they are using force for “security,” the unfortunate fact is that the successful use of force never brings security. All that happens is the victor must maintain military preparedness until the next war. The reason that force never brings security is that force cannot overcome illegitimacy. Even if a sovereign state wins a war, it is still an illegitimate political system and still must rely on force to survive. Even countries that seem to have been winning wars for centuries, such as Britain and the United States, have still not found security, and they never will, because they are using force to defend an illegitimate system. The better path to security would be, of course, to build a legitimate international political system, but until we try to do that, warfare will achieve nothing other than an intermission until the next war. Once we open our eyes to the illegitimacy of the current system, we can see perpetual warfare as a sign of a flawed political system, and we have a framework—legitimacy or illegitimacy—for looking at the global political situation and understanding the underlying causes of warfare and its solution.

These two examples show that, as well as its unexpected conclusions, Potentialism offers great explanatory power. It has both normative and analytic strengths. It can help open our eyes to the world as it actually is. It is an empirically tested, logically worked out political philosophy that, despite its seemingly counterintuitive conclusions, helps us understand the world today

and the political tasks of tomorrow. How does Potentialism start its argument?

Our Moral Potential

Potentialism is a political philosophy. It starts with some observations about the human condition and reasons from these to political conclusions, such as that political systems must respect our humanity to be legitimate.

There are many possible starting points for an argument in political philosophy. Traditional Western political thought has clustered around three competing foundation principles: (1) that humans are basically good, a view associated with Rousseau for instance; (2) that humans are basically bad, a view associated with Thomas Hobbes for instance; and (3) that humans are a “blank slate” and are available to have personality impressed upon them, a view associated with, for example, John Locke.¹

Potentialism rejects these three standard approaches. It puts the case that rather than having either a fixed nature or no nature, humans, in fact, possess a mass of potentials. Each of us has the potential to be good, bad, or indifferent; to love wealth or to hate it; to eat too much and become fat; to exercise regularly and become thinner, and so on. We are a mass of potentials, and as we go through life, we try to decide which potentials we will seek to realize, discover which potentials we lack, and discover which potentials society will reward or punish us for realizing. We are not intrinsically anything, but we are all potentially many things.

It is more accurate to describe various characteristics as potentials that might be developed rather than as fixed aspects of human nature. This helps us understand why different people perform differently. It helps us understand why everyone who says we are intrinsically good can be confounded by an example of us being bad and why everyone who says we are intrinsically bad can be confounded by an example of goodness. Different people have a different range of potentials, of course, but we all have an enormous range of potentials, and we all develop our potentials in different degrees.

How does this lead to political philosophy? Our argument will start with one key potential that we all seem to have and that affects how we relate to other people. This is our potential for empathy with others; a potential that by enabling us to feel sympathy also enables us to express kindness toward others, and, thus, sometimes leads to us developing moral ideas and behavior toward others. This potential will be referred to as the *moral potential* in this book.

We will take a page or so to introduce the concept of moral potential then return to our original question of how does this lead us to political philosophy? Our moral potential is the ability, which seems to occur naturally in humans, to feel sympathy at the sight of a fellow being's suffering. This sense of sympathy in turn can lead to a form of moral action when we say, for instance, "It is wrong that that person is suffering from starvation; the suffering should be stopped." Thus while it is an actual feeling of sympathy or empathy, it is only a moral potential, as we may not draw the moral conclusion. As well it is only a moral potential in the sense that stopping the suffering of others and treating them with respect constitutes a moral act. It has nothing to do with morality as a series of fixed conduct rules such as what food to eat, who to have sex with, what clothes to wear and so on as religions often present morality. It is a moral potential in the sense that a concern to relieve others from suffering is a moral concern. It is an empathetic feeling of sympathy, which we all seem to possess, that has the potential to lead to a form of moral ideas, thus the moral potential.

Humans can, and often do, behave immorally. But nearly all humans seem to have some ability to empathize with others and sympathize with them. This moral potential is evidenced in many ways.

The standard example will come from anyone who has seen someone else in pain and felt that instant of sympathetic pain. Whether it is the collective groan from the crowd when an athlete is injured, the charity that displays a photograph of a suffering child knowing this will appeal to our moral potential, the sympathy we all felt watching the victims of the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center, or the simple empathy one feels for a friend or colleague in time of need, almost everyone can provide an example of the moral potential briefly flaring up and causing empathetic feelings at some time in his or her life.

It is a very rare person who claims never to have felt even an instant of intuitive sympathy for anyone else. Let us consider what it means to deny we have a moral potential. To deny it means to say we never feel any sympathy with anyone in suffering, never wish to help anyone, and have no desire to behave in any way that can be seen as moral. Likewise it means to say we could never trust or love anyone, either in our family or in the broader society as we possess not even a moral potential to make trust or love possible. While I have met people who denied we possess a moral potential, such people always reject the claim that they themselves are absolutely unsympathetic to everybody no matter what their plight and absolutely unconcerned for everybody else's welfare in all cases; which means they do admit some moral potential. After all, we are talking only about a moral *potential* here. Some

people may deny we have a fixed moral sense or even a conscience, but it is almost impossible to deny we have a moral *potential*.

But, at this introductory stage we need not set out all the arguments showing the moral potential's existence. We can just note the seemingly self-evident nature of the claim that we have a moral potential for now. Chapter 4 will review the historical, philosophic and scientific arguments which show that we have a moral potential and discuss some of the many thinkers in many different cultural traditions who have pointed to similar concepts. As we are introducing the concept now, we will also not discuss all the different thinkers who have argued for the existence of the moral potential, albeit usually using different terminology than moral potential. Instead we will quote just one unexpected supporter, Charles Darwin, to give an idea of the range of people who have subscribed to this idea over the years. Contemporary evolutionary theorists have debated the existence of something like the moral potential with some arguing that the amoral quest for survival trumps everything. Others argue, more persuasively, that something like a moral potential is an essential part of human development; without a moral potential nobody could be trusted and we could never have formed functioning societies. The original evolutionary theorist, Charles Darwin, was in no doubt about this. He claimed that something similar to the moral potential would be an inevitable part of human development when he wrote:

Any animal whatever, endowed with well marked social instincts, would inevitably acquire a moral sense or conscience, as soon as its intellectual powers had become as well developed, or nearly as well developed, as in man.²

Under the name "moral sense" Darwin was certain of the existence of something like our moral potential. The quoted passage could also be interpreted to mean that Darwin thought the "social instincts" were the moral potential and this was then developed into a moral sense. Either way his acceptance of the concept is clear. Western thinkers often call the moral potential, or related concepts, the "moral sense," but we cannot borrow that term for our use. What we are talking about is a potential, not a guaranteed fixed aspect of behavior; to borrow the term "moral sense" runs the risk of obscuring that fact and in fact overstating what we are talking about. We undoubtedly possess a moral potential, but to claim we possess a moral sense is to make a much stronger claim.

In fact many thinkers have referred to such things as a social, moral, or benevolent sense, or impulse, over the years. All of these terms are useful, although none of them is exactly suitable. For the sake of presenting an argument, I have had to choose one as a preferred term, and I have chosen to

use “moral potential” for the reasons discussed above, especially to emphasize that it is a potential not a guarantee of behavior, and for other reasons discussed in the course of the book. For now I simply note that there is no magic about the term, and other terms would also do. In fact, given the widespread acknowledgement of the general concept a pertinent question might be; why has there not already been more political philosophy focusing on the consequences of acknowledging our moral potential? This is a good question but this book must focus on developing its philosophy rather than investigating why others have ignored our moral potential. The question for us must be; how does acknowledging the fact that we have a moral potential lead us into political philosophy?

Moral Potential and politics

At first glance, moral potential seems more relevant to ethical theory than politics. Thinking it through as an ethical theory, we could use it to develop a philosophy that states that being good to others is no more than the fulfillment of our human potential and thus we should be kind to others as part of self-development. Religious rules and other strictures actually seem less grounded in reality than a claim based on fulfilling our own human potential. We could develop an ethical philosophy in which being good to others was a path to human fulfillment and happiness. But this is a book about politics, so while noting the applicability to ethical theory we will not develop that theme and simply leave it for future reference. When we look more closely at the moral potential we can see that it does also have relevance for politics, and, in fact, has already played a significant role in politics. It is this area that we need to look at.

The moral potential’s main role in politics for a very long time has been to set minimum standards. Once we realize someone is a fellow creature, someone we can feel empathy and sympathy with, it becomes difficult to allow that person to be subjected to cruel treatment. While we do not (usually) then fall in love with that person, we accept that he or she exists in the field of our empathetic range and so must be given at least basic fair treatment and basic equal rights. Thus, for example, once we recognize someone as a fellow being, we do not demand that they be given great wealth, a new car, and anything else they desire. But we do demand that he or she is not subjected to anything too cruel or unpleasant and that he or she receives the same basic rights as others.

Slavery in the United States offers an instructive example of the moral potential briefly flaring and leading to significant social change. For a long

time, slavery was seen as a natural part of life; some felt it reflected the natural order of supremacy among peoples. Then, over a period of time covering barely a century, the institution went from being a fine thing and a bulwark of society to a moral outrage, helped cause a civil war, was abolished, and is now seen by almost all Americans as a stain upon their history. The full range of reasons for this change of views is complex, of course. Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States during some of this crucial period, did not come to office planning to abolish slavery and did not make the abolition of slavery a war goal until well into the American Civil War. All sorts of strategic, material, and cultural reasons existed for challenging slavery and allowing it to contribute to causing a civil war, but the heart of the issue was a moral one.

Simply put, slavery began to arouse people's moral potential. People began to see slaves as fellow humans. Once this started to happen, a sense of sympathy for the slaves' plight was also aroused. Soon many people began to think of slavery as immoral; it became an "issue" that went to the core for many people because it involved fellow humans. Once it became such an issue, slavery was doomed regardless of what the precise sequence of events leading to its destruction would be.³

This must be noted as an example of moral potential not natural goodness. Our non-existent natural goodness did not make people suddenly sit up and oppose slavery. Likewise our natural evil did not make us relentlessly defend the evil of slavery no matter what. Rather arguments were made that appealed to our moral potential. Once enough people's moral potential was aroused, slavery was doomed; as it ceased to be the exploitation of "others" and came to be seen as an atrocity perpetrated on fellow beings, it became an issue that would not go away and could not be papered over.

The impact of the moral potential on politics (when it is successfully aroused or appealed to) is to set or change the minimum standard of equality we grant to our fellows or the class of people we define as our fellows. It does not make all people love each other. The abolition of slavery most definitely did not lead to perfect love between black and white people in the United States, but enough people's moral potential was aroused to shift the minimum standard of political equality and legitimacy by making people realize that the slaves were fellow beings.

Thus we have actually introduced two areas where the moral potential has a significant impact on politics. Firstly that it operates to help us define the class of people we believe should receive at least a basic level of political and social equality. It plays this role because it is the underlying potential that enables us to feel something in common with others. Secondly we can see that it has a powerful ability to drive change in politics. If we redefine the

class of people with whom we feel a degree of empathy we become unhappy and in fact outraged if they do not seem to receive fair or equal treatment. When people appeal to our moral potential to make us realize we do have something in common, a common humanity for instance, with a marginalized group we become affected by the suffering of that group and call for equal treatment for them. In these situations great changes can be forced in political systems as we demand the formerly outcast group receives just treatment. This happens even though we do not (necessarily) love the outcasts; our moral potential is enough to make us unhappy that they are mistreated.

Whatever solidarity concept we use, it will only work when we successfully link it to our moral potential, a part of our humanity. That is why it is time for a political philosophy that uses as its foundation an acknowledgment that we share a moral potential. That is what Potentialism does, and that is what the rest of this book will be about. The next step is to try to give the reader some overview of how we develop a political philosophy based on recognition of our moral potential.

Overview of Potentialism

It is difficult to give a brief introductory overview of a new philosophy. The essence of a philosophy is that it is built upon a chain of reasoning. A summary, by leaving out most of the analysis that shows how each point connects to the next, can often be highly misleading, especially when it is a summary of a new philosophy like Potentialism. Nonetheless it would be asking a lot of the reader to travel through the rest of the text without some signposting and some idea of where the argument is heading so I will offer here a brief overview of the argument as a whole. As well this overview refers to the chapters in which key points are set out so the reader has an idea where to look for matters most of interest to him or her.

Potentialism shows that recognition of our moral potential has significance for politics. Arguing logically from this foundation point, Potentialism develops a guiding principle as the test for political legitimacy called the *human legitimacy principle*. It is stated as follows:

Political legitimacy is advanced by developing policies that are consistent with all of humanity having an equal opportunity to benefit. The word benefit in the previous sentence is confined to outcomes consistent with human development.

This principle can be used to analyze politics and come up with twin practical conclusions for today: Firstly, our existing political system is ille-

gitimate as it relies on competing national political systems seeking benefits for sub sections of humanity (their citizens) rather than generating benefits in a manner consistent with “all of humanity having an equal opportunity to benefit,” and, secondly, we need to build some form of trans-human system—a legitimate international political system—to achieve political legitimacy. The content of the human legitimacy principle will not be analyzed in any more detail now, save that the reader’s attention should be drawn to one part. It refers to policies “consistent with all of humanity having an equal opportunity” rather than demanding the absolute equal benefit of all of humanity instantaneously. This means that policies that move us in the right direction and are at least not inconsistent with similar benefits for others will still contribute to building legitimacy. The human legitimacy principle allows for progress; it does not demand instant radical transformation of everything.

But how does the argument arrive at the human legitimacy principle as the one overarching test of political legitimacy? Chapters 3 and 4 deal with some preliminary issues connected to why we have difficulty seeing the need for a legitimate international political system and why we should look to the human intellectual heritage and not just the Western one in developing our ideas of a legitimate international political system. The main argument starts in chapter 4 and is summarized here as it appears in the relevant chapters.

Moral potential

Chapter 4 begins the main argument by reviewing the historical philosophic and scientific arguments for the existence of the moral potential. It differentiates between the claim that we are absolutely good and the more modest claim that we possess a moral potential. The evidence in favor of us possessing a moral potential is overwhelming. The countervailing case that we possess no moral potential turns out to be incoherent.

Common humanity

Chapter 5 shows how we build upon our moral potential to develop solidarity concepts eventually leading to our sense of common humanity.

History has seen humans giving primary political loyalties to different groups: tribes, cities, Empires, religions, sovereign states, and so on over the millennia. In each case, we develop a sense of common feeling with members of that group and give priority to welfare and justice within that group. Thus we fight wars on its behalf, defend its members from attack, and demand a basic political justice for members within the group while not being too concerned about the rest of humanity. Each one of these loyalty stages

can be described as a development of the moral potential in that we come to realize that we share something with members of that group and can develop enough empathy with them, whether we know them personally or not, to demand a minimum level of political equality for them.

But of course each of these extensions of our moral potential is also a distortion. The tribe, nation, religion and so on has always turned out to be a fleeting socially constructed grouping rather than an inherent part of our existence. The one identity that is actual and inherent rather than socially created is our human identity. Yet our group loyalties are sometimes given priority over our human identity so that we exploit or kill our fellow humans on behalf of our “group.” For instance, when we believe we share a common national identity and care for our fellow nationals, we are developing our moral potential toward them. But when we say that non-nationals are less important and we treat their death and poverty with indifference, treat them in ways we would not treat our fellow nationals, and are even willing to kill and exploit them if it will advance our nation’s interests, we are no longer fulfilling our moral potential but distorting it. Our moral potential, analyzed logically, leads to respect for our common humanity.

In fact, we could not recognize each other as human beings if we did not have a moral potential. Without a moral potential, we may share a degree of reason, or shape, or size, or appetite with others, but we do not share a sense of empathy and concern. Rocks, for instance share many common characteristics, computers do too, and can even be networked. But a sense of common rockness or common computerness cannot develop. Neither group has a moral potential, a sense of empathy with others, that can be cultivated to enable them to realize their fellow feelings and become a self-conscious community. It is appeals to our moral potential that give us the ability to recognize the “others” as also our fellow community members and to demand that they receive at least a basic minimum standard of equal treatment.

Indeed, as chapter 5 discusses, the logic of this actually takes us beyond human beings. The pure form of the argument would be to say we can share a sense of identity with any being that has a moral potential (which may include non-human beings) and even with beings that can feel pain and suffering even though they may not have a moral potential, such as animals. The pure form of the argument would require a political system which upheld a basic level of respect for all beings with a moral potential. But as we have yet to encounter non-human beings with a moral potential and because this book has emerged from a study of human politics, the argument is confined to the human level. Our moral potential is what enables us to realize a sense of community with others, thus setting the boundaries of who should be treated fairly. The most logical development of this at the human level is to

realize that we share a common humanity. But what sort of political system is capable of respecting our common humanity?

The human legitimacy principle

In chapter 6 the argument takes a step backwards to enable it to go forwards. We had already seen how the moral potential gave us our common humanity. But this is not a theory of government. Should political systems respect our moral potential? What must a political system do to acknowledge our moral potential? Chapter 6 shows how crucial the moral potential is to human life and discusses how political systems should acknowledge it.

Our moral potential is what makes social life possible. Without it, we could at best form groups of manipulators and deceivers but could never develop a trusting or loving relationships with others. Today we know we should try to develop our physical and mental potentials in order to become healthy and smart. But it is even more important to develop our moral potential (to the extent with which we are comfortable, as nobody can achieve perfection in this department) if we wish to develop fulfilling relationships with others. Society faces a far greater threat from someone who has failed to develop his moral potential than from someone who has failed to develop their physical or mental potential. We may call a person who fails to develop his physical potential “fat,” and label one who fails to develop his mental potential as “stupid,” but we call a person who has completely failed to develop his moral potential and committed an evil crime an “inhuman monster.” Similarly, we call the greatest crimes “crimes against humanity.” To develop one’s moral potential is no more than to develop as a human being.

In fact the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article one, tells us that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience. . . .” Thus, right at the beginning, the declaration tells us that our most important faculties are reason and conscience. The declaration is itself assuming that we share a moral potential that we can develop into a conscience. Far from being a side issue, our moral potential is what gives us our humanity and our common humanity. Anyone who has totally repressed and/or abandoned his moral potential has thrown away his humanity and made himself akin to a conscienceless beast.

Thus the first point chapter 6 makes is that a political system should not deny us the chance to develop our moral potential. It is the very essence of our humanity. A dictatorship that refused to treat us as beings capable of making moral choices would be denying our moral potential. So would a political system that declined into chaos and reduced social life to a brutal struggle for survival. Should we say then that a political system should pro-

mote our moral potential? This turns out to be just as bad. Empathy and feeling cannot be forced. Compelling people to behave in a way deemed moral only leads to a new form of dictatorship.

The guiding principle must be nearer the middle; a political system should allow us the opportunity to cultivate our moral potential, but it cannot force it. To deny the opportunity is to deny our humanity.

What sort of policies would give us such an opportunity? There is no one fixed solution, there can only be general guidelines which then must be tailored to circumstances. Several policy guidelines are offered in chapter 6.

First, there must be some scope for freedom of expression and conscience; this is essential for any system to allow people to cultivate their moral potential. There must also be some framework of consultation by the political system with its subjects (for instance, but not confined to, democracy). To fail to heed people's opinions is to fail to treat them as beings with a moral potential. Third, there must be opportunities for education. Without access to education, people will have very limited chances to access the range of ideas and knowledge they need to express themselves and cultivate their moral potential, if they choose to do so. Fourth, there is a need for access to sufficient economic opportunities to be able to achieve enough material resources to live in a reasonable degree of comfort. People trapped in extreme poverty would be reduced to a ferocious struggle where survival trumped all other aspects of human life. Fifth, these opportunities must be provided in a way that does not degrade our physical environment. To destroy it is to ignore our relationship with future humans and to limit the choices of our fellow humans living today. Finally, all of these opportunities need to be provided in a manner that offers them equally to humans. To offer them unequally is to deny the moral potential of those getting the smaller share by saying their development is less important than others.

For ease of reference these guidelines are referred to as "human development" guidelines because they need to be followed to allow us the opportunity to develop our moral potential, to develop as human beings. Human development is a clumsy sounding name, but I have adopted it as the logical corollary of an argument that proceeds at every step by asking about humans.

At this point, it should be clear that political equality must be the key governing principle of the human development guidelines. If it is violated in the delivery of the others, then they have not been adequately provided. Its centrality is how the argument leads to the human legitimacy principle. A political system must provide some form of human development policies to achieve legitimacy. In providing them, there must be some base level of equality or else they are delivered in a way that denies our humanity. Thus we are led to the human legitimacy principle:

Political legitimacy is advanced by developing policies that are consistent with all of humanity having an equal opportunity to benefit. The word benefit in the previous sentence is confined to outcomes consistent with human development.

The answer to our earlier question of what should a political system do to respect our moral potential can now be given; it should use the human legitimacy principle to guide its policies. The human legitimacy principle incorporates respect for our common humanity and our moral potential, uniting the argument of chapters 5 and 6.

The human legitimacy principle in action

Chapter 7 begins the process of using the human legitimacy principle to examine political systems. The human legitimacy principle can be used analytically and normatively. Either way it leads to the same conclusion; the goal of politics must be to build a legitimate international political system, justice in one country is not justice. This book will use the phrase “legitimate international political system” to stand for a political system which aspires to human justice and is more in conformity with the human legitimacy principle than our current world of sovereign states.

Analytically, we can use the human legitimacy principle to examine political systems for legitimacy. When we look at national political systems, we find they tend to discriminate economically, politically, and militarily against non-nationals. They create a patchwork of illegitimate political systems spanning the globe, constantly using force and information manipulation to try to advance the interests of one group of humans over another. They are illegitimate systems that promote inequality and can only survive by force. As illegitimate systems they must resort to force to maintain their existence and that is exactly what they do, or prepare to do as they allocate large portions of their budgets to defense. The other analytic function that we can perform is to diagnose solutions. If asked what the cause of warfare is today, we can say an illegitimate political system. If asked the solution to the problem of warfare, we can say it must start with building a legitimate international political system.

Normatively, the human legitimacy principle can also help us by telling us what sort of political system is most desirable. The answer is one in which some form of human development policies are available to humanity not just justice in one country. It is clear that a legitimate international political system must involve some process whereby benefits, whether economic or social, generated in one part of the world are not generated in a manner that limits the ability of people elsewhere to generate the same level of benefits.

Chapter 8 talks more about what a legitimate international political system will look like, but in chapter 7 the book establishes the basic conceptual framework.

Before that, however, chapter 7 considers the nature of the reasoning process that has led the argument to the human legitimacy principle and the need for a legitimate international political system. The basic concepts involved in human development; consultation, rights to education, political equality and so forth seem unremarkable by themselves. Other political philosophies such as social contract theory, communitarianism, socialism, capitalism, and so on, can generate and have generated similar-sounding principles.

But these other philosophies have done so by relying on imagined abstractions such as the “social contract” or turning a stage in the development of a “community” or a “tradition” into some sort of imaginary bedrock. Potentialism has reached its positions, not by imagining abstractions but by focusing on the reality that we are humans and considering the implications of that. Its logic builds on the foundation of our humanity rather than imagined abstractions and is stronger for that. As well traditional Western political philosophies, with their reliance on abstractions such as social contract, can be hijacked by nation-states, city-states, religions, or any other group that overrides our humanity and be used to supposedly legitimize that sub group of humanity’s political system and help us forget the goal of building a legitimate international political system. Potentialism is the one political philosophy which cannot be reduced from universalism to parochialism in this way, it is based on and expresses our humanity rather than allowing it to be denied.

A legitimate international political system

Having seen that the goal of politics should be to build a legitimate international political system chapter 8 looks in more detail at what would constitute such a system. There are many possible paths to building a legitimate international political system, Potentialism is not absolutely committed to any one path. Potentialism sets out a general goal and proves it is both possible and necessary. But it cannot lay down an iron rule for the future other than the negative one that if we persist with an illegitimate system, we will continue to see inequality and warfare.

Some general aspects of a legitimate international political system are clear, however. Such a system need not involve the abandonment of the nation state but it would require the development of some overarching principles, consistent with human development guidelines, which would have to be

followed to a significant degree by the members of the legitimate international political system. It must work toward human development not national development. In this context, it is easy to see where the United Nations has gone wrong. By maintaining sovereignty as one of its principles, it makes it impossible to foster common political standards among its members. The cruelest dictatorship and the most benign social democracy are equally welcome among its membership. It cannot promote human development and begin to build a legitimate international political system while set up this way.

Possible paths to a legitimate international political system are considered. It could be developed formally through a new institution or informally through a gradual evolution of treaties and common practices. However it emerges it is likely to develop gradually with a small group of Countries attempting to build a legitimate system and gradually increasing their number as new members joined. It could only expand by consent, not by force. The path most likely to succeed (although, as noted above, there are no guarantees) appears to be one based on setting up a formal institution with some overarching principles, but which does *not* cover the world and then allowing it to develop gradually as people consent, and allowing new members to join when they want, as long as they conform to its overarching principles.

This is similar to the path followed by an international organization that exists today—the European Union. For all its flaws the European Union has seen peace and economic growth occur in an area that had been dominated by economic inequality and warfare for centuries. Nonetheless, it ignores the human legitimacy principle and human development in so many areas we can only look at it as an analogy of a gradually developing system, not as a direct model of a legitimate international political system.

The recommended path instead would be to start a “Human Union.” The union could begin with as few as two countries declaring their willingness to form one and then grow from there gradually. It would need to have some degree of overarching principles in regard to human development issues such as democracy, access to education, and environmental protection. It would also need to forbid expansion by force but would offer joint defense to its members. Such a union need not be based on geographically contiguous countries—for instance, Japan and Sweden could be the first members. It is most likely to start through two or more countries declaring a willingness to negotiate to form a Human Union. But if the European Union were to change its name to “Human Union,” and change its membership criteria accordingly, it would jump-start the process and be a magnificent act of vision. Whilst arguing for the Human Union this book is also clear that there may be other

paths to a legitimate international political system and that such a system, whatever form it takes, remains the key goal.

Chapter 8 also discusses the issue of political activism. Today more than ever, political activists play international roles. People campaigning on issues such as the environment, human rights, debt relief, poverty, and exploitation are all increasingly turning to international forums. Groups such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International have achieved much more as international activists than they could possibly have achieved by confining themselves to domestic politics.

These activists are right to turn their causes into international concerns. But none of their causes can succeed until there is a legitimate international political system in place to maintain whatever proposals they have re environmental protection, human rights and poverty reduction. While the current illegitimate international system continues, all such programs can only fall afoul of it and be incompletely realized. Examples of this are obvious and numerous, as countries choose to selectively follow trade, human rights, environmental, and other treaty agreements. Politicians nearly always allow the illegitimate national interest to trump the legitimate cause of building a legitimate international political system as we still live in a world governed by the false ideologies of nationalism and patriotism.

The recommendation is obvious. We need an activist group dedicated to the issue of building a legitimate international political system and encouraging members and others to consider themselves humans first and nationals or religionists second. Just as we need political change, so at the individual level is it time for activists to campaign for a human political community. Chapter 8 briefly looks at some existing activist organizations. Whether a new one should be formed or an existing one reenergized is an open question. When referring to the concept of such an organization through the book, I will use the name “Human Union Movement” just to have a name for it. I am a member of an existing Human Union Movement—it is a small group agitating for the formation of a “Human Union”—but I do not know if this movement or something else will become the political movement to challenge the leaders of the world and push us to a legitimate international political system. I do need a name for the generic idea, however, so in this book I am using the name Human Union Movement.

The final issue that chapter 8 considers is the question of identity politics. Does acknowledging our humanity mean totally rejecting our national, religious, and other identities? The answer is “no.” The issue is not that one must cease to be American to be human; the issue is to realize that being American is not more important than being human. Just as many people now realize that religious differences do not justify discrimination and killing, so

it should be with national and other identities. A legitimate international political system, whatever form it takes will be just that: legitimate. It will not mean perfect love or the loss of all other identities. People within it will still have all their other identities; they simply will have learned to embrace their human identities as well. At this point, the political philosophy argument has been concluded. But one important area yet remains for chapter 9 to resolve.

The problem of war

Chapter 9 looks at war, the ultimate denial of our humanity. Potentialism provides both a normative and an analytic case against war.

World leaders who start wars may be cynical manipulators only concerned with money and oil as radical critics often claim. But they do not get their wars by encouraging young people to fight for oil. People identify themselves principally as American or French, Christian or Moslem, and they kill and die for their groups. By distorting their moral potential this sense of group loyalty causes people to kill their fellow humans and lay down their own lives. Their group loyalty becomes the most important and transcendent aspect of their lives and becomes literally more important than being human. As the prime identity concept, it becomes the one thing worth killing and dying for. I use the word *groupism* to describe a situation in which a person's sense of identity has become so dependent on group identification that he or she will put it ahead of humanity, exploit and manipulate fellow humans for the group, and in the case of warfare kill for it.

Used analytically Potentialism shows us why most wars cannot enhance security and are just a pointless waste of human life. Sovereign states and other groupist entities that violate the human legitimacy principle are illegitimate political systems. When wars occur, leaders tell us that force is necessary for the "security of the group." But, since the group's interest is itself illegitimate, victory in war will not guarantee its security. As an illegitimate entity, it will still have to rely on force, and thus victory in war achieves nothing but a breathing space to prepare for the next war. For this reason, even those countries that have been most successful in war in the last few centuries—Britain and the United States—still find themselves involved in warfare. No matter how many wars they win, they will have to go on fighting more wars until they are finally defeated and a new set of illegitimate entities prevails, or, as this book proposes, until a legitimate international political system is established. The best choice between these scenarios should be obvious. Even the nominal hardheaded, coldhearted, security analyst could use Potentialism analytically to see that whatever war he proposes cannot increase security due to the illegitimacy of the underlying system. Even from the security analyst's point of view then, Potentialism used analytically

shows that the most practical goal is to build a legitimate international political system.

The analytical approach also leads us to a devastating normative picture. Since most wars cannot achieve their goals, and are merely the prelude for the next war, the implication is that every person who dies in war dies for nothing; all lives sacrificed are wasted. Put another way, the person who dies for his country, his religion, or his groupist ideology is throwing his life away. Worse, every person that these “fighters” kill has been killed for nothing. And even worse, the leaders who promote and order the war have caused the deaths of so many people for nothing but the use of force to maintain an illegitimate political system. War is the ultimate denial of our moral potential and our common humanity. It is the ultimate failure the ultimate political disaster, and—far from being the ultimate glory—the ultimate shame.

If we narrow the normative argument even further to the individual level, we can see how war causes us to deny our moral potential and our humanity. We saw earlier that our moral potential is a core part of our humanity. To deny it is to deny our humanity. What do soldiers, security agents, and defense bureaucrats do? In essence, they abandon their conscience in relation to the people they kill. They say “it does not matter if this war is right or wrong, but I will be available to kill whoever the leader of my (illegitimate) political system tells me to kill.” Their position is different to the person who says “if I judge there is no way out of a situation other than to kill then I will have to do it.” Their position is simply that if someone else tells them to kill, they will do it. The most fundamental decision of conscience—whether or not to kill a fellow human being—and the most fundamental denial of another person’s humanity—to treat them as a thing to be killed—these are the decisions that a military/security professional takes not on the basis of conscience but on the basis of abandonment of conscience. They abandon their right to develop their moral potential into a conscience by saying they will do whatever they are told and kill whoever they are told to kill. In this sense, then, choosing to enter the profession of war is about the most extreme denial of one’s humanity possible. It is a decision to abandon one’s conscience over the most fundamental issue possible. The modern “military ethos” emphasizes that the soldier must follow orders rather than make a moral decision. The modern military person’s highest duty—to obey discipline and follow orders—is in fact a requirement to have no conscience and abandon his or her humanity.

Potentialism’s simplest answer is to say to anyone “Put your humanity first and do not engage in warfare on behalf of an illegitimate political system.”

As clear as the basic analysis is, there are some extra questions about warfare that are analyzed in chapter 9. At times, people may have no choice

but to resort to force in self-defense. As well, at very rare times, respect for our fellow humans may actually compel us to resort to warfare. For instance, if an act of genocide or ethnic cleansing is about to occur and the choice is either to do nothing while thousands of people are killed or to intervene, then the most appropriate choice could well be intervention. These exceptional situations are just that, exceptional, and should always be seen as such. Chapter 9 discusses the limited situations in which a war might be acceptable from a Potentialist point of view and the type of political system that could legitimately engage in such a war.

But the key issue remains the building of a legitimate international political system, not the fighting of wars. Potentialism puts forward a philosophy that will help us to move toward a more legitimate, less-warlike world. The most practical solution to the problems of war, the problem of illegitimate use of force, is to build a legitimate international political system.

The argument reaches its conclusion in chapter 10, which looks at alternative paths to a philosophy of international political legitimacy. Today, other people also argue for some form of legitimate world political system. They use arguments such as “We all live on one planet,” “Communication is making the world smaller,” and so on to make their case. This book has no desire to take issue with these thinkers and activists and, in fact, wants to work with them. Nonetheless, it is necessary to briefly explain how such ideas, because they are not embedded in a complete philosophy of political legitimacy, often fail to persuade and are treated as sentiments rather than arguments. Potentialism offers a rigorous, fully thought-out political philosophy that enables us to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate political systems. It is a philosophy for the international politics of the twenty-first century.

At this point, we can finish our introductory summary. It has gone on for quite a few pages, but summarizing a complete new philosophy will always take more space than just summarizing a new idea from within the existing paradigm of ideas. Hopefully this introductory summary has been enough to whet the readers’ appetite for the rest of the book. It would be even better if this has been enough to convince the reader of the strength of the argument, and he is already persuaded. But, if not, most questions are answered in the following chapters.

Westernization and Groupism

At this point, it might seem natural to end this chapter and proceed to the methodical setting out of the main argument. However there is one objection

that people often raise at this preliminary stage that I want to deal with straightaway. I will briefly outline the objection and the answer, here, and then discuss both more comprehensively in the next two chapters; the observant reader will have noticed the summary in the previous section started from chapter 4. The objection that people often make at the outset is that calling for a legitimate international political system is a code for “Westernization.”

In the case of Potentialism, such a call is definitely not. First, this is because the argument stands on its own merits. But also because in fact it is Western ideas that have blinded us to the need to build a legitimate international political system and have to be exposed and rejected if we are to move toward respecting our humanity. In fact, contemporary groupist concepts such as political nationalism and racism received their main intellectual incubation in the West and were spread around the world in the wake of Western imperialism. Sovereign states and political nationalism are not the eternal form of human political organization that cannot be escaped; rather they are a collection of concepts not formalized until the seventeenth century in the West. They were then exported along with Western imperialism so that the whole world is now organized along Western lines into sovereign states that put their interests ahead of humanity. Far from Westernization being necessary for us to appreciate our humanity, some intellectual de-Westernization is necessary for us to open our eyes to our humanity and reject the false gods of national sovereignty and national exclusiveness the West has given us.

Chapter 2 will discuss the process by which groupism came to be a key theme of Western political thought and action. Chapter 3 will look at an example of a non-Western thinker, and the tradition of which he was part, as an example of non-Western thought rejecting groupist concepts such as political nationalism. This is to show that Potentialism, as a truly human political philosophy, draws from non-Western as well as Western sources. It is also to show that, at the intellectual level, Westernization is not necessary to enable a conceptualization of us as humans. In fact, Westernization has blinded us to our common humanity. Potentialism builds on the human political tradition, not the Western one.

For the remainder of this chapter, I will give a brief flavor of this intellectual history so that the reader can launch into this book from an intellectual heritage broader than the Western tradition of groupism; from a human intellectual heritage.

The first great work of Western political philosophy is Plato’s *Republic*. It offers a detailed array of proposals for organizing the republic, but when it comes to foreign policy, offers only the suggestion that hopefully the republic will be capable of winning wars against similar-sized opponents.⁴ The

concept of building a legitimate international political system is altogether absent. The policy for the outside world is only to make sure that outside interests are deferred to the group's. They are conceived of as the "other," not as our fellow human beings.

Plato lived from 427–347 BCE in ancient Greece. One non-Western thinker who developed an approach different from Plato's was born shortly before Plato died. This thinker, who lived on the other side of the world in what is now called China, was known as Mencius (Meng Zi in pin yin Romanization, c371–289 BCE). Mencius lived during the Warring States period of ancient China and argued that it should be possible for all the warring states, barbarians, and other political entities of the time to come together in a civilized order because their common humanity was more important than loyalty to individual kings, countries or tribes. Mencius' political thought is still influential today. For instance Kim Dae Jung (Nobel Peace Prize winner and, until 2003, president of South Korea) has consistently argued that Mencius' emphasis on the need for government to put the people's interests first provides a philosophical underpinning to justify accepting democracy and human rights as part of Asian political culture⁵. In a famous passage, Mencius argued:

My reason for saying no man is devoid of a heart sensitive to the suffering of others is this. Suppose a man were, all of a sudden, to see a young child on the verge of falling into a well. He would certainly be moved to compassion, not because he wanted to get in the good graces of the parents, not because he wished to win the praise of his fellow villagers and friends, nor yet because he disliked the cry of the child. From this it can be seen that whoever is devoid of the heart of compassion is not human. . . .⁶

His point in this passage is that in that first instance of seeing the child in peril, anyone would feel a pang of concern. This is the "heart of compassion." Subsequent to this moment, more practical concerns, such as winning praise for rescuing a child or a decision to leave the responsibility of rescue to someone else, may well intrude. But Mencius' point is that in that first instant, the human potential for sympathy is aroused. The "heart of compassion" is effectively the same concept as the moral potential. As Mencius noted, "whoever is devoid of the heart of compassion is not human," compassion is part of our human moral potential.

Mencius argued from this starting point to the conclusion that the only legitimate government was one that offered good government to all humans. He denied that the existing (i.e. existing in his time) cultural and political differences between humans meant that political morality should only apply within any one group. Instead, he argued that basic principles of good gov-

ernment should be available to all people and claimed a government was an illegitimate one if it was not trying to bring benefit to all of humanity.

Plato was succeeded by the great philosopher Aristotle, most of whose life as the dominant philosopher in Athens overlapped with that of Mencius (Aristotle's dates are usually given as 384–322 BCE). The differences between Aristotle and Mencius are even more stark and systematic.

Aristotle declared, "It is proper that Greeks should rule non-Greeks, the implication being that non-Greek and slave are by nature identical"⁷. For Aristotle, this was not due to a contingent fact of the world of his times but due to the very nature of people. He wrote: "It is clear then that by nature some are free, others slaves. . . ." ⁸ Mencius, on the other side of the world, argued that, due to the moral potential, even the crudest barbarian could develop and become part of the moral community of humanity. He illustrated this by pointing to two barbarians of the past who, in his opinion, reached sagehood; "Shun was an Eastern barbarian . . . Wen was a Western barbarian . . . The standards of the two sages, one earlier and one later, were identical" (4B 1).

Thus, while Aristotle had built on Plato's groupist assumptions to already develop an iron law that humanity is divided into irreconcilable groups, Mencius was forwarding the case for a legitimate international political system and stressing the common humanity of all people, even barbarians.

In Western universities today, Plato and Aristotle still appear on the classical political philosophy curriculum as major thinkers with universal relevance and as pioneers of our "universal" tradition of political thought. Mencius appears only as part of Asian studies, if at all. Yet while Mencius tried to consider the implications of our human identity, Aristotle confined full political justice to Greeks. In reality, it is Aristotle and Plato who are the parochial thinkers; Mencius is the thinker of universal relevance. Potentialism is connected to a broad intellectual process of reclaiming our human heritage not burying it under the worst baggage of the Western tradition.

As we work our way through the rest of the book and the philosophy of Potentialism, the key political choice of the twenty-first century will become clearer. Do we try to respect our humanity and build a legitimate international political system, or do we persist with the groupist world of competing states and the inequality and warfare that comes with it? Do we build justice in one country or try to build justice? The most important question we face is that of humanity versus sovereignty. It is time to start choosing humanity.

Chapter Two

GROUPISM

This chapter shows how groupism is entrenched in Western political thought and practice. The chapter does not provide a comprehensive survey of course, but looks at some key thinkers and periods so as to illustrate the role that groupism has played. This is done for the purpose of helping clear our minds of groupist assumptions. Chapter 3 then looks at a different intellectual tradition (Mencius and others) so that when the argument proper starts in chapter 4, it can start from a truly human foundation rather than be misinterpreted from within the context of the Western tradition of groupism. Groupism is so deeply entrenched in Western thought that we are rarely even consciously aware that we are being influenced by it.

Groupism, to one extent or another, can be found in all cultures, so in discussing the role of groupism in Western thought it should be made clear at the outset that the argument is not that only the West has developed groupist ideas. Rather, it is that groupism has played such a significant role in Western thought and practice, and the West has played such a significant role in spreading groupism in the form of political nationalism around the world, that a move to a philosophy of human political legitimacy requires a break with the main Western tradition rather than conformity with it. Likewise, developing a legitimate international political system will effectively involve some de-Westernization rather than Westernization as it will involve a move away from the western groupist tradition.

Loyalty to a group is not intrinsically a problem. We all have groups of people with which we are more comfortable. We can be loyal to our tribe, our religion, our nation, our town, or our football team. This is an important and necessary part of life. In this sense we all have multiple identities; local, national, religious and others. It is only natural to have some preferences for the company and welfare of groups of people with whom we share something in common. But when we allow our group identity to overwhelm our human identity we engage in groupism. If group loyalty is put so far above respect for our fellow human beings that our loyalty to our group becomes the rationale for exploiting, impoverishing and even killing our fellow humans we are engaging in groupist behavior. In such a case, we allow our group identity to go from being a part of our human identity to something that enables us to forget and abandon our human identity. Groupism comes in many forms but the main focus in this chapter will be on groupism and nationalism. The chapter will look at groupism in political philosophy, recent international history, political science, and identity politics.

Political philosophy and groupism

Political philosophy concerns itself with what makes the ideal, or best achievable, society. The standard approach of Western thought has been to imagine a small ideal group and depict its internal relations as the ideal society while advocating that it treat outsiders as potential threats rather than trying to bring them into a broader human civilization. In essence groupism is assumed as the only possible outcome, so that the ideal society can only be conceived of as a small minority of humanity which is prepared to war with the rest of humanity. Groupism is usually an assumption, rather than a stated position. I do not say that all Western thinkers advocate it and promote it, (chapter 10 looks at some Western thinkers who tried to go beyond groupism) but that it is often assumed and has colored the tenor of Western thought and action. This book will not try to prove that all Western thinkers advocate groupism but will simply show how it is built into the work of a range of famous thinkers so as to show how it has permeated our political philosophies.

The first great hero of Western thought is, of course, Socrates. Socrates famously argued that the “unexamined life is not worth living.” He preferred accepting a death sentence to living subject to the condition that he gave up his quest to examine our assumptions and seek truth wherever he could find it. At his trial, he did not accept that any limitations could be placed on his quest for knowledge. His defense was that the best he could do for society was to examine assumptions and try to move closer to truth. Yet he also offered the defense that he had been a loyal Athenian and had engaged in military service on Athens behalf when called upon. In other words, he had never opposed Athens’ national interest and had fought for it when necessary. Briefly, after being found guilty and sentenced to death, he analyzed the idea of escape but rejected the concept as a form of disloyalty to his ideas. He also rejected it as a form of disloyalty to Athens, to which he was a loyal citizen. In other words, his bold individualism and fearless examination of all assumptions had never led him to examine the assumption of loyalty to the state. This was the one unexamined assumption he did not just overlook but confidently cited in his defense as proof of how virtuously he had lived his life.¹ It may seem extreme to tax Socrates with overlooking this one issue when he questioned so much else. But it is interesting that this was the one assumption that he not only did not examine but expected praise for upholding. Socrates died during the fourth century BCE, the same century during which Mencius lived most of his life and argued that support for a legitimate international political system was more important than loyalty to the state.

It was Socrates' student Plato who wrote the "Republic", the first major work of Western political philosophy. In this famous work, Plato dedicated much space to detailing how the ideal society (which we will refer to as the republic) should be organized, setting out a range of rules for education, child rearing, the treatment of different classes of society, and so forth. However, when it came to foreign policy, Plato's main hope seemed to be that his ideal society would be difficult to defeat in warfare. "Our trained soldiers should easily be a match for two or three times their number."² If that did not work, he suggested dividing the republic's enemies by appealing to differences between rich and poor and other classes.³ He also proposed that children be taken to witness warfare so as to develop a good fighting mentality.⁴ This is all good advice to ensure the republic will survive in a hostile world, but it means Plato has only considered political legitimacy as possible within the small group, the republic; those outside are to be met with force. There is no suggestion that a political society could be organized on the basis of principles consistent with developing a legitimate international political system of humans. For Plato, the realization of political ideals stopped at the borders of the republic.

If Plato was the first great Western political philosopher, his pupil Aristotle was the first to be both a great political philosopher and a great political scientist. Aristotle catalogued a range of possible governments based on the city-states of his day. His ideal government was not, of course, a legitimate international political system but an ideal city-state. He argued this state should be so small that the citizens could all know each other and their qualities and, likewise, its territory should be so small it could be easily "surveyed."⁵ Like Plato, he felt that prowess in war was a key part of developing the best state rather than building a legitimate international political system.

Aristotle synthesized these views with a theory about human potentialities. He thought that all things had potentialities and it was in their nature to fulfill them. Aristotle thought that, for humans, reason was the key potentiality to be realized. But while he sometimes wrote about this in seemingly universal terms when he came to politics he was very clear that different classes of humans had different potentialities and political systems should be developed in accordance with these different capacities. For Aristotle then, human potentialities were limited. For instance some people, namely the Greeks, were naturally suited for freedom; others, namely non-Greeks, were naturally suited for slavery, as we saw in chapter 1. He thus developed a theory of the capacities of different races of people which helped justify the groupist assumption that a trans-human political system was an impossibility. The lives of Mencius and Aristotle overlapped. The fact that Mencius was capable of conceiving of a trans-human political system suggests that it is not the

Western tradition of thought or modernity by itself that has somehow made it possible for us to appreciate our common humanity.

If, in fact, we turn to modern (i.e. post medieval) Western political philosophy we find a similar groupist pattern. Groupism is either assumed or consciously advocated; only rarely is it opposed. The towering figure of modern political thought is John Locke who published his writings in the late 1600s. His vision of a society—legitimized by a social contract that included regular elections, the protection of some “natural” rights such as property and free speech, and some separation of powers—has been the major philosophical synthesis of the ideas underlying both the British and U.S. systems of governments during those states’ rise to global prominence (and subsequent decline in the British case). Locke conceived of the social contract as being created within a particular society rather than a global contract.⁶ He did not advocate groupism but remained silent as to international politics. He thus offered a legitimizing principle for national governments but no legitimizing principle for international politics. By default, social contract theory became a concept used to legitimize national governments rather than international political systems.

Locke’s great seventeenth century competitor as a social contract theorist, Thomas Hobbes, emphasized the flaws and cruelties in human nature. He argued that domestic society could only become bearable if we surrendered almost all of our rights and allowed an all-powerful “Leviathan” to rule. While a Leviathan could bring order to domestic politics, there could be no possibility of a Leviathan in international politics according to Hobbes. He expected the international realm to be one of lawless conflict and violence.⁷ Locke and Hobbes’ thinking provided the template for political thought in the 1700s, also known as the “Age of Reason” or “Enlightenment.” Voltaire, the great figure of the age, was a fervent admirer of John Locke. Even the oppositional figures of the “age of reason” took a groupist approach. The most famous of these, Jean Jacques Rousseau, argued that human ideals could only be realized in small groups. He claimed that any society larger than a medium-sized village would see a loss of common identity and a corresponding lack of civility. It was therefore inevitable, according to Rousseau, that all forms of international politics would involve conflict; the only legitimate political society was the small city-state similar to the Greek ideal.⁸

In the 1800s Hegel, the great German philosopher of historical progress, argued that all of human history was no more than the unfolding of the idea of freedom. However he argued that this unfolding could only occur within the confines of a nation state. He went so far as to announce that the source of morality was the state and following its interest was the only way to real-

ize a person's human potential. "The State consists in the march of God in the world," he wrote. International politics, therefore, would see continual strife and violence. For Hegel, this was good, as fighting for the state was one of the finest things a person could do.⁹ For Hegel, groupism was a positive ideal.

Earlier, I wrote that I would show how frequently groupism is assumed in Western political thought rather than claiming it is consciously proclaimed. We have looked at some of the greatest political thinkers of the classical and modern West and have seen that groupism is almost never opposed, is regularly assumed, and sometimes is actively proclaimed. Its status as an assumption in Western thought is clear. Exceptions, such as Kant, (see chapter 10) only prove the rule by their uniqueness and the problems they found in having their political projects accepted. The thinkers noted here are sufficient to indicate the embedded nature of groupism in Western political philosophy. When we are asked the question of what is the ideal society, we seem to automatically answer that it will be some sort of small group that will have to use force against outsiders. We never seem to say that the ideal society is one that holds out a possibility of political justice for humans.

Recent international political history and groupism

It is not just the assumptions, of course, but the practice of the West, that has been characterized by groupism, and in particular political nationalism. Of course to review the political history of the West would require an encyclopedia rather than the very brief overview offered here¹⁰. In this section we can highlight some key stages of the history of Western political practices so as to show how recent political nationalism is and how it has narrowed the scope of even Western political conceptions.

Early Greek political systems encouraged the assumptions of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. They consisted of small city states often at war with each other and with non-Greeks. These systems were replaced by a giant, unified multicultural Empire that Alexander the Great established by force. This was ironic to say the least, as Alexander had studied with Aristotle, but failed to learn the lesson about small communities. The Alexandrian Empire soon collapsed, and the next major political formation of Western history was the Roman Empire. This is interesting, as at its peak, it was also a multicultural, multiracial, multi-religious entity. The rights of Roman citizenship were eventually extended from the people of Rome to people from anywhere within the Empire, other than women and slaves. The dominating ideal was Romanitas, to be a good Roman, rather than to slice off a separate independ-

ent small community. Roman emperors came from many different regions in the Empire, not just Rome. To pick just one example from many, Diocletian, one of the most famous emperors, came from what is now Croatia. But the very idea of him fighting for the independence of Croatia was preposterous, and he is historically known as a Roman emperor, not a Croatian politician. In day-to-day imperial practice, the benefits of Roman law were supposed to give rights to all within the Empire, not just people born in Rome. The Roman political system was very far from ideal, but here we can note it represented a stage in Western history when broader ideals of political community than the national functioned. The one intellectual system that appeared congruent with the broader approach of Roman days was Stoicism. This Greek philosophy, which was later taken up by some Romans, held that all people contained a spark of the same divine fire and that moral duties extended to all humans, not just to tribal comrades. Stoicism influenced some major political actors in Rome but was never a widely popular philosophy within the Empire. Nonetheless the fall of the Roman Empire was not hailed as a chance for subject nations to be free but viewed with horror as a collapse of civilization!¹¹

The turmoil of the post-Roman world lasted for centuries, but for most of the “medieval” period people hankered after something like Roman unity rather than national separateness. The ideal of Christendom replaced the Roman ideal as a unifying concept for all people. The Papacy rose to political significance as an embodiment of this universalism. An institution called the Holy Roman Empire was also created to express the yearning to move toward a broader community. Despite the rhetoric of Papacy and Empire, however, these were fragile systems that failed to deliver basic political justice to most people. People had to depend on local feudal Lords for survival. These feudal leaders, from minor Lords up to Kings, were often in conflict, armed clashes or warfare between different regions or groups within the broader realm of Christendom were frequent. As well, of course, Papacy and Empire were themselves groupist when they came into conflict with other religions and Empires. But the point to note here is that in their political rhetoric and aspirations Pope and Emperor, and their respective supporters, were quite “universal” compared to today’s age of nationalism.

These shaky “semi-universal” European systems were finally torn apart by the Protestant Reformation (initiated in 1517). This ushered in a century of ferocious violence, climaxing with the brutality of the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648). Some new system had to be developed to stop the cycle of killing. As people finally began to tire of religious killing, a new form of political loyalty began to emerge. Thinkers began to argue that people should give their primary loyalty to their region or local sovereign and that people from

the same area should not kill each other over religious differences, as what they had in common was more important than what divided them. A first attempt to institute this approach came with the treaty of Westphalia, in 1648, which redrew the map of Europe and assigned sovereign rights to each area. The ruler of each area was to be sovereign, and the rights of Pope and Emperor to intervene were restricted.

This swing toward the concept of sovereignty coincided with a waning of religious faith and a rise of political nationalism. Nationalism was a new phenomenon. Earlier, people had given primary loyalty to Pope or Emperor, Catholic or Protestant, or the local lord. But over time an increasing number of writers and thinkers argued that something different—national identity—was the most important aspect of political life. Thinkers as diverse as Milton, Herder, Savigny, and Mazzini steadily convinced people that they shared a national identity and should be united in nation-states. Where a fourteenth-century Italian cultural figure such as the poet Dante could only speculate about a united Christendom in Europe, a nineteenth-century Italian cultural identity such as the composer Verdi was a passionate advocate of Italian unity.¹²

Gradually, people came to believe that national identity rather than religious affiliation was the most important identity in one's life. As Benedict Anderson states, a new identity was imagined for people, a national identity, and then activists set out to turn the national imagining into a political reality.¹³ Warfare provides the most brutal illustration of this. In the 1500s, people across Europe killed each other based on whether they were Catholic or Protestant. But as they imagined and created common national identities people would say, for instance, "Germans should not kill Germans over religious differences; we are all fellow Germans." Thus religious violence declined across Europe. But, as a replacement, people killed each other for national differences, so Frenchmen killing Germans and vice versa replaced Catholics and Protestants killing each other over the same geographic region. Throughout the nineteenth century, nation after nation rose, each declaring that it had existed forever; places such as Germany and Italy suddenly united into passionately nationalistic, unified political entities; and groups such as the Greeks fought for their "national" independence.¹⁴

By the twentieth century, nationalism had become so strong that the two world wars of that century surpassed even the ferocity of the wars of religion as people now tortured and slaughtered each other out of loyalty to national identity rather than religious identity. Catholic slaughtered Catholic and Protestant slaughtered Protestant across the trenches during World War I, as nationalism proved it had gained a stronger grip on people's minds than religion held. Treason replaced heresy as the crime most threatening to the es-

established order, and the national security agency replaced the inquisition as the extra legal agency engaged in ferreting out deviant thinkers and torturing them into conformity. Nation replaced religion as the inspiration to wage war.

From the nineteenth century through to the twenty-first century, this ceased to be a European phenomenon and became a world phenomenon. The European powers, by the nineteenth century well practiced in warfare, were able to expand outside Europe in the phenomenon known as imperialism. By the twentieth century, European Empires covered most of the world and had cowed most of the unconquered areas. But imperialism carried within it the seeds of its own destruction. This was the ideology of nationalism that the European Empires carried with them. Subject peoples everywhere absorbed this idea and rather than demanding political equality within multiethnic and multiracial cosmopolitan Empires (which nationalism likewise compelled most of their conquerors to deny them) as had occurred in the Roman Empire they demanded the same sacred identity as their conquerors, the right to a sovereign nation state. Soon subject peoples everywhere were organizing themselves into nations and demanding their freedom, which usually meant they formed a sovereign state. All over Asia, Africa, and South America, writers conjured up national identities and the newly invented nations fought for their independence. Across the world, figures as diverse as Sun Yat Sen, Kemal Ataturk, Jomo Kenyatta and Jan Smuts set out to convince people that they shared a national identity that had to be represented by a sovereign state designed along modern lines. By the end of the twentieth century, most Empires had dissipated, and we had today's world of sovereign states. Instead of moving from imperialism to humanity, however, we have moved from imperialism to sovereignty.

The one political movement that had attempted to stem the rise of political nationalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was Marxism. Karl Marx had insisted that economic relations were more important than ideas or culture. He believed the solidarity created by exploited people's economic status would cross national borders and that therefore the workmen of the world would unite. Marxist socialist movements therefore organized themselves as "Internationals" and expected to lead the worldwide working class in revolution. In the lead up to World War I, the leaders of the "Second International" (the first had collapsed due to internal squabbles) expected the workers of France and Germany to work together rather than fight. They were wrong. The workers, seduced by the ideology of nationalism, slaughtered each other in the hundreds of thousands and the "Second International" collapsed. Later during the twentieth century the Marxist movement found itself repeatedly succumbing to nationalism as Stalin pio-

neered the concept of “socialism in one country” and communist states such as Russia and China put their national identities ahead of “fraternal cooperation.”¹⁵

Thus in less than five hundred years, political nationalism has come to dominate not just European but world political organization. Even its opposition movement from within the West, Marxism, collapsed before it; although Marxism’s final death had other causes as well. The last few pages offer an overview of some key events, not a comprehensive history of every political movement in European history. The key point is that building on the base of groupist political philosophy found in the European tradition, nationalism has been able to sweep both Europe and the world in less than five hundred years. The book *Imagined Communities* by Benedict Anderson, which is listed in the bibliography, offers the best one-volume summary of the rise of political nationalism.

Nationalism’s victory has been so comprehensive that most people today are barely aware of its rise and regard it as some sort of unavoidable reality and bedrock of human society. It is not. It is simply the latest groupist fantasy that has blinded us to our common humanity. It is an “imagined identity.” While we do not need to abandon our national identities, we do need to remember that our national identities are less, not more, important than our human identities. Our national identities are meant to enrich our lives not to be an excuse to kill and impoverish others. It is our Western heritage that has imprisoned us in the false consciousness of the primacy and inevitability of groupist nationalism. The twentieth century saw hundreds of thousands of people lay down their lives for their nations in warfare and, of course, kill human beings from other nations. No other ideology has been able to arouse so many people to kill so many human beings for centuries.

Today, every form of politics is corrupted by this ideology. People in the wealthiest nations treat poverty relief as though it refers only to the impoverished of their wealthy lands while millions of people starve elsewhere. Meanwhile, Western countries’ constitutions grant “human rights” to citizens of those countries but not to humans. The poor and desperate are turned away when they seek to enter wealthy countries—the same wealthy countries that follow groupist policies to entrench their wealth and do nothing to build a legitimate international political system so that people elsewhere can have hope. Every country spends more on armaments than on foreign aid. Security and prosperity are achieved or conceptualized as achievable only by putting the interests of the group ahead of those of our fellow humans.

Thus we can see that groupism has been built into Western intellectual traditions for a long time, and in the last five hundred years, taking the form of nationalism, it has come to completely dominate Western political prac-

tices, which in turn have been exported to the rest of the world. To challenge the grip of groupism and political nationalism is to challenge the grip of Western ideologies upon us.

Western political science and groupism

The last few pages have probably offered more than enough to show the entrenched role of groupism in the Western contribution to the world, and in the state of the world today. But there are still a few important areas of which we must be aware. In political science departments, questions of international politics are usually studied under the heading of “international relations”; in some situations there is even a separate department with international relations in its name. Where political philosophy seeks to develop a vision of an ideal society, political science tries to discover the laws, or at least rules of thumb, that govern behavior in political societies. In the political science of international relations the dominant school of thought is known as realism. Its rules of thumb tend to dovetail with groupism by treating the sovereign state as the main and only conceivable subject of international politics. Thus where political philosophy idealizes the group, political science backs it up with a bogus science that tries to present a world of competing states as the only possible scientific reality.

If the hardheaded political scientist declares he has scientifically shown there can be no political justice in international politics then the ever-hopeful political philosopher must confine his or her visions of a better society and political legitimacy ideals to the realm of domestic politics. If political philosophy provides the political scientist with a conceptual world in which the only sources of political loyalty are states or other groups, the political scientist may well find himself looking at international relations from a perspective that assumes that the only sources of political legitimacy are states and, not surprisingly, all he can see in international politics is an endless battle for the national interest. The political philosophy and political science approaches are thus mutually reinforcing in trapping us within the false ideological world of groupism.

So realism as a political science of international relations also needs to be analyzed as an ideology of groupism to understand, and liberate ourselves from, its impact.

The political philosophers I discussed are all major figures, well known to many people today. Realism, by way of contrast, is dominated by academics; there are few eminent realists whose fame extends beyond the walls of university international relations departments. Whilst united by many com-

mon features, realists also have differences with each other. I will discuss two broad streams of realism rather than bore the reader with the numerous small differences that concern purely academic minds.

Realism is usually said to come in two broad schools: classical realism and neorealism; the latter is also sometimes referred to as structural realism.¹⁶ Classical realism focuses on the flaws in human nature. It argues that as humans always seek power, the states that humans lead will also do so. International politics, then, will become an arena in which promises are broken, agreements are ignored, and the strong will set out to exploit the weak. Force will always trump virtue. This is presented as a more-or-less inevitable consequence of man's insatiable drive for power. The only form of order that can occur in international politics will be a fleeting one, based on temporary convenience and balance of power considerations. Balance of power considerations should come into play, as powerful states will almost inevitably seek more power, thus posing a threat and compelling weaker states to form a balance of power alliance to contain the threat. Such a balance of power alliance will not be based on common principles but common interests, and it will collapse once the common interest, blocking a common enemy, evaporates. That is, with the fall of the common enemy. Thus, for instance, the alliance between the Soviet Union and the United States in World War 2 was based not on shared ideals but on opposing the common enemy, Nazi Germany, and collapsed shortly after the common enemy disappeared. At times, classical realists have claimed thinkers such as Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes as precursors, due to their emphasis on the role of amoral power-seeking behavior in politics. But classical realism did not emerge as a self-aware and distinctive school of thought until the mid-twentieth century. Its most famous exponent as such was Hans Morgenthau.¹⁷

At first glance, classical realism seems to offer some important advice: be aware of the imperfections of humans and do not imagine that a few professions of goodwill will be enough to establish a legitimate international political system. Such a caution is both sensible and necessary. I have argued that a legitimate international political system is something that can be achieved, not something that will just automatically fall into place. I have also distinguished between a legitimate system and one based on universal love. A legitimate international political system will be a great step forward, but it will not mean, nor does it require, that we all become morally perfect loving beings. But when classical realism moves beyond a moral caution to a general theory, it seems to run into contradictions.

If human "evil" destroys the chance of international political legitimacy, why should it not destroy domestic political legitimacy as well? Apparently

because evil, selfish people will give their unthinking loyalty to a state and its values, and therefore, accept some limitations on how “evil” they will be in seeking domestic power. These same people, however, could never give their loyalty to an international political system and so could never be bound by its values. But history, even Western history, shows people often giving their loyalty to international entities, such as the Roman Empire or the medieval Catholic Church, rather than to the nation state. Indeed figures as diverse as Diocletian and Thomas More (a Catholic from England) are famous and admired because they put their transnational loyalty before their national loyalty. Thomas More defied his national king, Henry the Eighth, rather than abandon his loyalty to the non-national belief system of Catholicism.

Likewise there is the question of why the evil, selfish people observed by classical realists would suddenly identify their interests with the state and do anything to advance the state’s interests. After all a rational, calculating, cynical, evil, power-seeking politician may well conclude that he would be better served by promoting an international system, such as the Roman Empire, and becoming emperor, than by breaking away and “idealistically” becoming the leader of his people’s struggle for freedom. The power-hungry evil people that realists say will ruin any international system in the name of their idealistic commitment to the nation state were all on the side of the Romans rather than Boadicea when a transnational Empire was established in Britain!

In short, classical realism does no more than restate the assumption of groupism. Human virtues will somehow stop at national boundaries and be replaced by evil conduct once we cross the national border (or some other groupist border). Classical realism offers no explanation of why this change will occur. In fact, its insistence on the propensity for evil in humanity should make it more difficult to accept groupism. If there is such a limited capacity to be loyal to ideals, it really raises the question of why people are loyal to the state. Perhaps loyalty to the state is such an embedded assumption for classical realism that it simply cannot imagine any other approach. This, however, is not an argument in favor of groupism but an assumption of groupism in its nationalist form. Classical realism offers nothing to oppose the idea that, as humans constantly redefine the class of people with which they feel solidarity, we can one day redefine it to include our fellow humans. I will write more about classical realism in later chapters, but at this point we can simply note that it maintains the nationalist version of the groupist assumption without offering a strong argument as to why we should accept the groupist assumption as the only approach to politics.

Neorealism offers a less-grandiose, more dry and technical vision. Neorealists do not bother with human nature and instead treat the state as an en-

tity, which, by definition, wishes to survive. To survive, the state must always be aware of the potential dangers from other states and so is driven into the same conduct that classical realists emphasize: amoral power balancing for the purpose of maintaining the state's existence as a distinct entity. The most well-known neorealist is Kenneth N. Waltz, although he prefers to call this view structural realism (I will stay with "neo"), as he claims it is the "structure" of international politics that compels states to behave the way they do.¹⁸ Waltz argues that each state, wishing to survive and unsure of other states' intentions, must maintain sufficient military power to protect itself. Every other state, therefore, must be aware of this potential threat and so must also prepare for war, creating in all the impression that each other is preparing for offensive war. In such an environment, balance of power politics are inevitable; each state must seek alliances to balance off the potential threat from the strongest state, and those alliances must in turn collapse as soon as the threat disappears since all that holds the allies together is the need to balance the threat. Indeed, Waltz has described the balance of power theory as the "only" theory of international relations.¹⁹

Neorealism is difficult to criticize in its own terms. If all that exists are states, and all they want to do is survive, neorealists do have reason to argue that all we will see is constantly shifting balance of power formations as each state puts its own security first. The problem with this is that states do not exist by a force of nature. They exist because people believe in them as political institutions, and they would cease to exist if people stopped believing in them as the highest form of political institution. There is no scientific or genetic basis by which we are all divided into states. As we have seen, sovereign states are simply a product of the expansion of the ideology of political nationalism. They are actually a quite recent phenomenon in human history.

The real issue here is what makes states or transnational institutions legitimate. We have briefly discussed the sequence of ideological changes which gave rise to the sovereign state²⁰. We have seen how people's sense of identity changes over time and different types of political institutions rise and fall as people's loyalty changes. There was no evidence that sovereign states were somehow compelled to exist by a force of nature as the only possible human political institution; they are not. We have already noted some reasons for preferring a legitimate international political system to a world of competing states. People having accommodated so many other identity transformations over the years it seems odd to just assume that they will never go beyond sovereign states and never give priority to their human identity. Neorealism offers no reason for its claim that people will go on believing the state is the most appropriate political institution and never switch their sup-

port to anything else. It is virtually saying that if we accept the assumption of groupism as a fixed and unchanging reality, in the form of states, then balance of power politics follows²¹. In fact, Waltz himself emphasizes this point by referring to units rather than states; he wants his theory to apply to any groupist situation.

But this is only a logical development of the implications of groupism, rather than a reason for treating groupism as foundational. Waltz is, in effect, saying; if groupist units exist they will compete and form balance of power configurations. This is not a proof of the viability or eternity of groupism. It is no more than a statement of the logical implications of a policy of groupism. It boils down to saying, if there is groupism; then there will be groupism. Here the groupist assumption in Western thought has been carried to its highest form. It is presented as an eternal, unchanging, and unquestionable fact about politics, and a “social science” is developed on the basis of this eternal, unchanging, and unquestionable fact. The social science then predicts the recurrence of this unchanging fact as states balance power to maintain their existence. But it is not an eternal fact; it is an assumption with no evidence to back it up. Neorealism thus becomes the theory that, if you assume states always exist; they will always exist. This is hardly an impressive piece of logic. It is not a scientific statement of the inevitability of competing states; it is a piece of subjective advocacy in favor of the great idol of groupism.

In fact, we can see that realism itself is not really a social science but an ideology. Once the world was divided into competing states, realism arose to try to legitimize this situation by pretending that the existence of states is some sort of unavoidable scientific fact. It is not. But to turn the imagined identity of our nations into an unshakeable eternal reality, we needed some sort of pseudoscience to prove it was part of an eternal reality. Realism is that pseudoscience. Far from being social science, realism is simply an ideology that treats the contingent reality of today as a permanent and unchanging truth. It provides pseudoscientific doctrines in an attempt to legitimize this just as pseudoscience is sometimes used to justify other false ideologies, such as racism. The emperor of today—the sovereign state—has no clothes. The realist clothing turns out to be imaginary.

From Socrates to Waltz, the assumption of Groupism has gone unexamined in Western thought. As an unexamined presumption, it has been presented as a scientific fact about human society and used to oppose projects to build a better world through developing a more just international political system. By looking at that presumption through the eyes of a theory of international political legitimacy, we can more clearly see that it is just that: A

presumption that cannot be substantiated. Rather than a scientific fact, it is simply a false idol.

Identity and groupism

In this section we briefly go beyond politics look at the issue of identity. This is necessary for a fuller understanding of the role of groupism in our lives. Groupism can play such a strong role in people's lives that they allow their group identity to overcome, rather than complement, their human identity.

Groupism has become so fundamental to many people's sense of identity that it is part of their very sense of being. Such people experience a threat to their group as a threat to their very sense of self. Since those outside the group are by definition beings of a different class, the threatened person is then prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to protect the group. Even small threats can be blown up into major scares because, at this ideological level, these acts threaten our sense of identity.

A simple example of this from the past would be burning or otherwise defiling the cross. In reality, such an act amounted to nothing more than the destruction of a piece of wood. But because that act represented an ideological challenge to the Christian's sense of identity, he experienced deep fear and unease. In the past (and occasionally still today) such behavior would meet with outrage and severe punishment. A similar situation arises around national symbols. The burning of a flag is no more than the destruction of a piece of cloth. But because burning the flag represents an ideological challenge to the nationalist's sense of identity, he experiences deep fear and unease; flag burning often meets with outrage, and in many countries, severe punishment.

Since groups such as sovereign states and religions have become the primary field in which we believe our ideals and our identity can be realized, they have become the benchmarks by which we define and realize ourselves as human beings. Our group identity is taken for granted as the locus of our human identity. And with this group as the locus of our identity, defending that group—usually the religion or the nation—becomes the most important thing and the only thing worth killing and dying for. As the most important bearer of our identity these groups can legitimize the ultimate discrimination against others: killing. In the past, this was especially true in regard to one's religion. In medieval Europe, for example, if you killed someone, you had done a terrible thing and were considered a murderer . . . unless you happened to have killed for a religious purpose. In that case, killing someone labeled a heretic or heathen made you a hero. Likewise, if you died for your

religion, your life was not wasted and you were praised as a martyr. Today, the nation has largely usurped religion. As a rule of thumb, if you kill someone today you will be regarded as a murderer and someone who has done a terrible thing . . . unless you wear your country's uniform. In that case, killing the "other"—your fellow human being—makes you a hero, and you will be praised and honored for your actions. Likewise, you are a martyr and a hero if you die for your country; your body will be bought home and buried with honor.

In addition to legitimizing warfare and mass killings, these group identities develop agencies to prohibit ideas that challenge the group. Medieval Christianity produced the inquisition, which because it was not governed by normal law, often engaged in cruel and demented tortures in its search for unbelievers. It was allowed such power because the group, medieval Christianity, was the bearer of people's identity, so ultimate power had to be given to the people whose job was to find and remove ideological threats to the group. Ideological threats were the greatest danger because, of course, they threatened the very belief system that maintained the group's existence.

Today we see sovereign states engaged in a similar process. In many countries the national security/intelligence agency is either above the law, or has been granted greater intrusive powers than other policing agencies, and is allowed to engage in secret actions in its search for the modern version of heresy: Anything that threatens the national interest. The victims of such agencies often have about the same rights as inquisition victims. They cannot seek the protection of law and, as events in Abu Ghraib prison remind us, are subject to torture and other humiliation just as victims of the inquisition once were. Such modern agencies even produce bogus threats such as the inquisition once did; instead of a ruthless search for witches and heretics, they provide the ideological justification with a ruthless search for weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Even the idea of a threat to the group is enough to justify warfare and violence.

Because the group becomes the bearer of our very sense of identity, it is only natural that defending the "group" becomes the one thing that can justify killing others. In such cases, our very sense of self is being defended. Likewise, dying for the group is to die for a transcendent cause that goes on sustaining life for your fellow nationals or coreligionists long after your life has been sacrificed.

To test this argument about political groups and identity, try to think of another circumstance in which you will not simply be excused but become a hero for killing large numbers of people. Or simply imagine another circumstance in which large numbers of people will come forward and be prepared to sacrifice their lives. When we take religion and nationalism out of the pos-