

The Routledge Companion to Social and Political Philosophy



Edited by Gerald Gaus and
Fred D'Agostino

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Gerald Gaus and Fred D'Agostino



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PREFACE

In compiling this *Companion to Social and Political Philosophy*, our aim was to combine comprehensive coverage and in-depth analysis. Typically, reference works must choose one or the other, or compromise between the two. The typical encyclopedia provides comprehensive coverage but sacrifices on depth; some recent handbooks go deep into fifteen or twenty issues, but ignore most of social and political philosophy. Routledge and, in particular, our wonderful editor Andrew Beck, has enabled us to avoid this dilemma of handbooks. Our sixty-nine 6,000-word chapters carefully examine almost all facets of social and political philosophy.

Because current political philosophy is so closely tied to the great historical figures, Part I provides studies of the giants of western political philosophy, as well as analyses of nonwestern political thought, something missing in many handbooks. There follows a comprehensive examination of political theories and ideologies, from anarchism through liberalism, republicanism and conservatism to Marxism, environmentalism and feminism. Part III is devoted to a central concern of recent analytic political philosophy—the normative grounding of political thought (contract-centered, consequentialist, perfectionist, pluralist, virtue-based and natural law). The *Companion* next analyzes what is, perhaps, the dominant debate in political philosophy over the last forty years, the nature of distributive justice. Rather than, as in some reference works, having a single chapter on distributive justice, the *Routledge Companion to Social and Political Philosophy* has eight chapters exploring the main proposals discussed today. We then move to another substantive issue that is at the forefront of contemporary political philosophy, the nature of the nation-state and the global order. Again, rather than one summary chapter, the *Companion's* six chapters explore borders and secession, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, global justice, and war.

From Plato onwards political philosophy has been an inquiry into the nature of the concepts that structure our thinking of the social and political world. Having considered justice in such depth in the fourth part, Part VI provides examinations of other core concepts: equality, freedom, autonomy, power, authority/legitimacy, democracy, rights, and toleration. We then move on to studies of different methods of analyzing social and political life, from rational and social choice theories and evolutionary models to pragmatism, discourse theory, and postmodernism. The final part of the *Companion* is devoted to substantive issues that are fundamental to contemporary social and political philosophy, but are often lost in the focus on distributive justice and the state. We are delighted with the range of issues that are examined: education, health, the family, work, punishment, terrorism, paternalism in markets, and religion in public life.

The *Companion*, we believe, is the definitive reference work, for those beginning their study of social and political philosophy, those who are expanding their interest

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to new areas and concerns, and those who wish to review current thought in almost any area. We are deeply grateful to Taylor & Francis for their generous support of this unique undertaking and, most of all, to our contributors who have made this such an excellent work.

Gerald Gaus
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