

## CHAPTER VII

### FROM "JUST SAVINGS" TO "JUST PROVISION"

At the close of the previous chapter we were, I trust, left with a rather clear indication of how Rawls's attempt to derive a just savings principle succeeds and how it fails. Stated briefly, Rawls's predominant difficulty is his failure to supply a valid and defensible motive for the parties in the original position to comply with principles embodying justice between generations. He has failed, that is, successfully to convert a manifestly valid *abstract* principle of just savings into a tenable principle of *practical* justice.

In this chapter, I will propose a motivation assumption from which one might, in the context of Rawls's general theory of justice, derive a practical principle of "just provision" for posterity that is both broader in scope and more extensive in time than the "principles of just savings" that are proposed by Rawls. I will not prolong this already lengthy dissertation with elaborate attempts to "prove" the efficacy of this assumption. Rather, I will offer a suggestion as to how the requisite assumption might be formulated and validated.

Before turning directly to the question of the *motive* for just provision, I will examine the *concept* of just provision. In particular, I will point out that the future course of events might be affected, directed, and influenced in some morally significant ways that are scarcely acknowledged by Rawls. These additional modes of influence upon the future will be incorporated into the concept of just provision. In the section which follows, I will note some ecological aspects of the posterity question which are virtually ignored by Rawls. He treats this exclusion as something of a procedural decision. However, I will suggest that an introduction of relevant ecological considerations into Rawls's theory might severely challenge or alter his conclusions concerning the duty to posterity.

In the remaining sections of this chapter, I return to the question of the motivation for, and the derivation and justification of, a broad principle of just provision for posterity. First, I propose, on the basis of assorted general data, impressions, theories, and "considered judgments," that healthy, functioning personalities are naturally motivated to identify with and value the long-term flourishing and endurance of certain identifiable places, communities, artifacts, institutions, and ideals. Next, I will suggest that this motive, which I call "self-transcendence," qualifies as a "primary good" and thus as an operational premise in the original position. In the section which follows, I will indicate that the motive of self-transcendence appears to be implicit in some of Rawl's accounts of moral psychology and "goodness as rationality." In the concluding sections, I will suggest, rather broadly, informally and tentatively, that the need for self-transcendence might admirably qualify as the sought-for "motivation assumption" that would prompt the parties of the original position to adopt first an *abstract* and then a *practical* principle of just provision. The dissertation will close with a brief summary section.

#### 41. Beyond "Just Savings."

*The trouble with "savings".* Rawls's choice of the term "just savings" to describe his rule of justice between generations seems, on first encounter, to be less than fully appropriate to its task. Moreover, it does not wear well with repeated use. Surely, the reader might protest, there is more to the duty to posterity than mere "savings!" Rawls appears to agree, as he points out that:

Each generation must not only preserve the gains of culture and civilization, and maintain intact those just institutions that have been established, but it must also put aside in each period of time a suitable amount of real capital accumulation. This saving may take various forms from net investment in machinery and other means of production to investment in learning and education. (p. 285)

(But note how, even here, the emphasis is directed toward the "putting aside.")

Our continual encounter with the term "just savings" may incline us to believe that provision for the future involves resources which, like the proverbial cake, may be "had" now or kept until later but not both. In many cases (e.g., that of depletable natural resources), this correctly describes the circumstances. However, in still other cases, the "cake paradigm" manifestly does *not* apply. Rawls acknowledges some of these non-depletable "savings" (e.g., the preservation of culture and the maintenance of just institutions). Others he does not.

Consider first the cultural "capital" described by Rawls; i.e., the "gains of culture and civilization" and just institutions. Surely these are not "saved" by setting them aside. They are not "used up" as they are employed and utilized. Quite the contrary, the more knowledge, skills, artistic expression, scientific research, and just institutions are "used," the more valuable they become through use. To be sure, *some* investment in buildings, printing, formal education, and so forth is necessary to maintain these cultural assets (as is well-known by any school superintendent seeking to meet his budget). Even so, for the most part, flourishing societies best "save" and "preserve" just institutions by utilizing them. There are additional modes of provision for the future about which Rawls has little to say, and which can only with considerable verbal license be called "savings." We will now consider just a few of these.

*Just anticipations.* Earlier, I indicated that moral responsibility applies to circumstances which the agent can *foresee* and *affect*. (Thus, we noted, with the rapid acceleration in this century of scientific knowledge and technological capability, the time span of reliable foresight and the scale of significant technological, social, and ecological impact have greatly expanded.) I would now suggest that we extend this rule of moral responsibility to include not only the duty to act (or to refrain from acting) within the range of foresight and ability, but also a duty to increase this range of knowledge and effective control of future circumstances. This expansion of knowledge and power, beyond the needs of present beneficiaries for the sake of the welfare of future generations, I call "the duty of just anticipation." Examples of such a duty would include technological and environmental impact studies which seek to assess the consequences of projects and policies several hundred years into the

future. To be sure, such studies exact costs, in research and manpower, and in the delay and even the cancellation of projects that are beneficial in the short-term. But clearly, it would be a strange twist of language to treat the costs of such "just anticipation" as a type of "savings."

The duty of just anticipation entails a responsibility to foresee developing crises and to enact appropriate remedies while the time is available to act effectively. In our earlier discussion of "the fossil fuel subsidy" and "the limits to growth," we considered some "distant early warnings" and the implied duties to act immediately to forestall impending and disastrous ecological and technological traps (see p. 192, above).

*Just forbearance.* As often as not, "future studies" (or "anticipations") will indicate what we must not do, rather than what we might do. To cite two familiar examples, studies of atmospheric physics and chemistry may determine that we face a choice between having our grandchildren protected from ultra-violet radiation or having our generation enjoy the convenience of aerosol sprays and supersonic aircraft. Nuclear fission power may offer a parallel case. A decision to favor future generations would, in these instances, require *just forebearances* on the part of those now living.

A policy of "just forebearance" is a conservative approach to provision for the future, often favored by environmentalists. The ecosystem, they argue, is a network of complex and subtle inter-relationships, the intricacies and ramifications of which we can never fully comprehend. Rather than carelessly toss aside components of this system (e.g., species and nutrients), we should approach the planetary life community with humility and care. If our information is incomplete, it is better to postpone, or even to abandon, projects that threaten the integrity of the system (more about this shortly).

From a broader perspective than that of the environmentalist, Daniel Callahan offers a suggestive set of general rules of "just forebearance":

- a. Do nothing which could jeopardize the very existence of future generations.
- b. Do nothing which could jeopardize the possibility of future generations exercising those fundamental rights necessary for a life of human dignity.
- c. If it seems necessary, in the interests of the existing rights of the living, to behave in ways which could jeopardize the equivalent rights of those yet to be born, do so in that way which would as far as possible minimize the jeopardy.
- d. When trying to determine whether present behavior will in fact jeopardize future life calculate in as responsible and sensitive a manner as one would in trying to determine whether an act with uncertain consequences would be harmful to one's own children. If you would not conjure up the possibility of magical solutions occurring to save your own children at the last moment from the harmful consequences of your gambling with the future, do not do so even with future generations. (p. 279)

The prevailing rule, in the duty of just forbearance, is "preserve the options." Writes Delattre: "It seems fairly clear that no generation should needlessly foreclose the decisions of future generations by destroying the options which would be available to them under sustaining environmental conditions (p. 256)." Like "just anticipation," the concept of "just forbearance" seems to be well beyond the confining notion of "just savings."

*Just restitution.* In some cases a generation may find itself the inheritor, or even the creator, of a wasteland. Because of warfare, economic exploitation, lack of planning, or ecological blunders, the prospects of future generations may be found to have been diminished. It may then become the duty of that generation to restore and to renew the land, the resource base, the labor force, the economic system, or whatever it is that was previously devastated. Programs of reforestation, public works, urban renewal, mass public education, or population control, may fall under this category. In such cases, effort and resources are invested not simply to *protect* the expectations of future generations but to *restore* expectations that had been decreased, due to the ignorance or greed of the present generations, or that of its predecessor.

The burden of just restitution upon a society may be heavy; so much so, perhaps, that such restitution may better be classified not as a duty (according to the principles of justice) but as *supererogatory virtue* ("beyond the call of duty"). Indeed, if the Club of Rome studies, and others, are to be believed, *this* generation apparently faces such a circumstance. As John Passmore observes: "We now stand, if the more pessimistic scientists are right, in a special relationship to the future; unless we act, posterity will be helpless to do so. This imposes duties on us which would not otherwise fall to our lot (p. 98)." This burden of responsibility raises an acute problem for Rawls's theory. Supererogatory acts, he holds, "are not recognized" by the concept of justice or natural duty. A person who performs such an act, he continues, "does not invoke the exemption which the natural duties allow. For, while we have a natural duty to bring about a great good, say, if we can do so relatively easily, we are released from this duty when the cost to ourselves is considerable." (p. 117) Furthermore, we will recall, Rawls holds that there is "an upper bound on how much a generation can be asked to save for the welfare of later generations. The just savings principle acts as a constraint on the rate of accumulation. Each age is to do its fair share in achieving the conditions necessary for just institutions and the fair value of liberty; but beyond this more cannot be required (p. 298)." Unfortunately, as Passmore points out, the demands of the present worldwide emergency may stretch Rawls's principle of just savings beyond the breaking point:

The sacrifice required . . . may be heroic, and Rawls's theory . . . leaves no room for the heroic sacrifice. Yet if the conservationists are right it is precisely such a heroic sacrifice we are now called upon to make, a sacrifice far beyond anything our ancestors had to make. And this transforms the situation. (p. 87)

## 42. Just Savings and the Ecological Perspective

Our final challenge to the concept of "just savings" involves ecological issues. In the course of this dissertation we have had several opportunities to examine the ecological aspects and implications of the issue of the duty to posterity. However, most of these references have appeared through my initiative, since Rawls has virtually nothing to say concerning "the place of nature in man's world" to borrow Paul Shepard's aptly sardonic phrase (1969, p. 5). Rawls explains this omission in a single lengthy and carefully phrased paragraph late in the book:

We should recall here the limits of a theory of justice. Not only are many aspects of morality left aside, but no account is given of right conduct in regard to animals and the rest of nature. A conception of justice is but one part of a moral view. While I have not maintained that the capacity for a sense of justice is necessary in order to be owed the duties of justice, it does seem that we are not required to give strict justice anyway to creatures lacking this capacity. But it does not follow that there are no requirements at all in regard to them, nor in our relations with the natural order. Certainly it is wrong to be cruel to animals and the destruction of a whole species can be a great evil. The capacity for feelings of pleasure and pain and for the forms of life of which animals are capable clearly imposes duties of compassion and humanity in their case. I shall not attempt to explain these considered beliefs. They are outside the scope of the theory of justice, and it does not seem possible to extend the contract doctrine so as to include them in a natural way. A correct conception of our relations to animals and to nature would seem to depend upon a theory of the natural order and our place in it. One of the tasks of metaphysics is to work out a view of the world which is suited for this purpose; it should identify and systemize the truths decisive for these questions. How far justice as fairness will have to be revised to fit into this larger theory is impossible to say. But it seems reasonable to hope that if it is sound as an account of justice among persons, it cannot be too far wrong when these broader relationships are taken into consideration. (p. 512)

In this section, I would like to explore the reasonableness of this hope. Surely, if a clear, analytical cleavage can be cut between policies of fair human association (i.e., rules of justice), and policies of dealing with nature, then Rawls is correct not to open himself to what would have to be a difficult and lengthy digression. If, however, there is no clear boundary between the implications of basic ecological concepts on the one hand, and the conditions and rules of just association on the other, then he may be excluding considerations that are not only not beyond the scope of justice as fairness but may be in conflict with it. At the very best, Rawls may be overlooking some notions and judgments that could extend and enrich his theory.

This late in the dissertation I can only hope to raise a few pertinent questions. The issue of the ecological dimension of justice is, by Rawls's explicit choice, outside the scope of his book, and I have more than enough to do in dealing with issues that he *does* choose to raise. However, since Rawls's exclusion of nature from his system may have significant bearing upon his conclusions

concerning justice between generations, particularly his rule of "just savings," at least some attention should be drawn to this issue.

*Rawls and nature.* While Rawls gives little direct attention to ecological issues, he does, in the course of his long book, leave clues as to his covert attitude toward nature and toward the moral significance thereof. Many of these attitudes appear to be at considerable variance with key components of the ecological point of view. The following are a few of the ecologically significant attitudes that I detect in *A Theory of Justice*.

(a) "The Infinite Earth." We may assume, of course, that Rawls understands that the earth has limited space and resources. Yet, in careless moments, he writes as if this were not the case. As we noted in the previous chapter (§37), he writes of just societies and their institutions "preserving their material base" (p. 288) as if this were a steady-state enterprise, unaffected by resource depletion and dispersal. He gives no acknowledgment of the increasing costs, due to entropy, of maintaining communication and social order, in addition to "the material base." Furthermore, the finitude of the earth and its resources has direct bearing upon population policies. Yet, in Rawls's discussion of "just savings," the topic of population is scarcely, if ever, raised.

(b) Man as *apart from* nature. Man, says Paul Shepard, "did not arrive in the world as though disembarking from a train in the city" (p. 4). On the contrary, if the evolutionists and ecologists are to be believed, our bodies and brains have developed through constant interaction with our physical environment and within the life community of which we are a part. From the DNA in each of our cells to the sea water in our blood stream, we are, as Barry Commoner puts it, the result of countless natural experiments through over two billion years of research and development (1971, p. 43). Yet, as Charles Harris points out, "both utilitarianism and Rawls's theory . . . involve themselves in a view of nature as manipulated and 'corrected' by man, which lends itself reluctantly to [a] . . . regard for nature in its own right" (p. 142). This abstraction from nature is quite apparent in the quotation from *A Theory of Justice* that opens this section. In that passage, Rawls expresses, quite clearly, his belief that a theory of justice can be stated apart from a consideration of man's natural condition. "A correct conception of our relations to animals and to nature," he writes, "would seem to depend upon a theory of the natural order and our place in it" (p. 512). But such a theory is not presented by Rawls and coordinated with his theory of justice. He considers the question of "the natural order and our place in it" to be a separate, and separable, issue.

(c) "The whole is understood in terms of its parts." This characterization of justice as fairness is too simple and uncompromising to be entirely fair to Rawls. Even so, it is not without some application to his theory. After all, justice as fairness involves an attempt, through the device of the original position, to determine rules of justice for *all*, through a calculation of maximum expectation and minimum risks of *each*. This propensity of Rawls to "reduce wholes to parts" bothers Lawrence Tribe, who questions Rawls's willingness "to reason about human society only, leaving aside all questions of what might be called 'ecological morality' despite the possible (and indeed plausible) inseparability of the two at some important levels" (p. 94). In contradistinction to this "reductive"

mode of moral analysis, an "ecological ethic" argues that the value of the *part* must be answered in terms of the *whole*.

(d) Environmental goods are not included in Rawls's list of "just savings." It would appear from the preceding remarks that Rawls's general methods and presuppositions are incompatible with basic ecological concepts. (Unfortunately, in this regard Rawls is like many, and perhaps most, moral philosophers of the Western tradition since the Renaissance (Cf. White, 1967, and Passmore, 1974, Ch. 1). However, Rawls's disregard for ecological considerations goes beyond this, for he fails even to mention environmental data and concepts when they might simply and appropriately be introduced into his system. A noteworthy example of this neglect is the absence of environmental "goods" from his list of "savables" to be set aside, and/or preserved for the benefit of future generations. As we will recall, Rawls's inventory includes "the gains of culture and civilization," "just institutions," "real capital accumulation" (e.g., "machinery and other means of production," "investment in learning and education" (p. 285). Missing from this last are such "bequests" as abundant land (i.e., not overpopulated), unspoiled wilderness, clean air and water, an ozone shield in the stratosphere, the absence of radioactive wastes in the lithosphere, and so forth. Interestingly, as I pointed out in the previous section, just provision for *these* goods is less a matter of "savings" and more a matter of "anticipation" and "forbearance."

(e) The ecosystem as a primary good. The primary goods, says Rawls, are those goods that would be desired whatever else might be desired. These include, of course, the "goods" that sustain all other goods. Now we can assume that a wise and knowledgeable contractor (e.g., a party in the original position) would not fail to "desire" that which he clearly and objectively *needed*. Furthermore, it should be clear that none of the primary goods listed by Rawls, either "natural" or "social" could be obtained on a ruined planet; not health, not vigor, not liberty, not opportunity, not wealth. Rawls's primary goods sustain the various individual personal goods, but a functioning ecosystem sustains the primary goods. Thus it is the most "primary" of these primary goods. With all general knowledge at their disposal, surely the parties in the original position would know this. Rawls, however, has neglected to take note of this crucial fact.

*An alternative: the ecological perspective.* The ecological point of view opposes Rawls on each point outlined above. Drawing from prevailing concepts and laws of *Ecology*, the science of the structure, function, and maintenance of life communities, this position holds: (a) the earth is finite, containing a limited amount of resources and importing only the radiant energy from the sun from which all life-supporting energy is derived, either directly or indirectly. (b) Man is an integral part of nature, and thus cannot be adequately understood *apart* from nature. In other words, a part of the world ecosystem (e. g., human society) can be fully understood only in terms of the whole system. (c) Human goods can be obtained and sustained only through the support of a thriving ecosystem, thus (d) responsible provision for the future implies a preservation of such an ecosystem.

We are at the borders, now, of the rich, provocative, and timely topic of "ecological ethics."<sup>1</sup> It would be tempting to move ahead and to explore this fascinating issue, but this is a temptation that must be resisted, for otherwise we would soon be drawn far away from the concerns and objectives of this

chapter and dissertation. Instead, we will examine a few clear and prominent implications of the ecological point of view (as sketched above), for the issue of "justice between generations" and the challenge thus raised for Rawls's just savings principle.

*The ecological perspective and just provision.* It should not be difficult to begin to draw from the ecological point of view a policy of provision for future generations. The basic, prevailing rule would be: "*Preserve the Ecosystem!*" This means, in turn, "preserve the *stability* of the system." Furthermore, since, according to ecological law, stability is a function of species diversity, the basic maxim implies that species diversity also be protected. In addition, a policy of ecosystem maintenance would entail a protection of the system from chemical and physical disruption; for instance, atmospheric and soil standards must be sustained, nutrient cycles kept intact, foreign and toxic substances quarantined, etc.

All this must be done, says the ecologist, not simply to serve man's ulterior, artificial purposes, but for the sake of the "planetary organism" of which man is a part. To put it another way, mankind's dominant purpose *should* be to be a functioning and sustaining part of the world ecosystem. If the present generation fulfills this duty, future generations will be able to take care of themselves. But should the planetary ecosystem be allowed to unravel, then mankind will have no future beyond the collapse of its life-support system.

Significantly, this "morality of planetary citizenship" implies a "duty to posterity" that is of the longest duration. It is a duty to serve the future, not only of one's progeny, civilization, or even species, but of a life community, the career of which may endure for billions of years.

*Is there room for accommodation?* How does the duty to "preserve the system" stand against Rawls's "just savings principle" (i.e., the duty to save the gains of culture, just institutions, and material and non-material "capital")? Superficially, there appears to be no direct inconsistency; but this is only because Rawls has stated his "savables" in terms of the highest level of abstraction. Once we begin to specify the *content* of these "gains of culture" and of this "capital," we might encounter conflicts aplenty. But beyond these areas of possible disagreement, there is the pervasive matter of *priority*. "Duty to the ecosystem" appears nowhere in Rawls's theory. To the ecologically oriented moralist, it is of supreme importance. This difference alone would be certain to raise fundamental disagreement between a Rawlsian policy of "just savings" and an ecologist's program of "just preservation."

Is there a possibility of a compromise? Perhaps there is. Some convergence might be accomplished if Rawls would include "maintenance of the ecosystem" in his index of primary goods. Since there is strong and, I believe, sufficient empirical evidence to support the idea that a functioning ecosystem is necessary to most, and perhaps all, of Rawls's primary goods, it is hard to imagine how he could further deny its presence on the list. Put another way, the parties in the original position may be presumed to be aware of the general laws of ecology and the biological prerequisites of human life and health. Accordingly, if what I have sketched about the ecological perspective is valid, and if the parties would, in fact, have concern for the welfare of *all* generations, it follows then that a rational



policy of just provision would necessarily encompass a duty to preserve the integrity of the ecosystem -- the life community of this planet.

A combination and synthesis of justice as fairness with the ecological perspective clearly seems to be warranted, and even *required*. But is it *possible*? Would not an attempt to accommodate the disparate, and perhaps conflicting elements of these perspectives unravel the elegant system that Rawls has so carefully assembled? I suspect that it might. Regretfully, I must not attempt a justification of this suspicion since such an exercise would require the careful presentation of "ecological ethics" that I have agreed to exclude from this section. This intriguing digression will therefore be left unpursued.

*"Just savings" and "just provision:" a summary.* "Anticipations," "forbearances," "restitution," "ecological integrity" -- clearly, this list of "just provisions" could be extended. However, I trust that I have made my point: the range of appropriate moral responses to the needs and rights of the unborn cannot appropriately be described as "just savings." For this reason, I have chosen the broader term of "just provision." Yet, even *within* the restricted realm of "savings," there are large and persistent questions: "Savings" of *what*? Of Goods? Resources? Skills? Machinery? Mores? Social structures? Economic systems? The needs vary according to the time and circumstances of history. Thus we are led to ask: what rules and principles are to guide our selection from this inventory of "savables"? And when we extend the realm of provision for the future to include anticipation, forbearances, etc., the problem expands accordingly. I will not, of course, attempt in this brief space to answer this question. I might, however, close with one suggestion. The various modes of "just provision" (e.g., savings, anticipations, forbearances, etc.) have variable "cost-benefit ratios."<sup>2</sup> As historical and social circumstances differ, some types of provision will yield more benefits from posterity at reduced costs to the living. Indeed, some types of provision enjoy a favorable cost--benefit ratio in almost any condition of society. The preservation of just institutions may be the best example of this. Risk-aversion may be another factor that is relevant to the choice of a policy of just provision. If so, "just forbearance" may be well recommended as a key feature of such a policy.

All too soon, I must terminate this analysis. It is merely a superficial sketch of the sort of critical work that must be done, by policy analysts, social theorists, social planners, ecologists, and moral philosophers, if we are to obtain manageable conceptual grasp of the issue of the duty to posterity. Rawls has chosen to focus his attention on only a small portion of the conceptual realm of just provision. As I shall suggest later in this chapter, he did not need to do this. Within his general theory may be found abundant means with which to devise a much more inclusive and compelling principle of justice between generations.

### 43. "Self Transcendence": A Proposal <sup>a</sup>

In the previous chapter I concluded that the "heads of families condition" is unacceptable in the original position as a motive for just savings. It seems, then, that we must find another motivation assumption. How are we to proceed? Rawls's meta-ethics offers some guidance: we must, he suggests, look to our moral sense and our "considered moral judgments." In addition, we must draw upon general information concerning moral psychology, ethical theory, social dynamics, anthropology, history, and so forth. Such will be the task of this section. However, because I must search a broad and extensive field of data and opinion, and summarize my findings in a relatively brief space, my presentation must of necessity be superficial and impressionistic. Many important books and some splendid careers have been devoted to the study, explication, and validation of the need for self-transcendence, or of key elements thereof. This late in the dissertation, I will not pretend to add significantly to this fund of data and insight. There will be no original research or elaborate proofs in the following account. Rather, I will attempt to evoke in the reader a sense of recognition of a familiar psycho-social phenomenon, and hope that with this recognition, he will agree that I am denoting, by "self transcendence," a significant, fundamental, and widespread feature, both of human moral and social experience and of human culture and history.

(The term "self transcendence," bears misleading connotations that should be promptly and explicitly dispelled. I choose to define the term naturalistically; i.e., in terms of identifiable, commonplace, and publicly recognizable human experience and behavior. No subtle, mystical, ontological interpretations are intended here. "Spirit substance," "the Oversoul," "Platonic Ideas," "absolute Mind," none of these, or other, metaphysical concepts are applicable to, or entailed by, the term "self transcendence" as I choose to interpret and apply it in this dissertation.)

*The concept of self transcendence.* By claiming that there is "a need for self transcendence," I am proposing that, as a result of the psycho-developmental sources of the self and the fundamental dynamics of social experience, well-functioning human beings identify with, and seek to further, the well-being, preservation, and *endurance* of communities, locations, causes, artifacts, institutions, ideals, etc., which are (of course!) outside themselves and which they hope will flourish beyond their own lifetimes. John Donne, then, spoke for all mankind when he wrote: "No man is an illand, intire of itselfe."

This claim has a reverse side to it; namely, that individuals who *lack* a sense of self-transcendence are acutely impoverished in that they lack, to quote Rawls, "certain fundamental attitudes and capacities included under the notion of humanity" (p. 488)<sup>3</sup>. Such individuals are said to be *alienated* -- both from themselves and from their community.

"Self transcendence" describes a *class* of feelings which give rise to a variety of activities. It is no small ingredient in the production of great works of art and literature, in the choice of careers in

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<sup>a</sup>An expanded version of this section was published under the title "Why Care About the Future," in my anthology *Responsibilities to Future Generations*, Prometheus, 1981.

public service, education, scientific research, and so forth. In all this variety, however, there is a central, generic motive; namely, for the self to be a part of, to favorably affect and to value for itself the well-being and endurance of something beyond that is *not* oneself.

There are two aspects of self transcendence that are of special interest to us in this dissertation. First, self transcendence is manifested in an interest in and a concern for events and circumstances that will obtain well beyond the lifetime of the individual. Second, the need for self transcendence is sufficiently fundamental to human experience and motivation that it might qualify as a *primary good*, and thus be relevant to the deliberations of the parties in the original position. The significance of self-transcendence to Rawls's theory of justice and, in particular, to his account of justice between generations, now becomes apparent. In the following section I will assess the propriety of adding self transcendence to the list of primary goods, and thus of using it in the derivation of practical principles of just provision. For the moment, however, I would like to explore further the intuitive and evidentiary case for the need for self transcendence.

*The self and society.* If "self transcendence" is to qualify as a primary good in Rawls's system, and not as a "take-it-or-leave-it" personal good (that may or may not be adopted in a particular "rational life plan"), then it must be shown that the desire for self-transcendence is essential to the very nature of a functioning human self. A strong case for this position is to be found in the writings of George Herbert Mead (1956) and John Dewey (1958, Ch. VI). (I will focus most of my attention on Mead, mindful that Dewey's position is, in most significant respects, quite similar.) Mead suggests, in effect, that the notion of a totally isolated self is a virtual contradiction. The *self*, he argues, has its origin, nurture, and sustenance in social acts. Furthermore, says Mead, the mind emerges through the acquisition, in social acts, of communicative skills and the consequent absorption of the medium of "significant symbols" known as *language*. Accordingly, the self is reflexively defined and identified (i.e., "self-conscious") only in terms of social experience and the consequent perception of a "generalized other" (or, roughly speaking, internalized norms or "conscience"). Moreover, even in moments of solitary reflection, the mind employs, in silent soliloquy, the fund of meanings (i.e., the language) of the community<sup>4</sup>.

The upshot of the position of Mead and Dewey would seem to be that the self, *by its very origin and nature*, transcends the physical locus (of body, of sense impressions, and of behavior) which identifies the individual. "Self transcendence" becomes, then, not a moral desideratum, but a basic fact of the human condition. To be sure, some persons may withdraw from human society and claim to be unconcerned with their effects upon others and with the future fate of mankind. However, Mead and Dewey would argue, those who claim total psychic and moral autonomy are deceived. Their personality and selfhood nonetheless have their origin in social acts and contexts, and their denial of this nature is a symptom of personality disorder. In brief, to be a healthy, well-functioning person is to have "significant others" in one's life, and to wish to be significant *to* others, and to effect consequences *for* others. Furthermore, this desire to extend one's self to others (either directly, or through institutions and works) is limited neither by physical proximity or the extent of one's lifetime. The self, then, from its earliest origins in infancy, is *essentially* "transcendent." To be

human is to "relate out," to identify with others, and to show concern for the well-being and endurance of (at least some) communal values, artifacts and institutions.

If this admittedly impressionistic account is roughly accurate (both of Mead's and Dewey's position, and of human motivation), its significance is clear: "self transcendence" is *not* a more-or-less occasional and accidental characteristic of individuals and cultures. It is a consequence of universal conditions and circumstances of individual human development. A sense and expression of self-transcendence is thus as necessary for mental health as is exercise for physical health. Accordingly, the parties in the original position would desire the opportunity to express and manifest self transcendence, whatever else they might desire. Self transcendence, in other words, is a *primary* good.

*"The law of import transference"*. In *The Sense of Beauty*, George Santayana defines "beauty" as "pleasure objectified" (1955, p. 47). By this, Santayana means that when an object is perceived as beautiful, the pleasure of the aesthetic experience is projected into the object and interpreted as a quality thereof. While I do not wish either to defend or criticize this controversial theory, I find it quite illustrative of a psychological phenomenon which is widespread, familiar, plausible, and most significant to our discussion of the motive of "self transcendence." This psychological phenomenon may be summarized by what I will call "the law of import transference." The law states that if a person P feels that X (e.g., an institution, place, organization, principle, etc.) matters *to him*, P will also feel that X matters *objectively and intrinsically*. In other words, the significance and importance of an object *to* the agent is interpreted by the agent as a quality *of* the object *itself*. Thus the well-being and endurance of the significant object apart from, and beyond the lifetime of, the agent may become a concern *of* and a value to the agent -- a part of his inventory of personal *interests or goods*<sup>5</sup>. John Passmore expresses the point quite eloquently:

When men act for the sake of a future they will not live to see, it is for the most part out of love for persons, places, and forms of activity, a cherishing of them, nothing more grandiose. It is indeed self-contradictory to say: 'I love him or her or that place or that institution or that activity, but I don't care what happens to it after my death.' To love is, amongst other things, to care about the future of what we love . . . . This is most obvious when we love our wife, our children, our grand-children. But it is also true in the case of our more impersonal loves: our love for places, institutions and forms of activity. To love philosophy -- to philosophise with joy -- is to care about its future as a form of activity: to maintain that what happens to it after our death is of no consequence would be a clear indication that our 'love of philosophy' is nothing more than a form of self-love. (p. 88)

The application of this point to posterity, then, is quite clear:

There is . . . no novelty in a concern for posterity, when posterity is thought of not abstractly -- as 'the future of mankind' -- but as a world inhabited by individuals we love or feel a special interest in, a world containing institutions, social movement, forms of life to

which we are devoted – or even, a world made up of persons some of whom might admire us. (p. 89)

"The Law of Import-Transference," I suggest, describes a universal phenomenon familiar to all of us. It is manifested in acts and observances of patriotism, and in the donation of time, talent, and substance to various causes, places, and institutions. It is also seen in posthumous trusts and bequests. Most dramatically, import transference is found in the hero's willingness to die for the sake of other persons, his country, his religious beliefs, or his ideals.

"Unfortunately," the critic may reply, "there are still *other* cases of import transference that may not manifest a motive for 'self transcendence'; or at least, not the kind of 'transcendence' that would encourage just provision for future persons."<sup>6</sup> For example, the miser "transfers import" to money to the degree that this normally instrumentally good medium of exchange becomes, to him, an *intrinsic*, good. He desires to own and to hoard money (something other than himself) for the sake of ownership alone, and not for whatever might be purchased therewith. More generally, the selfish and acquisitive person (e. g., the landowner who "locks up" his holdings, or the art collector who keeps his collection in a vault, not for investment but for mere possession itself), does not fail to value things for themselves.. Surely he does this, but in addition, he desires to *own* them.

The difference, I suggest, is that in the case of the selfish individual, the "transfer of import" is partial, while to the artist, scholar, or philanthropist enjoying self transcendence in his work or in his benefactions, the transference is more complete. How is this so? Because the selfish person desires the well-being of other-than-self (e.g., his money, his land, or his art objects) for *his* sake. The "transcending" individual desires the well-being of the other-than-self (e. g., institution, artifact, place, ideal, etc.) for *its* sake, or perhaps the sake of other persons that might benefit thereby. Thus we may suppose, for example, that the miser cares or thinks little of the fate of his hoard after his death (except, perchance, to wish that he could "take it with him"), while (say) to the artist the anticipated fate of his creations after his death is of great interest and concern. In short, I shall say that one is "fully self transcendent" when (a) he regards something other than himself as good in itself, *and* (b) when he desires the well-being and endurance of this "something else" for its own sake, apart from its future contingent effects upon him. The selfish person may fulfill the first condition, but he fails the second. (We might also say, by implication, that the unselfish person cares for other persons, and so cares for their sake rather than his. Accordingly, we can establish distinct and exclusive definitions of "selfishness" and "unselfishness." With this distinction at hand, we are able to escape the familiar trap of "psychological egoism" -- i.e., the error of treating *all* conceivable behavior as selfish behavior, thus rendering the term "selfish act" empty and tautological).

We are left with an unsettled problem of no small significance. Even if we assume the truth of the law of import transference, we find that this phenomenon gives rise either to selfish behavior, or to "fully self transcendent" concern and involvement. (The possibility of still other results has not been excluded.) It follows, then, that of itself this "law" can supply no proof of a basic "need" for self transcendence. In other words, "import transference is apparently *not* a sufficient cause of a motive for self-transcendence. It may, however, be a necessary condition, in which case self transcendence

may be said to be "grounded in," or supported by, this putative behavioral law. We thus find ourselves at the threshold of a difficult ethical challenge: we must show that rational, informed persons (e.g., those in the original position), would prefer a mode of life with self transcendent concerns (in the "full" sense), to a life that is wholly selfish. In the remaining pages of this section, I will try to indicate that this is, in fact, the case, albeit I haven't the space to present a careful and detailed justification of this crucial moral claim.

For the moment, let us assume what is yet to be demonstrated; namely, that a rational person, aware of the laws and general circumstances of human behavior and personality (e.g., a party in the original position), would in fact prefer a life with self transcendent concern to a wholly selfish existence. How would this bear upon the deliberations in the original position? To begin, the veil of ignorance would, as we know, exclude any knowledge, among the parties, of the transfer of *particular* interests and attachments to identifiable persons, places, causes, or institutions. This would follow from the ban against knowledge of personal circumstances and of the good. However, and this is significant, if "import transference" is in fact a general law of moral psychology, an abstract knowledge of this law would be admissible in the original position and would likely play an important role in the derivation of the principles of justice. And how might the law of import transference bear upon the choice of principles? First of all, the parties would know that, in actual life, their interests and loyalties might transfer to *some* enduring persons, ideals, institutions, etc., albeit they would not know *which* these might be. Thus the parties would know that, in actual life, they might, somehow, care about the conditions of life for generations that would follow their own. But this is not all. The veil of ignorance is not complete in this regard, since the conditions in the original position offer at least some general content to this concern for the future. To begin, the parties would themselves transfer import to the principles of justice they would choose. It then follows that they would want to insure a perpetuation in actual society of the circumstances of justice necessary for a well-ordered society (e.g., no less than moderate scarcity, and at least mutual disinterest. See Rawls, §22). In addition, they would want to incorporate into their principles provision for the perpetuation and flourishing of just institutions. All this, I submit, is ample material with which to devise, in the original position, *abstract* principles of just provision for the future. (Interestingly, the conclusion of this "import transference argument" is about the same as the conclusion which follows from the condition of generational ignorance. However, since these are clearly separate arguments, the claim that the parties would adopt such a principle is accordingly strengthened. I will expand upon these points in §46, below.)

*Significance and mortality.* My next account of the motive of self transcendence is somewhat existential. It is based upon the universal human awareness of physical mortality. As philosophers have noted and commented upon for centuries, the price that each man must pay for his rationality and self-consciousness is a knowledge that he too must die. There is, of course, an abundance of religious and metaphysical doctrines of spiritual immortality and of physical resurrection. Even so, there is virtually universal acknowledgement that the time of personal presence and efficacy in the affairs of familiar and significant persons, places, and institutions, is coterminous with one's physical life span.

Surely I need not argue that the finitude of human life is a source of much preoccupation and regret. A myriad of religious doctrines and philosophical systems have been devised to offer hope, consolation, or at least perspective in the face of this common fate. All this is obvious and commonplace and thus needs no elaboration. However, there is one response to the awareness of mortality that is of considerable importance to our analysis. I refer to the investment and devotion of time, talent, concern, loyalty, and financial substance in behalf of enduring and permanent causes, ideals, and institutions. Now there are, of course, many motives for these kinds of activities. However, I would like to focus upon one motive in particular; namely, the desire to extend the term of one's influence and significance well beyond the term of one's lifetime -- a desire evident in arrangements for posthumous publications, in bequests and wills, in perpetual trusts (such as the Nobel Prize), and so forth. In all this, and more, we find clear manifestation of a will to transcend the limits of personal mortality by extending one's self and influence into things, associations, and ideals that endure. Nicolai Hartmann offers the most eloquent expression that I have yet encountered of this need to transcend the limits of one's immediate life and circumstances:

In such a [self-transcending] life is fulfilled something of man's destiny, which is to become a participant in the creation of the world . . . . But what will that signify, if [a person's] life-work dies with him, or soon after? It is just such work that requires permanence, continuation, a living energy of its own. It inheres in the nature of all effort that looks to an objective value, to go on beyond the life and enterprise of the individual, into a future which he can no longer enjoy. It is not only the fate but is also the pride of a creative mind and is inseparable from his task, that his work survives him, and therefore passes from him to others, in whose life he has no part. (p. 313)

. . . . The content of a fruitful ideal necessarily lies beyond the momentary actual. And because it reaches beyond the limits of an individual life, it naturally reduces the individual to a link in the chain of life, which connects the past with the future. Man sees himself caught up into a larger providence, which looks beyond him and yet is his own. (p. 324)

Hartmann is describing here a profound and universal feeling of which the parties in the original position would surely be aware in their deliberations concerning justice between generations.

*Alienation: the self alone.* In this section I have, to this point, attempted to indicate that the need for self transcendence is a basic and virtually universal trait of human nature. (As we shall see, the claim must be this bold if self transcendence is to play a role in the original position.) In defense of this assertion, I have cited what seem to be necessary and general conditions of human development, evaluation, and awareness. I would like now to examine the issue of self transcendence from a different perspective. Specifically, I would like to explore the results of even a partial deprivation of the alleged "need" for self transcendence. If, as I have suggested, this need is basic to human nature, a denial thereof should produce clear and dramatic results.

In much contemporary sociological and psychological literature, this denial of self transcendence has been described as "*alienation*." In the introduction to their anthology, *Man Alone*, Eric and Mary

Josephson present a vivid account of the broad range of sources and manifestations of alienation in contemporary life:

Confused as to his place in the scheme of a world growing each day closer yet more impersonal, more densely populated yet in face-to-face relations more dehumanized; a world appealing ever more widely for his concern and sympathy with unknown masses of men, yet fundamentally alienating him even from his next neighbor, today Western man has become mechanized, routinized, made comfortable as an object; but in the profound sense displaced and thrown off balance as the subjective creator and power. This theme of the alienation of modern man runs through the literature and drama of two continents; it can be traced in the content as well as the form of modern art; it preoccupies theologians and philosophers, and to many psychologists and sociologists, it is the central problem of our time. In various ways they tell us that ties have snapped that formerly bound Western man to himself and to the world about him. In diverse language they say that man in modern industrial societies is rapidly becoming detached from nature, from his old gods, from the technology that has transformed his environment and now threatens to destroy it; from his work and its products, and from his leisure; from the complex social institutions that presumably serve but are more likely to manipulate him; from the community in which he lives; and above all from himself -- from his body and his sex, from his feelings of love and tenderness, and from his art -- his creative and productive potential. (pp. 10-11)

Clearly the Josephsons have described here a sizeable array of social and personal disorders. I should not, and will not, attempt to respond to more than a few of them. Most of these symptoms that I will discuss fall under the category of *personal* or *psychological alienation*.

What, then, do we mean by "personal alienation?" Eric Fromm describes it well. It is, he says, "a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself. He does not experience himself as the center of his world, as the creator of his own acts-but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys, or whom he may even worship" (p. 57). In other words, says Fromm, alienated man "does not experience himself as the active bearer of his own powers and richness, but as an impoverished 'thing,' dependent on powers outside of himself, unto whom he has projected his living substance" (p. 59).

Unfortunately, it is all too easy to find examples of alienation in contemporary life. For example, the worker finds that he is, himself, a replaceable part in the assembly line or shop. His job activity is governed by machines (most ubiquitously, the clock). The product of his labor shows no evidence of his distinct personality or skills. Even if he wears a white collar and brings an inventory of acquired professional skills to his work, he may perform as a faceless functionary, with little personal style evident or required in his task. The management of his household, his shopping habits, travel arrangements, even his leisure activities, are mechanized and impersonal. The utilities and services which sustain his life and creature comforts are themselves maintained by an unfathomable network of electronic, mechanical and cybernetic devices which, at any moment, could collapse from the



weight of their own complexity. Economic and political forces which may radically disrupt his life are unresponsive to his needs and beyond his control; indeed, they may even be beyond the conscious and deliberate control of *any* persons, either in public or in private offices.

In brief, the alienated man shrinks into himself. He loses control over the social, economic, and political forces that determine his destiny. With loss of control comes indifference and apathy. Because, in his social contacts, he is responded to ever more in terms of his *functions*, and ever less in terms of his personality and autonomy, he becomes estranged from the well-springs of his own unique personal being. He becomes, that is, alienated from *himself*. He is left aimless, vulnerable, insignificant, solitary, and *finite*. In such a condition he loses not only his self-respect; even worse, he is hard-pressed to recognize and define the identity of his own self.

In alienation, I contend, we find the very antithesis of self transcendence. There is no feeling, within a state of alienation, of a personal contribution to grand projects, no sense of involvement in significant events, no investment and expansion of one's self and substance into enduring causes and institutions. Surrounded by institutions, machines, individuals, social trends, for which he has no significance and to which he can thus "transfer" no "import," one truly lives in an alien world. Surely alienation is a dreadful condition, made nonetheless so by its widespread and growing manifestations. It is a condition that no rational person would happily wish upon himself.

*Two contrary cases: the recluse and the playboy.* I have stated that alienation is "the very antithesis of self transcendence." But isn't this an overstatement? Might we not find cases of individuals who are both "self transcendent" and alienated<sup>7</sup>? On the other hand, might there not be individuals that are *neither* self transcendent nor alienated?

In the first case, consider such solitary persons as Henry David Thoreau and John Muir. Though these individuals voluntarily withdrew from their communities, surely their lives cannot be said to have been unproductive and without purpose. Indeed, in their own views, and that of others, Thoreau and Muir pursued lives in transcending significance. However, I would further deny that they were *alienated*. To be sure, Thoreau was alienated from the commonplace commercial and civic routine of Concord. However, he perceived himself as a member of a community of ideas and, of course, a community of nature. He shunned the life-style of his neighbors not because he felt his life had no significance but because he sought a variant and, he believed, a *deeper* significance. He chose, that is, to "march to the sound of a *different* drummer." He did not refuse to "march" at all. His writing is directed to causes, issues, and times that extend far beyond his immediate circumstances. Thoreau's life supplies eloquent evidence that *solitude* need not imply alienation.

But can a life display *neither* self-transcendence nor alienation? In response to this somewhat more difficult challenge, let us examine the case of the "playboy," the self-indulgent hedonist who "takes no care for the morrow," much less posterity. If such a person is healthy, wealthy, personable and attractive, can he be said to be "alienated"? It would seem, quite to the contrary, that he is living not in an "alien" world but in a world quite friendly to his tastes and whims. And if the playboy is not

alienated, then isn't he, necessarily, the *opposite*; i.e., self-transcendent? But how could this be so? Or might he not, in fact, be neither alienated nor self-transcendent?

These questions lead us to an important point; namely, that a life not filled, during every waking moment, with self-transcendent causes and projects, is not necessarily an alienated life. There is time, in any life, for simple, trivial, self-sufficient activities and pleasures. I would suggest, however, that a life *totally* devoid of any awareness of, concern for, involvement with, or valuing of things, persons, institutions, and ideals, *for the sake thereof*, would in fact be an alienated life. Consider then, that paradigmatic hedonist, Hugh Hefner, the publisher of *Playboy* Magazine. Is he "alienated?" Apparently he is not, for despite all his mansions, jets, hi fi's, and bunnies, Hefner has also established "The Playboy Foundation" (which is involved in such public issues as civil liberties), he has published a "playboy philosophy" (a philosophical position, of sorts), and he has contributed sizeable amounts of money to various social and political causes. All of these enterprises and benefactions would seem to manifest a desire for self-transcendence.

If not even Hugh Hefner presents a refuting case, let us then concoct an extreme paradigm. Imagine a person with health, wealth, sophistication, social grace, etc., who cares for nothing in life but his own personal satisfaction, and values nothing except as it immediately contributes thereto. Assume, further, that with his generous endowments his selfish interests are routinely satisfied. Would such a person, having no concern for the well-being of anything else (for it's own sake), lead an enviable life? Would a party of the original position desire to be such a person in actual life?

Despite all his good fortune and opportunity, such a person might, I suspect, be liable to a feeling that his life was confined and confining. By stipulation, nothing would matter to him, save that it had impact upon the course of his personal life plan. He would have no interest in persons he would never meet, places he would never see, and events and circumstances outside the span of his lifetime. In other words, those persons, places, and events beyond the scope of his life would be "alien" to him. With all significant events confined to the span of his lifetime, the consciousness of his own mortality would be especially burdensome. While this is a life style that we might be tempted to try for a while (given the chance), I wonder if we could bear it for a lifetime. ("A great place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there.") If, as I suspect, such a life does not "wear well," this might explain why it seems that those new to wealth are more inclined to indulge themselves with gadgetry, diversions, and opulence, while those born to wealth generally involve themselves with such self-transcendent concerns as philanthropy, the arts, social work, and political issues.

I have said that I "suspect" that an opulent, self-centered life would be confining, and, concerning all things outside the small egocentric confinement, *alienating*. Unfortunately, we shall have to close with nothing more substantial than this "suspicion." Surely much literary and psychological evidence might be brought to bear upon the question of the relationship between self-indulgence and alienation. Furthermore, one might conceive of some sort of direct empirical study of the issue, albeit the execution of such a study might be a trifle awkward; e.g., "Tell me, Howard Hughes, are you *really* happy?" All this, however, is beyond the scope of this dissertation. I must, therefore, conclude, rather dogmatically, that while a party in the original position might prefer the life of the

alienated, egocentric millionaire to that of many other possible choices, given the additional happy option he would, I believe, desire still more to accept the millionaire's resources and circumstances and to utilize them in a life containing self-transcending projects and concerns.

*The paradox of morality.* Throughout these explorations of the putative "need for self-transcendence," we have found manifestation of evidence of what is often called "the paradox of morality." Briefly, the paradox is found in the common circumstance that one appears to live best for oneself when one lives for the sake of others. Thus stated, the rule seems pious and banal. Even so, it points to a profound and recurring theme in religion and moral philosophy; a theme that is especially prominent in the writings of contract theorists from Hobbes to Rawls<sup>8</sup>. Surely Rawls's theory of justice argues forcefully that a group of self-interested egoists would, from an initial position of equality and fairness, formulate and accept rules of mutual regulation, assistance, and forbearance. Other statements of the moral paradox are abundant in the writings of contemporary philosophers. Thus, Kai Nielsen writes:

There are good Hobbesian reasons for rational and self-interested people to accept the moral point of view. A rational egoist will naturally desire the most extensive liberty compatible with his own self-interest, but he will also see that this is the most fully achievable in a context of community life where the moral point of view prevails. (p. 132)

(This passage, published in 1967, is a virtual paraphrase of Rawls's general approach to justice.) Consider also Michael Scriven's position:

Each citizen's chances of a satisfying life for himself are increased by a process of conditioning all citizens not to treat their own satisfaction as the most important goal. Specifically, a system which inculcates genuine concern for the welfare of others is, it will be argued, the most effective system for increasing the welfare of each individual. Put paradoxically, there are circumstances in which one can give a selfish justification for unselfishness. (p. 240)

"The paradox of morality," then, supplies still another argument for self-transcendence. But it is an argument with a difference. In our earlier discussion of the motive of self-transcendence, we adopted a psychological approach; i.e., we considered the need for self-transcendence from the perspective of its origin and sustenance in human experience and behavior. Thus a life "transcended" is perceived to be a healthy life, while an alienated life is perceived to be impoverished. In contrast, the argument from the moral paradox directly *recommends* self-transcendence (in the form of "the moral point of view") as more *prudential* policy for achieving self-enrichment and personal satisfaction.

At the outset of this discussion of "the paradox of morality," I admitted that, on first encounter, this principle seemed "pious and banal." Hopefully I have, in the intervening paragraphs, added some substance to the notion. Perhaps the paradox seems less to be a truism, and is given its most severe testing, when it is applied to the question of the duty to posterity. In such a case, the defenders of

this duty might wish to affirm that life is immediately enriched (or at least not demeaned) by the collective agreement of the living to provide for the well-being of the unborn. This is the position of economist Kenneth Boulding:

Why should we not maximize the welfare of this generation at the cost of posterity? *Après nous le deluge* has been the motto of not insignificant numbers of human societies. The only answer to this, as far as I can see, is to point out that the welfare of the individual depends on the extent to which he can identify himself with others, and that the most satisfactory individual identity is that which identifies not only with a community in space but also with a community extending over time from the past into the future . . . . This whole problem is linked up with the much larger one of the determinants of the morale, legitimacy, and "nerve" of a society, and there is a great deal of historical evidence to suggest that a society which loses its identity with posterity and which loses its positive image of the future loses also its capacity to deal with present problems and soon fails apart. (pp. 99-100)

If I interpret Boulding correctly, he is saying, in essence, that "we need the future, and we need it now." We will have further occasion to refer to the paradox of morality and its application to the posterity problem.

*"Self-transcendence": a summary.* While this has been a long section, considered in the perspective of the task attempted it has nevertheless been all too brief. In this section I have tried to explicate the "considered judgment" that healthy, well-functioning human beings have a basic and pervasive need to transcend themselves; that is, to identify themselves as a part of larger, ongoing, and enduring processes, projects, institutions, and ideals. Furthermore, I have contended that, if persons are deceived into believing that they can live in and for themselves alone, they suffer for it both individually and communally. These claims are both bold and significant. Unfortunately, I have not been able, in this brief space, to offer detailed proofs of their soundness. Instead, I have relied upon the reader's own moral experience, social perception, and general knowledge for confirmation. And so, while I believe that there is strong intuitive warrant for accepting the idea of self-transcendence, I would also suggest that there is a clear need and opportunity for further research and analysis on the part of behavioral and social scientists, and analytic and moral philosophers.

In addition to proposing a need for self-transcendence, I have further suggested that this need might qualify as a "primary good" and thus be a significant factor as the parties in the original position seek to formulate principles of justice between generations. However, there is further work to be done before this concept can be effectively applied to Rawls's theory of justice. In the next section, I will give further attention to the question of the suitability of self-transcendence as a primary good. In the section that follows, I will indicate that the concept of self-transcendence is congruent with Rawls's ideas concerning moral psychology. Following that, I will finally propose that the need for self-transcendence, as a primary good, would prompt the parties in the original position to adopt broad, wide-ranging, and inclusive principles of just provision for posterity.

#### 44. Is Self-Transcendence a Primary Good?

In the previous section I indicated that, if the need for self-transcendence is to be admitted into the original position as a "motivation assumption," it must somehow be associated with "the index of primary goods." I would like now to determine whether or not the need for self-transcendence meets this test. But first, a brief review of Rawls's "thin" and "full" theories of the good is in order. (For a more thorough review, see pp. 97, 114, above.)

*Primary goods: a recapitulation.* It is the task of the "thin theory of the good" to formulate and explicate the "index of primary goods" that all rational persons would desire, whatever else they might want. This list of primary goods includes such "natural" goods as health, vigor, and intelligence, and the "social primary goods" of "rights and liberties, powers and opportunities, income and wealth" (p. 62) and, most significantly for our purposes, *self-respect*. This index of primary goods is needed in the original position to motivate and direct the parties in their search for the general principles of justice which are to secure their rights and opportunities and to regulate the distribution of advantages among them.

In the original position, the parties have no knowledge of their personal tastes, aspirations, or life circumstances. However, they know that they *do* have *some* personal life-plans (whatever they may be) and that these plans will be constrained by the principles of justice chosen in the original position.

"Personal life plans" are, in turn, comprehended under "the full theory of the good." As noted earlier, Rawls defines the individual's good as "the most rational long-term plan of life given reasonably favorable circumstances (p. 92)." From this simple beginning, the full theory is extended to include the concepts of *beneficence* (acting to further another's life plan) and *moral worth* (having features that "it is rational for members of a well ordered society to want in their associates [p. 437]"; "rational," that is, in the sense that these qualities in others further personal life-plans. However, since these "moral features" are defined in terms of the concepts of *right*, we see at once that the full theory of the good is subordinate to the principles of justice.) Finally, the full theory is extended still further to define the good ("well ordered") society, as that society which "has the properties that it is rational to want in a society;" namely, the upholding of a rational life plan and a regulation of social interaction according to the principles of justice (p. 577).

A noteworthy feature of the full theory, as it applies to personal goods, is that, while it provides a singular *formal* definition of the good (i.e., "the satisfaction of rational desire according to a rational plan of life"), in particular instances the good is seen to differ from person to person, according to background, taste, and circumstance of each (p. 424). Thus, given the undoubted diversity of human conditions, there are innumerable ways to achieve a "rational life plan." Herein we are reminded of two fundamental differences between the full theory and the principles of justice ("right"): (a) while personal good is determined and planned in the light of all available knowledge, the principles of justice are chosen behind the veil of ignorance; and (b) while rational life-plans are variable among persons, the principles of right apply equally to all (pp. 447-449).

As we review these general components of Rawls's system, it is crucially important to keep their *logical* order in mind. First we have the list of "primary goods" which, Rawls suggests, might be inferred from "the general facts about human wants and abilities, their characteristic phases and requirements of nurture, the Aristotelian Principle, and the necessities of social interdependence" (p. 434). The derivation and explication of these primary goals and the rational grounds for their inclusion in the original position constitute the "thin theory of the good." Next, the principles of justice follow from this index of primary goods and the other conditions of the original position detailed earlier (§23, above). (For the sake of simplicity, I am excluding here the additional factor of "reflective equilibrium" with "considered moral judgments.") Finally, the principles of justice are prior to the full theory of the good in that they define the *limits* of the ("full") good (i.e., only that which is right can count as a good), and they are presupposed in the derivation of other moral concepts. The full theory, says Rawls:

Takes the principles of justice as already secured, and then uses these principles in defining the other moral concepts in which the notion of goodness is involved. Once the principles of right are on hand, we may appeal to them in explaining the concept of moral worth and the good of the moral virtues. Indeed, even rational plans of life which determine what things are good for human beings, the values of human life so to speak, are themselves constrained by the principles of justice. (p. 398)

It thus becomes clear that, if circularity is to be avoided, a strict distinction must be placed between the full and thin theories of the good.

*Self-transcendence as a primary good.* With this recapitulation of Rawls's general theoretical structure now behind us, we are prepared to ask whether or not "self-transcendence" can be interpreted as a primary good. To begin, a little dialectical exercise might help us to locate the place of self-transcendence in the index of primary goods, if it is to have a place at all.

The list of primary goods, we will recall, is divided into two basic categories: the "natural" and the "social." Because self-transcendence has its origins in, and is directed to, social phenomena, it seems obvious that it would belong to the latter category. Among the social primary goods are found "rights and liberties, powers and opportunities, income and wealth" (p. 62) and self-respect. Might self-transcendence be subsumed under one of these goods, or must we suggest that it be added on as an *additional* primary good, which was carelessly overlooked by Rawls? Fortunately, I will argue, we can adopt the simpler course of including it under an existing primary good, that of *self-respect*, which, says Rawls, may be the most important social primary good (p. 396).

It would seem, from the above review, that to be properly included among the primary goods, a trait must (a) be fundamental to human nature, (b) be desired "whatever else might be desired," and (c) found to be indispensable to the fulfillment of a desirable and satisfactory life plan. (Item (c) may be interpreted as being entailed by item (b).) If, on the other hand, a trait is found to be dispensable, or if acceptable substitution or compensation can be found for a deprivation thereof, a trait cannot qualify as a primary good.

How does self-transcendence fare against these criteria? Quite well, I believe. Consider first the question: "Is self-transcendence fundamental to human nature?" If my exposition has been sound, we find that, according to Mead's theory of the evolution of the self, the need for social effect and identification is a necessary and inalienable aspect of selfhood. Our discussion of "significance and mortality" indicated that the need to extend oneself beyond the time and circumstances of one's immediate existence is as universal as the awareness of physical mortality. In presenting the "law of import-transference" I have suggested that self-transcendence is grounded in (though not necessarily implied by) a fundamental and universal psychological phenomenon. Examples of this law are, I submit, commonplace in our personal lives and in the records of human culture.

Next, let us ask: "Is self-transcendence indispensable to a satisfactory life?" I believe that it is. Even great wealth may not, over the long run, compensate for deep-rooted alienation. Indeed, I suggest that most of the familiar examples, in fact and in fiction, of misery amidst wealth might be seen to describe alienation, often caused by the wealth itself. Consider, for example, the "poor little rich girl" who never knows whether or not she is loved for herself. Then too there is the case of the person, epitomized by Charles Dickens' "Ebenezer Scrooge," who invests so much time and attention in the acquisition of wealth and *objects* that he detaches himself from the *subjective* world of human relationships and causes. In contemporary American culture, one of the great social problems may well be the alienation brought about by affluence and consumer-oriented mass culture; i.e., the loss of personal content and significance amidst a plethora of perishable objects. (This is the contention of such thoughtful commentators as Erich Fromm, Bruno Bettelheim, C. Wright Mills, and Lewis Mumford, to name but a few.) Thus, if alienation is understood in the original position to be a symptom of the failure of the self to identify with and be connected to transcending projects and ideals, and if alienation is further perceived to be incompatible with the formulation of a satisfactory life-plan, the parties would include its antithesis, self-transcendence, in the index of primary goods. It would be acknowledged, that is to say, as a good to be desired, "whatever else might be desired."

But what of hermits and "gurus" and other such persons who *choose* to be alienated from human society? Can't they be said to have "rational life plans?" In many (most?) cases, such persons are alienated from a particular community, but strongly oriented to and identified with other ideals or institutions (e.g., nature, or holiness, and so forth). In the previous section I cited the examples of Henry David Thoreau and John Muir. But what of those hermits who have no transcending causes or projects, and who steadfastly avoid all human contact? In reply, I can only say, with sincere pity, "poor wretches!" In Rawls's words, "their nature is their misfortune (p. 546)." I cannot, however, accept these cases as refutation of the rule that healthy, well-functioning personalities *need* to experience self-transcendence, just as I find the existence of masochists to be no refutation of the general rule that healthy personalities universally desire physical well-being and the absence of pain. As is well known, various personal and cultural traits can so conspire as to drive an individual to perform deliberate acts and to adopt habits that are contrary to his best interest, contrary even to his conscious goals and purposes. Accordingly, in suggesting that the need for self-transcendence is a primary good, I am not required to establish that this trait is manifested in all imaginable cases, or even in all *known* cases.

Another objection might be based upon a survey of particular cases. Thus, a critic might point out that an author seeks to "transcend himself" in his writing, or a teacher in his classroom, or a senator in the legislation which he sponsors. But in each case the individual is pursuing his personal "life plan." None of these activities, it is argued, are goods for all persons at all times. In other words, these manifestations of the desire for self-transcendence belong to the "full theory of the good" (i.e., personal "rational life plans" barred, by the veil of ignorance, from the original position). They do not belong to the "thin theory of the good" (i.e., the index of "primary goods" known to the parties in the original position). Accordingly, they are *not* primary goods and have no place in the original positions.

I would reply that the critic is dealing with the wrong level of abstraction. To be sure, writing, teaching, legislating, and so forth, are all personal goods. The critic objects that "these particular manifestations of the desire for self-transcendence belong to the full theory." Agreed. But this remark gives him away. For all their diversity, these acts are indeed "manifestations" of a singular, abstract need for self-transcendence. It is this *general* trait and not its particular modes that belongs to the thin theory. Consider an analogous case: the natural primary good of *health* entails that each person must receive the minimum requirements of nutrients and food energy. Each person will desire this much, "whatever else he desires." The thin theory, however, has nothing whatever to say concerning particular diets or tastes. The gourmet's feast and the Trappist monk's simple meal, equally fulfill the requirement, provided they are both nutritionally adequate. Similarly, if self-transcendence is truly a primary good, the thin theory requires that the parties in the original position devise principles of justice that will provide for its realization in actual life. However, the parties are *not* required to stipulate any preferences for one particular *mode* of self-transcendence over another.

*Self-transcendence and self-respect.* The concept of "self" has, unsurprisingly, pervaded each of my four separate presentations in defense of the notion of self-transcendence. It is thus easy to suppose that the need for self-transcendence is closely linked to *self-respect*, which is believed by Rawls to be the most important social primary good. In these closing paragraphs of this section, I will indicate how the realization of self-transcendence may be necessary for the maintenance of self-respect. Space permits only a small assortment of such arguments. Even so, if we stipulate, with Rawls, that self-respect is indeed a primary good, and if my presentation supports the contention that self-transcendence is necessary for self-respect, then it follows that my argument will also support the supposition that self-transcendence is a primary good.

Before we turn directly to the question of the relationship of self-transcendence to self-respect, it may be useful to review briefly Rawls's account of self-respect. Rawls, we may recall, views self-respect (or self-esteem) as having two aspects. The first is a sense of one's own value, and "his secure conviction that his conception of his good, his plan of life, is worth carrying out." The second aspect of self-respect "implies a confidence in one's ability, so far as it is within one's power, to fulfill one's intentions. When we feel that our plans are of little value, we cannot pursue them with pleasure or take delight in their execution" (p. 440). Thus, Rawls concludes, without self-respect, "nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, we lack the will to strive for them. All desire



and activity becomes empty and vain, and we sink into apathy and cynicism" (p. 440, see also p. 102, above). Viewed positively, Rawls contends that "self-respect is not so much a part of any rational plan of life as it is the sense that one's plan is worth carrying out (p. 178)." For reasons such as these, says Rawls, "the parties in the original position would wish to avoid at almost any cost the social conditions that undermine self-respect (p. 440)."

Rawls could scarcely have stated a stronger case for avoiding the psychological condition of *alienation*. As described earlier, personal self-alienation is clearly indicated by the feeling that, in Rawls's words, "nothing is worth doing," that one is powerless, that one's "plans are of little value" and cannot be "pursued with pleasure." These feelings of insignificance and isolation, I have suggested, simply describe the *absence* of self-transcending projects, concerns, and interests. Indeed, so fundamental is self-transcendence to self-respect that its opposite, alienation, is not simply *destructive* of self-esteem, it is destructive to the very *self* "itself." When, in Fromm's words, the individual is no longer "the center of his world" and "the creator of his own acts," he loses sight of his self-identity -- the very essence of his being (p. 56). Clearly, then, an active involvement in a world of cherished persons, honored ideals, respected institutions, and enduring causes, which is to say projection into and an identification with transcending entities and projects, all this is a sufficient antidote to *alienation*. Thus, if it is not too simplistic to say that alienation is the *absence* of self-transcendence, and that alienation is incompatible with self-respect, then it follows that self-transcendence is a necessary condition for the achievement of the primary good of self-respect.

I suggest that this conclusion is reinforced by our other findings concerning the bases of the need for self-transcendence. Thus, in my earlier discussion of the development of the self, the psychological trait of "import transference" and the awareness of personal mortality (§43, above), I have indicated that the self finds its own identity and value in involvements and concern *beyond* itself, which is to say through its own *transcendence*. Without recapitulating these now-familiar points, I believe that we can conclude from our earlier discussion that the self can find no source of abiding esteem totally from within. Transcendental involvement and concern with projects, ideals, persons, and institutions beyond the self is necessary for self-respect. Accordingly, we have arrived at our desired conclusion: self-transcendence is necessary for self-respect and thus, by implication, is a primary good.

#### **45. Rawls and Self-Transcendence**

Does Rawls, in *A Theory of Justice*, endorse the notion of "self-transcendence"? If so, is this endorsement explicit or implicit? While these are interesting questions, we must not overestimate their significance to our inquiry. For even if, through an examination of Rawls's text, we determine that Rawls does in fact acknowledge the need for self-transcendence, and that there is a compatibility of this need with his theoretical system, we have not proven thereby that he is *correct* in this acknowledgment. We should, in short, be less concerned with a "higher criticism" of Rawlsian text, and more interested in suggesting, on the basis of independent evidence, refinements, revision, and validations to his theory<sup>9</sup>.

Before we proceed with these indications of Rawls's implicit endorsement of self-transcendence, a methodological warning is in order. Let us recall that we are proposing that self-transcendence qualifies as a *primary good* in Rawls's theoretical system. This immediately raises some logical hazards, for, if we wish to search in *A Theory of Justice* for concurrence with this suggestion, we must not draw from textual material that presupposes the principles of justice. And why not? Rawls explains:

The constraints of the principles of justice cannot be used to draw up the list of primary goods that serves as part of the description of the initial situation. The reason is, of course, that this list is one of the premises from which the choice of the principles of right is derived. To cite these principles in explaining the list would be a circular argument. (pp. 433-434)

This rule excludes much, but not *all* of Rawls's treatment of "the full theory of the good," a portion of the book from which one might be particularly inclined to search for material dealing with self-transcendence. In the citations which follow, I have, I believe, evaded the logical snares that might invalidate them. However, I cannot detail the nature of these hazards nor justify my claim to have evaded them, without becoming involved in some difficult, extended, and otherwise pointless technicalities. The scrupulous reader is welcome to test, at his leisure, my claim of logical adequacy. (The most important consideration here would be this: Have I drawn from contexts in the book which do not presuppose the principles of justice or the thin theory of the good?) Without further delay, let us turn to these indications that, in *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls does, in fact, endorse the notion of self-transcendence.

*Self-transcendence and the laws of moral psychology.* In three key sections of *A Theory of Justice* (§§70-73), Rawls describes the development of the sense of justice from infancy to maturity. In the first stage ("the morality of authority") a child, raised in the context of just family institutions, and "recognizing [the] evident love" of his parents for him, comes to love his parents in turn (p. 490). In the second stage ("the morality of association"), feelings of friendship and trust are extended to those with whom one enjoys just social arrangements. In the third and final stage ("the morality of principles"), one acquires a sense of justice "as he recognizes that he and those for whom he cares are the beneficiaries" of just arrangements (based, that is, on the principles of justice). This final stage, which comprehends and incorporates the moralities of the prior stages, is characterized by an orientation and loyalty to *abstract* principles of justice. (For a statement of these principles, see p. 116-7, above.) In support of his scheme of moral advancement, Rawls cites several general traits of human growth and social dynamics. Two in particular strongly support the idea of self-transcendence.

Consider first the following passage offered in support of "the morality of association." Rawls describes here how the child must, in the course of his development, associate himself with the roles and points of view of others around him.

In due course a person works out a conception of the whole system of cooperation that defines the association and the ends which it serves. He knows that others have different

things to do depending upon their place in the cooperative scheme. Thus he eventually learns to take up their point of view and to see things from their perspective. It seems plausible, then, that acquiring a morality of association (represented by some structure of ideals) rests upon the development of the intellectual skills required to regard things from a variety of points of view and to think of these together as aspects of one system of cooperation. In fact, when we consider it, the requisite array of abilities is quite complex. First of all, we must recognize that these different points of view exist, that the perspectives of others are not the same as ours. But we must not only learn that things look different to them, but that they have different wants and ends, and different plans and motives; and we must learn how to gather these facts from their speech, conduct, and countenance. Next, we need to identify the definitive features of these perspectives, what it is that others largely want and desire, what are their controlling beliefs and opinions. Only in this way can we understand and assess their actions, intentions, and motives. Unless we can identify these leading elements, we cannot put ourselves into another's place and find out what we would do in his position. To work out these things, we must, of course, know what the other person's perspective really is. But finally, having understood another's situation, it still remains for us to regulate our own conduct in the appropriate way by reference to it. (pp. 468-469)

The reader may recognize this as a virtual paraphrase of George Herbert Mead's theory of the genesis of the self, which I cited in an earlier section (§43). Indeed, Rawls cites Mead in the course of this argument (p. 468n). I believe that a close reading of this quotation and the context in which it is found will reveal no presupposition of the principles of justice. Perhaps, then, we have found in this passage an endorsement by Rawls of the first of our independent arguments for the need of self-transcendence.

*Self-transcendence and the sense of justice.* A person who lives in a well-ordered society, and who has progressed to the third stage of moral development ("the morality of principles"), can be said to have a "sense of justice." This is, however, by no means the only circumstance that gives rise to the sense of justice. Quite the contrary. In most societies, however unjust may be the institutions or conditions thereof, individuals will be found who manifest, to some degree at least, a sense of justice. The *capacity* to develop and display the sense is found in virtually all functioning persons. I would like now to examine the sense of justice outside the context of ideal theory and the well-ordered society. From this broader perspective, I would like to determine the role of self-transcendence in the achievement and the functioning of the sense of justice.

In a crucial and lengthy passage, quoted at length earlier (p. 118, above), Rawls states quite clearly that a sense of justice, and the moral sentiments that follow therefrom, are fundamental traits of the human condition (pp. 488-489). Thus, when he writes that moral sentiments "are a normal part of human life (p. 489)," he is not confining himself to the ideal circumstances within the well ordered society. Rather, he means that:

A person who lacks a sense of justice, and who would never act as justice requires except as self-interest and expediency prompt . . . lacks certain natural attitudes and moral feelings

of a particularly elementary kind. Put another way, one who lacks a sense of justice lacks certain fundamental attitudes and capacities included under the notion of humanity. (p. 488)

Rawls then points out that having a sense of justice necessarily makes one liable to suffer the moral feelings of guilt and shame, should his behavior fall short of just expectations. However, "this liability is the price of love and trust, of friendship and affection, and of a devotion to institutions and traditions from which [one has] benefitted and which serve the general interests of mankind (p. 489)."

Now consider carefully this final sentence by Rawls. Is he not affirming here that a sense of justice entails *self-transcendence*, in the form of "love, trust, friendship, affection," and, most significantly for our purposes, "a devotion to institutions and traditions from which [one has] benefitted?" Is not this devotion expressed in a concern for the well-being and preservation of those institutions and traditions for their own sake and beyond the term of one's own lifetime? By saying that one wishes to avoid the guilt and shame of failing to support just institutions and ideas, is he not saying that one has a need to transcend a total pre-occupation with his immediate and personal needs and desires? I suggest that Rawls's analysis of the sense of justice implies affirmative answers to these questions. To *have* a sense of justice is to *have* a self-transcending concern for the well-being and endurance of associations, institutions, and ideals, for their own sakes.

*Self-transcendence and "the social union"*. We have, I presume, found good reason to believe that the need for self-transcendence is implicit in Rawls's account of moral psychology. However, it is in Rawls's discussion of the conditions, function, and advantages of a flourishing system of human cooperation, "the idea of social union" (§79), that we encounter what may be the strongest support in *A Theory of Justice*, for the concept of self-transcendence.

Rawls describes a "society" in the most general sense, as "a cooperative venture for mutual advantage . . . typically marked by a conflict as well as an identity of interests (pp. 4, 520)." As we have noted earlier, Rawls believes that it is the function of systems of justice to maximize expectations of advantage and to adjudicate conflicts within a society (p. 4). Of special interest to us, however, is Rawls's often reiterated belief that social activities (i.e., "the social union") *necessarily* leads the normal, well-functioning individual to extend his self-interest toward an identification with community interests, institutional interests, and ideal interests. Thus, writes Rawls, "the members of a community participate in one another's nature . . . the self is realized in the activities of many selves (p. 565)." And, in a passage that is a virtual affirmation of the principle of self-transcendence, Rawls writes:

Human beings have in fact shared final ends and they value their common institutions and activities *as good in themselves*. We need another as partners in ways of life that are engaged in *for their own sake*, and the successes and enjoyments of others are necessary for and complementary to our own good. (pp. 522-523, my italics)

Accordingly, "only in a social union is the individual complete (p. 525n)." The good, to the individual, of participating in a well-ordered social union follows, says Rawls, from "the psychological features of our nature (p. 571)."

"But," the critic might ask, "why should we bother with a recitation of these familiar facts of social life? While this is all true enough, it is so obvious and commonplace as to be insignificant and unimportant." Would that this were so. However, as Rawls quite correctly points out, there is a significant competing notion; namely, that of the "private society." As Rawls describes it:

Its chief features are first that the persons comprising it, whether they are human individuals or associations, have their own private ends which are either competing or independent, but not in any case complementary. And second, institutions are not thought to have any value in themselves, the activity of engaging in them not being counted as a good but if anything as a burden. Thus each person assesses social arrangements solely as a means to his private aims. No one takes account of the good of others, or of what they possess; rather everyone prefers the most efficient scheme that gives him the largest share of assets. (p. 521)

Historically, this position has been argued by Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic* and Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* (Cf. Rawls, p. 521n). Contemporary advocates include John Hospers, Ayn Rand, and Rawls's Harvard Colleague, Robert Nozick.

In the presence of a traditional and well-argued alternative, Rawls's notion of "the idea of social union" becomes controversial and interesting. My own concurrence with the idea of social union is perhaps evident in much of the foregoing text. Of more immediate interest, however, is Rawls's affirmation and support of the notion of the social union; an affirmation which pervades his entire book, both in his formal argument for justice and his extended discussion of the "full theory of the good." But note especially Rawls's claim that participating in the life of a well ordered community is a great good (p. 571)," and that "the self is realized in the activities of many others (p. 565)." Is he not, in effect, stating here that a well-functioning human personality needs and actualizes an extension and transcendence of itself into enduring projects, institutions, and ideals, perceived to be valuable *in themselves*? If this is a fair and accurate paraphrase of Rawls's intention, then, once again, he has affirmed the need for self-transcendence.

If involvement in "the social union" truly satisfies a need for self-transcendence, it should follow (from our discussion in §43), that the very same involvement will be a sufficient antidote to the disorder of *alienation*. Rawls seems to say as much:

It is a feature of human sociability that we are by ourselves but parts of what we might be. We must look to others to attain the excellences that we must leave aside, or lack altogether. The collective activity of society, the many associations and the public life of the largest community that regulates them, sustains our efforts and elicits our contribution. Yet the good attained from the common culture far exceeds our work in the sense that we cease to

be mere fragments: that part of ourselves that we directly realize is joined to a wider and just arrangement the aims of which we affirm. (p. 529)

Finally, if the self-transcendence achieved through the social union is to serve the interests of posterity, it must be directed toward enduring projects and perceived in the perspective of historical time and processes. Once again, we find in Rawls strong support for this conclusion:

It is through social union founded upon the needs and potentialities of its members that each person can participate in the total sum of the realized natural assets of the others. We are led to the notion of the community of humankind the members of which enjoy one another's excellences and individuality elicited by free institutions, and they recognize the good of each as an element in the complete activity the whole scheme of which is consented to and gives pleasure to all. This community may also be imagined to extend over time, and therefore in the history of a society the joint contributions of successive generations can be similarly conceived. Our predecessors in achieving certain things leave it up to us to pursue them further; their accomplishments affect our choice of endeavors and define a wider background against which our aims can be understood. To say that man is a historical being is to say that the realization of the powers of human individuals living at any one time takes the cooperation of many generations (or even societies) over a long period of time. (pp. 523-525)

Rawls's view of the historical process is, in this passage, directed largely toward the past. However, that his remarks might be directed, quite as appropriately, to the future seems indisputable.

As we close this section, we might reiterate the limitations of our findings. If I am correct, then Rawls seems to acknowledge, implicitly at least, that self-transcendence is a basic human need. However, while this finding bears interesting insight into Rawls's position, it provides no independent warrant to conclude that Rawls's position herein is correct. Even so, my analysis of Rawls's text suggests that if, as I propose, "self-transcendence" is acknowledged as a primary good, justice as fairness may accommodate this amendment without compromising the integrity of its theoretical system.

*A summary.* We have found, I believe, that implicit in Rawls's analysis of moral psychology and social structure there is a recognition of a universal human need to identify with, to feel concern for, and to cherish ongoing institutions, causes, projects, and ideals. This need is sufficiently essential to human welfare that, without it, life would be reduced to a state of insignificance and meaninglessness. Furthermore, if I have correctly interpreted Rawls, then it seems that he might concur with my suggestion that self-transcendence qualifies as a primary good. Finally, if my analyses of the last three sections have been successful, then we have found, both independently and within Rawls's own text, the motivation assumption needed for the parties of the original position to derive broad and inclusive principles of justice between generations. In the next section, I shall further examine this claim.

## 46. Just Provision as an Abstract Principle of Justice

My exposition and criticism of Rawls's position concerning justice between generations is now essentially behind us. So too is the development and presentation of my own assumptions and analytical tools. Following a brief inventory of the relevant available information, assumptions, and critical methods, we will assume the perspective of the parties of the original position and attempt, on the basis of this data, to propose new principles of just provision, or at least to determine if such an enterprise might still be carried out in the context of justice as fairness. This analysis from the original position will follow three basic stages: (a) an examination of just provision as an *abstract* principle of justice (§46); (b) an examination of the adequacy of just provision as a *practical* principle (i.e., its *stability*) (§47); and, finally, (c) an assessment of the *congruence* of the practical principle of just provision with the full theory of the good (§47). The final section of this chapter will summarize the basic findings of this dissertation.

*Where are we?* In our analysis of Rawls's argument for just savings (Chapter VI, above), we found that some of the conditions in the original position pertaining to the issue of justice between generations followed simply and consistently from the general rules of the original position. Noteworthy among these conditions were the assumption that the parties were to be actual (not "possible") persons and that they did not know to which generation they belonged. Assumptions such as these that were judged to be coherent with Rawls's general system were accepted without alteration. On the other hand, two other conditions in the original position, "the present time of entry interpretation" and "the heads of families condition" were found to violate the general rules of the original position (i.e., the veil of ignorance, and the generality and universality rules). In addition, these two conditions appeared to be *ad hoc* additions to the theory, with no discernable functions in Rawls's system *except* to affect the outcome of the posterity question. For these and other reasons, the "present time of entry" and "heads of families" assumptions were found to be untenable and were discarded.

It is interesting that (as far as I can recall), virtually all of Rawls's "rigged" exceptions to the basic conditions in the original position bear directly upon the posterity issue. This "multiplication of hypothesis" suggests that Rawls had considerable difficulty with this question.<sup>10</sup> It also makes his whole argument concerning justice between generations very suspect.

In an attempt to solve this problem, I have first applied Occam's razor to the offending hypotheses. Following that, I have sought, and I hope that I have found, an alternative motivation assumption (i.e., "the need for self transcendence") that is both consistent with the general conditions of the original position and qualified for inclusion in the index of primary goods. We can now present a case before the parties of the original position that is simple, consistent with the general theoretical rules and presuppositions, and free of *ad hoc* assumptions. However, while we now have a better case, we have not demonstrated that it is a sound and convincing case. To carry such a project to a satisfactory and affirmative conclusion would require, at the very least, (a) a careful assessment of alternative policies of provision for the future, and (b) an exposition and analysis of Rawls's difficult, technical, and lengthy work on "risk assessment and aversion" (Rawls §§ 26-30), topics that I have,

happily, been able so far to by-pass. This would require at least two additional chapters. Since I must not extend this lengthy dissertation to include this necessary data, I will be unable to supply a clear, explicit, well-founded principle of just provision. Even so, I believe that we can take some useful steps toward such a realization. The accumulated length and scope of this dissertation must also preclude, in these final pages, any attempt to display the care, detail, and rigor of the earlier chapters of this dissertation. In these closing sections, my objective will simply be to propose and to sketch a strategy of revision and extension of justice as fairness, whereby it might encompass and sustain a broad and extensive policy of "just provision" for future generations.

What do we have to bring to this task? What are our resources? They are considerable. *First*, we have (with the few noted exceptions) all the general conditions of the original position; namely, the constraints of the concept of right, the circumstances of justice, the rules of acceptance and exclusion of knowledge, the primary goods, the rules of deliberation, etc. *Second*, we have the rules of the original position which pertain particularly to the posterity issue; e.g., generational ignorance, the exclusion of "possible persons." *Third*, we have now the assumption that "self transcendence" is a primary good. With these assumptions and procedures at hand, we can now ask: "How would the parties of the original position deliberate concerning the issue of justice between generations?"

*Toward an abstract principle of just provision: Three arguments.* The parties of the original position might seek, first, an abstract principle of just provision, with the understanding that such a principle might have to be modified somewhat to allow for *compliance* in the circumstances of actual life in a well ordered society. Such a modified principle would, according to our terminology, be a "*practical* principle of justice" (Cf. p. 327, above). Very well; given the best possible case (i.e., with stability, for the moment, taken for granted), how might the parties proceed to formulate a principle of just provision?

Consider, first, what might be called "*the argument from self transcendence.*" By this accounting, the parties in the original position would review the index of primary goods. They would thus find that, whatever principles they chose, they would have to insure that, in entering actual life, their self-respect would be secure. By examining the conditions of self respect, they would further conclude that they must, at all costs, protect their self esteem from the self-diminishing and self-demeaning condition of *alienation*. And, since alienation can be construed as the absence of self transcending interests, concerns, loyalties, and projects, they would wish to assure that, in actual life, they might be identified with, involved in, and concerned about, persons, places, associations, institutions, and ideals outside themselves. Furthermore, the parties will know (through admissible knowledge of general psychology) that, by investing concern for transcending things and ideals, that is to say, by "transferring import," such objects, plans, associations, and ideals become *intrinsic* goods, and the expectation of their well-being and endurance becomes a good for the individual. It then follows that the parties will understand that, in actual life, their self respect will be integrally tied to active concern for enduring things, associations and ideals. Thus, paradoxically, what they perceive to be the future course of events beyond their own lifetimes becomes relevant to their own well-being during their lifetimes. (This, of course, is a manifestation of "the paradox of morality.") In short, the parties will understand (a) that unless the well-being of lasting objective things, projects, and ideals



*matter to them*, their lives will be empty and devoid of self-esteem, and (b) that they cannot truly love or care for these things, projects, and ideals *unless* they hope and plan for the preservation and flourishing thereof long beyond the span of their personal lifetimes. Self-transcendence, then, as a necessary component of the primary good of self-respect, assures that the parties of the original position will care, *generally*, about the course of events beyond their lifetimes, and about the availability, to future persons, of (unspecified) goods, opportunities, excellences, etc.

Of course, the veil of ignorance forbids any knowledge in the original position of personal goods and causes that the parties might wish to protect and preserve. However, as Rawls correctly points out in his discussion of the "principle of paternalism," the parties will know that, whatever the goods and values they may cherish in actual life, these goods cannot be actualized *without* the primary goods. Accordingly, the argument from self-transcendence entails that the parties will desire to assure the continued availability of such "pre-requisite" primary goods as basic resources, health, intelligence, self-respect, equal opportunity, and equal liberty. (Thus the argument from self-transcendence has the interesting side effect of reinforcing the principles of equal liberty and equal opportunity. This manifest application of self-transcendence to *other* parts of Rawls's system lends support to the notion and acquits it of the charge of being an *ad hoc* hypothesis.)

Another approach to the validation of a concern for posterity, within the confines of the original position, is familiar to us and thus may be treated in a brief space. This is "*the argument from generational ignorance*." In an earlier section (within which I developed the distinction between abstract and practical justice), I quoted R. M. Hare's criticism of Rawls's "present time of entry interpretation" (§38). By neatly disregarding the stability question, and by focusing on the criteria of generality and universality, and the condition of generational ignorance, Hare concluded that:

If the [parties] do not know to what generation they all belong, and are prescribing universally for the conduct of all generations, they will have (if they are rational) to adopt principles of justice which maintain impartiality between the interests of all generations. We can say that they are either prescribing for the past as well as the present and future, or choosing the principles by which they want society to be governed in the future and hope that it has been governed in the past. (July 1973, pp. 243-244)

I suggest that Hare is quite correct here, as far as the standpoint of *abstract* justice is concerned. Hare's mistake is that he is willing to stop at this point and consider the task complete. Rawls, on the other hand, correctly recognizes that an acceptable final principle of justice must be *practical*; i.e., it must take compliance into account. However, since we are, for the moment, looking simply for an *abstract principle*, Hare's conclusion will do for now. Accordingly, the argument from generational ignorance concludes that, as a rule of abstract justice, future generations have an equal right to just and impartial treatment. (Note that this argument makes no reference whatever to self-transcendence as a primary good. It is thus independent of the first argument).

A third argument for an abstract principle of just provision is also familiar. We might call it "*the argument from the loyalty to justice*." (The argument appeared briefly, and unnamed, on page 217,

above.) Assume that the deliberations concerning justice between generations appear late in the agenda of the original position<sup>11</sup>. If so, some *content* to the rules of just provision becomes evident; namely, some prevailing conditions, assumptions, and prior conclusions of the original position. Now, if the parties *themselves* may be assumed to be subject to the "law of import transference" (the "law" is, after all, a component of the primary good of self-transcendence), then the content of their prior conclusions will be invested, by the parties, with *intrinsic* significance. The result of this transfer of import within the original position is noteworthy: the parties become motivated to adopt principles of justice between generations that will insure the perpetuation of the (to them) *valuable* principles of justice among contemporaries. And what is required to perpetuate these principles? Answer: The circumstances of justice (moderate scarcity, mutual disinterest, etc.) and just institutions. In short, the law of import transference motivates the parties to adopt principles of just provision requiring that care be taken to perpetuate the conditions and institutions which support justice. And so, while particular *personal goods* cannot be prescribed for the benefit of future generations (due to the veil of ignorance), the protection and perpetuation of general circumstances, conditions, and rules of right might be accomplished by an adoption of principles of just provision. Indeed, due to their *own* primary good of self-transcendence (in the form of "import transference"), the parties would be motivated to do just that. The motive of self-transcendence in the original position thus extends all rules of justice among contemporaries into the future. Furthermore, it is an extension without limit. So long as there can be moral personalities (i.e., persons with the capacity for a sense of justice), there may be just institutions, and the parties will wish these institutions to become actual and to flourish.

*Some conclusions.* Each of these three arguments has been presented from the point of view of the original position; that is to say in each case I have attempted to follow the prescribed rules and procedures of the original position and to avoid the use of data excluded by the veil of ignorance. We are prepared now to draw a few tentative working conclusions.

First of all, from the argument from self-transcendence we conclude: (a) In order to protect and preserve their personally cherished goals and values (unknown in the original position), the parties would agree to principles that would insure the continued availability of primary goods. The argument from generational ignorance yields this conclusion: (b) From the point of view of the original position, all generations have equal right to just and impartial treatment and provision. From the point of view of actual life (due to the immutability of the past), *future* generations have a *prima facie* claim upon the living for equal care, concern, provision, and protection from harm. Finally, from the "argument from loyalty to justice" we conclude: (c) The circumstances of justice, just institutions, and social conditions that lead to a sense of justice are to be preserved into the future, so long as there are moral personalities to benefit thereby.

From these arguments and conclusions, a "draft principle of just provision" might be drawn as follows:

*Always act so that the availability of primary goods, circumstances of justice, and just institutions to future generations will be assured, consistent with the preservation of the just rights of the living.*

This is fine as a beginning, but it is only a beginning, since several qualifications are in order.

To begin, there is the question of the available knowledge and the capacity to affect the future course of events; i.e., the so-called "possibility condition." Now the parties would surely understand that, in actual life, they would be neither omniscient nor omnipresent. Their eventual principle of just provision should reflect this. (Because I have discussed this point at some length earlier in the dissertation, I will not repeat it here (Cf. pp. 50-51, above).)

Even with this restriction, our "draft principle" has a decidedly utilitarian tone to it, and thus might be quite unacceptable to the parties of a Rawlsian original position. For instance, the parties might be concerned that they might find themselves members of a generation of whom unreasonably high sacrifices might be demanded in order to maximize advantages across several generations. (As noted at the beginning of this chapter, we of the late twentieth century may well belong to such a generation.) Should there not, then, be a "utility floor" (similar to that implied by the difference principle) below which a generation should *not* be required to go in making just provision for the future? It would seem, from Rawls's point of view, that no generation should have to reduce its expectations so severely that it moves from a state of "moderate scarcity" to a condition of "acute scarcity," thus relinquishing the circumstances that support the special conception of justice (and the priority of equal liberty). But what of lesser, yet still considerable, sacrifices? What, in general, is required of the living? According to what rules do we determine a fair contribution to the well-being of future generations?

At this point we run out of the supporting data and assumptions necessary to carry this inquiry forward. To proceed further, we would, like Rawls, have to examine and assess strategies of choice-with-uncertainty and a risk-aversion (Cf. Rawls, §§26-29). In order to contain the scope of this dissertation, I have chosen to omit this difficult consideration. In addition, if we were to continue this line of inquiry, we would also need to expand our analyses of various modes of provision for the future, and attempt to devise rules for choosing among the menu of possible policies (Cf. §41, above).

Suffice it to say that, in the interest of minimizing the risk to their future prospects, the parties would likely place a limit on the claims that (from the standpoint of actual life) future generations might place upon their own. Thus they would not allow utilitarian imperatives to mandate ruin for the present in behalf of the future. Justice as fairness prescribes "fairness" to all generations.

*A tentative abstract principle of just provision.* We are ready, then, to state our somewhat less-than-final "abstract principle of just provision":

*The generation of the living is to adopt and effect policies of care and provision such that the availability of primary goods, circumstances of justice, and just institutions to future generations will be assured, subject to the limitations of available knowledge and capability, and to the limits of fair sacrifice.*

#### **47. Just Provision as a Practical Principle of Justice**

If our abstract principle of just provision is to lead to a practical *principle*, we must supply evidence that the principle would be complied with in a well-ordered society; that is to say, that the principle would be "stable." As we seek this evidence, we may or may not find that the abstract principle will require modification before it is found to be tenable as a practical principle of justice. Fortunately, our earlier discussion of the need for self transcendence will provide most of the evidence that we are looking for.

*The motive for compliance.* To begin, I would like to adopt a *negative* approach to the question of stability. Rawls, we will recall, holds that a sense of justice makes one liable, in the violation thereof, to the "moral sentiments" of guilt and shame. Similarly, I have argued that a failure to identify with self-transcendent projects, causes, and ideals, creates feelings of *alienation*. We are therefore led to ask: What are the consequences (in terms of shame, guilt, alienation, etc.) of a failure to make just provision for future generations? (Recall that, consistent with Rawls's "full compliance" assumption, we are referring here to a well ordered society. Furthermore, I am assuming, with Rawls, that in a well ordered society, the sense of justice among *contemporaries* is stable.) The members of such a self-serving generation might have to entertain such unpleasant consequences as these: (a) They might have to live and die with the realization that future persons would likely, with good reason, regard their well ordered, but unproviding generation with resentment, indignation, and contempt<sup>12</sup>. (b) Presumably, the members of a well ordered society would be mindful that their fortunate condition was the result of a long, laborious historical process of gradual moral progress, yet, in the face of this knowledge, they would willfully decline to be part of this just historical community. Such an attitude would exact a high penalty in terms of lost self-esteem. This would, in turn, make them liable to feelings of *guilt* and *alienation*.. (c) It would clearly follow from this that members of the unproviding generation would face the shame of falling far short of their capacity to act as free and rational agents. Rawls has written that:

The desire to act justly derives in part from the desire to express most fully what we are or can be, namely free and equal rational beings with a liberty to choose . . . . Acting unjustly is acting in a manner that fails to express our nature as a free and equal rational being. Such actions therefore strike at our self-respect, our sense of our own worth, and the experience of this loss is shame. We have acted as though we belonged to a lower order, as though we were a creature whose first principles are decided by natural contingencies. (p. 256) This awareness, I suggest, would place a heavy burden upon the consciences and self-esteem of the members of the improvident generation<sup>13</sup>.

Finally, (d) those who failed to provide for the future might attempt to rationalize this policy by arguing that they really had no projects or institutions worth preserving. This remedy would likely prove to be far worse than the disorder which prompted it. Why? Because such an excuse would entail the dreadful self-deprecating admission that the activities and products of the generation, and presumably of most members thereof, were meaningless, insignificant, and transitory.

In the light of the points developed earlier in this chapter, the positive benefits of complying with a principle of just provision now becomes quite clear. I trust that a brief mention of these familiar benefits will suffice. First, (a) self-respect is enhanced by the understanding that the result of one's labors and talents will endure. This satisfaction follows, in part, from a hope and expectation that these consequences of one's life career, and thus oneself, will be appreciated in the future; (b) a knowledge that "things that matter" will endure eases the pain of the universal knowledge of personal physical mortality. (c) The Aristotelian principle is manifested in the creation of things (e.g., art objects, scientific theories, literary works, philosophical systems, etc.) of ever-greater subtlety and complexity. Just provision allows for further advances in projects to which one has contributed his work. Consequently, one is less inclined to feel that all his effort and skill devoted to the advancement of his chosen art, science, or craft, "were for nothing." This leads us directly to the next point: (d) According to the law of import-transference, things, places, institutions, and ideals valuable to persons are valued for themselves. The principle of just provision adds assurance that *intrinsic* goods will last, which is, in turn, a good *to* persons who value these intrinsic goods (i.e., who have transferred import to these things). (e) Persons who act in behalf of posterity display their capacity and desire to act rationally and autonomously; i.e., they "express most that [they] can be, namely, free and equal rational beings with a liberty to choose" (p. 256, also see p. 239, above). Finally, (f) those who plan and act from interest and concern for the unborn feel that they are a part of an historical moral-community-in-time; that they are part of a scheme, the significance of which transcends immediate time and circumstance.

For reasons such as these, I would suggest that members of a well-ordered society, having a sense of justice toward each other and motivated by a need for self-transcendence, would also be strongly motivated to provide for the future. This motive would be sufficient to prompt them to adopt and to act according to a principle of just provision. Furthermore, I suspect (but I will not attempt to prove) that this motive for compliance is strong enough that our abstract principle of just provision might be accepted, virtually intact, as a *practical* principle of justice between generations.

This does not, however, complete our task. For even if we have found warrant to believe that our principle of just provision *would* be complied with, we have yet to demonstrate that such compliance would be a personal good. In other words, I have not proven that this principle of right is *congruent* with a rational persons' good.

*Congruence: What is at issue?* Recall, for a moment, the basic structure of Rawls's theory. Stated briefly (too briefly for any purpose other than review), the order of priority is as follows: First, the index of primary goods (derived and explicated through the thin theory of the good) serves as a premise in the formal derivation (in the original position) of the principles of justice. The principles,

in turn, "constrain" the full theory of the good, which defines and determines personal goods, moral virtue, and social values (Cf. pp. 224-5, above). This means that nothing which violates the *right* can count as a ("full") good. But while the principles of justice (i.e., social right) set the bounds of the good, they do not determine the *content* thereof.

Now the question of congruence is simply this: Is the ("full") good consistent with justice? Even more, are they mutually supportive? Stated thus, alongside the previous paragraph, these questions appear to be logical nullities; i.e., by stipulation, goodness and justice *must* be consistent. Fortunately, there is more to it than this. Rawls *also* offers an independent definition of the good for a person; namely, the successful pursuit of "a rational plan of life." This definition is applied, in turn, to the definition of "moral virtue" (having qualities that it would be rational to want in one's associates) and "social value" (having qualities that it would be rational to want in one's community). With the independent definition of good at hand, the question of congruence is "opened." We can, like Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic*, ask if it is to one's personal advantage to be just. As Rawls puts it: "It remains to be shown that that this disposition to take up and to be guided by the standpoint of justice accords with the individual's good" (p. 576). And the following sentence indicates why we should now be particularly interested in this question: "Whether these two points of view are congruent is likely to be a crucial factor in determining stability" (p. 567). The question of congruence, by the way, can be viewed from the point of view either of *justice* or *goodness*. Thus we may ask, does "a person's rational plan of life affirm and support his sense of justice?" Conversely, we may ask "do the various desiderata of a well ordered society and . . . its just arrangements contribute to the good of its members?" (p. 513).

Now it follows from all this that a "principle of just provision for the future" must be seen (in fact, and not by definition) to constrain the good ("rational life plans") if it is to be a genuine principle of justice. In other words, it must be shown that no bonafide rational life plan can *violate* the principle of just provision. Viewed positively, by asking if just provision is congruent with the good of a person in a well ordered society, we are asking: (a) would a person seeking to make just provision for future generations be seeking that which would contribute to a "rational plan of life" for himself? (b) Is a personal disposition to make just provision for the future the sort of quality that it is rational for a person to want in his associates? In other words, is just provision a moral virtue? Finally, (c) are the qualities of a community with active policies of just provision the sort of qualities that it is rational for a person to desire in his society? In other words, is a policy of just provision a social value to living members of that society?

I believe that just provision can be shown to be congruent with all three senses of the good. Furthermore, this claim of congruence may be supported with material developed earlier in this chapter. I will not attempt an extensive and multi-faceted argument in support of the congruence of just provision and personal good, since such an exercise would involve a tedious recapitulation of familiar ideas. Instead, I will assume that the foregoing account of (a) the *justice* of fair provision for the future, and (b) the *good* of caring for unborn generations, offers abundant supporting arguments in favor of congruence. I cannot, from this perspective, conceive of any clear inconsistency between (a) this principle of justice, and (b) these traits of goodness. But while I will not present a

full and detailed case for congruence, some suggestive fragments of such a case might be illuminating.

Why, then, might we believe that a person's good is congruent with the principle of just provision? If our foregoing analyses of the bases and nature of self-transcendence are correct, it would seem that no person would rationally choose (i.e., choose with sufficient knowledge and "deliberate rationality") a life plan that is without transcending meaning and direction, and unproductive of results of lasting significance. The principles of moral psychology suggest that such a life, pursued wholly for oneself, would be empty, meaningless, and the source of self-contempt, shame, guilt, and alienation.

Why, conversely, might we conclude that the principle of just provision is congruent with personal good? As noted earlier, a just society is a "union of social unions" in which the good of *each* is enhanced and amplified through the cooperative effort of *all*. Accordingly, just institutions, functioning in behalf of future generations, offers the means through which the individual's personal need for self-transcendence can become effective and actualized. By pooling his talents and efforts with others, in a just "social union" of complementary roles, the individual may find that his contributions in behalf of posterity (and responsive to his need for self-transcendence) will be far more effective and lasting than they might be had he attempted to express his "just concern" for posterity on his own. In this sense, institutionalized just provision in a well ordered society can be seen to be congruent with the personal good of expressing self-transcendence through an effective caring for posterity.

In general, the findings of this chapter indicate that the person whose plan of life is responsive to his most basic human needs will desire to perceive himself as a contributing member of an inclusive community in time<sup>14</sup>. Accordingly, he will be motivated to act, in the course of his lifetime, in behalf of future persons; i.e., caring for the future is a personal good. Furthermore, those qualities in his associates that enhance his plans to enrich the life of the unborn will be perceived to be *moral* qualities, or "virtues." Finally, those *just* institutions of society that promote, exemplify, and amplify his efforts in behalf of the future will display, in their just provision, a consistency with and a complement to, his personal good of self-transcendence. In other words, these institutions, by endorsing and acting out the principle of just provision, will be congruent with his individual good.

*Stability, congruence and "the moral paradox."* While stressing the good of seeking just provision for the future, we must not lose sight of the principle of "the moral paradox." Stated briefly, the paradox holds that personal interest is best served by serving others, or at least by serving objective ends (Cf. 222, above). Rawls expresses the paradox in this manner:

A person is happy then during those periods when he is successfully carrying through a rational plan and he is with reason confident that his efforts will come to fruition. He may be said to approach blessedness to the extent that conditions are supremely favorable and his life complete. Yet it does not follow that in advancing a rational plan one is pursuing hap-

piness, not at least as this is normally meant. For one thing, happiness is not one aim among others that we aspire to, but the fulfillment of the whole design itself. (p. 550)

By applying this paradox to the issue of the duty to posterity we conclude that one will best satisfy the need for self-transcendence not by seeking it directly but through a genuine identification with and a concern for transcending projects, institutions, and ideals. Accordingly, a practical principle of just provision will "serve" the living best if it is explicitly oriented toward the benefit of the unborn. Paradoxically, if a principle of just provision betrays ulterior personal interests of the living, then the benefits to the living are compromised. To paraphrase the scripture: "That generation which loses itself in just concern for the future of its community, shall find its good in self-esteem, vigorous purpose, and transcending significance." Like all such epigrams, this one suffers from oversimplicity and pious generality. Even so, it serves well as a brief summary of some of the key findings of this chapter.

With this finding we have arrived at last at an answer to that cynical challenge which opened this dissertation: "What do I owe posterity; after all, what has posterity ever done for me?" Our duty to posterity is not of the form of an obligation; i.e., it is *not* a contractual agreement to exchange favors. To be sure, posterity does not actually exist *now*. Even so, in a strangely abstract and metaphorical sense, posterity may extend profound favors for the living. For posterity exists as an *idea*, a potentiality, and a valid object of trans-personal devotion, concern, purpose, and commitment. Without this idea and potentiality, our lives would be confined, empty, bleak, pointless, and morally impoverished. In acting for posterity's good we act for our own as well. Paradoxically, we owe it to *ourselves* to be duty bound to posterity, in a manner which focuses upon future needs rather than our own. By fulfilling our just duties to posterity, we may now earn and enjoy posterity's favors.

If my analysis has been sound, this strange and profound conclusion is supported by Rawls's general theory of justice, unencumbered by the *ad hoc* restrictions of the present time of entry and heads of families conditions, and enriched by the motivation assumption of self-transcendence.

*The stability of the principle of just provision: A summary.* "The most stable conception of justice," says Rawls, will presumably display the following three features: (a) it will be "rooted not in abnegation but in affirmation of the self;" (b) it will be "perspicuous with our reason!"; and (c) it will be "congruent with our good."<sup>15</sup> If this is so, this entire chapter constitutes an argument for the stability of the principle of just provision. In the first place, (1) our exposition and analysis of the need for self-transcendence clearly indicates that the principle of just provision is "rooted not in abnegation but in affirmation of the self." Furthermore, (2) our derivation of the *abstract* principle of just provision suggests that such a principle is "perspicuous with our reason," in that the principle follows from the rules of the original position which, as we know, displays a model of "rational decision procedures." In addition, (3) we have just sketched an argument to support the belief that the principle of just provision is *congruent* with personal good. Finally, (4) we have, throughout this chapter, suggested some direct arguments in support of the stability of the principle of just provision. If these various presentations have been successful, we might tentatively suppose that the *abstract* principle of just provision *is* stable; that is to say, that it would generate its own support and thus



would be complied with in a well ordered society. Accordingly, the parties in the original position might have warrant to adopt the principle as a *practical* principle of justice between generations. With this tentative conclusion at hand, the essential work of this chapter, and of this dissertation, is complete.

#### 48. Summing Up: The "Guiding Questions" Revisited

In the first chapter of this dissertation I presented four questions which, I said, would guide the subsequent content of the work (p. 15, above). It would now be appropriate, by way of summary, to restate these questions and to answer them in the light of the findings of this dissertation.

(a) *Is Rawls's search for "principles of justice between generations" logically coherent and conceptually intelligible?* In Chapter III we determined that the general notion of the duty to posterity was quite coherent and intelligible. Following an exposition of Rawls's general theory (Chapter IV) and his position concerning "justice between generations" (Chapter V), we further concluded that his approach to the posterity issue was, in general, logically comprehensible (§35).

(b) *Is Rawls's derivation of these principles consistent with the general tenets or structure of his theory?* Just provision for future generations is quite consistent with Rawls's general theory. However, in developing his particular principle of justice between generations (i.e., "the just savings principle"), he introduces assumptions into the original position (specifically his "present time of entry interpretation" and "heads of families condition") that violates his general criteria of right; in particular, his criteria of *generality* and *universality* (Chapter VI, §§38-40).

(c) *Has Rawls presented the best available argument in behalf of posterity, in the context of his general theory?* If the findings of this chapter are sound, then clearly he has not. Rawls's argument for just savings is limited, both in terms of the *manner* of provision for the future, and in terms of the temporal extent of provision (i.e., "the span of responsibility"). Nonetheless, Rawls may have, undeveloped within his thin theory of the good and his position concerning moral psychology, the resources with which to develop a strong and wide-ranging set of principles of justice between generations. In a word, from his own perspective, Rawls could have presented a much better case in behalf of posterity than, in fact, he did.

(d) *Might a representative member of a future generation conclude that his rights and interests have been justly served if predecessor generations had acted according to the "principles of justice" and have been motivated by the "sense of justice" as articulated by Rawls?* This is essentially a restatement of the previous question, but from the point of view of a future person. The previous answer applies, but with these amplifications: (a) a future person might suffer from earlier failures of "just anticipation" and "just forbearance," which are both aspects of provision for the future that are not apparent in Rawls's principle of just savings; (b) a future person might live with (or die from) the catastrophic consequences of policies enacted many generations earlier for the benefit of a short-

sighted generation and its immediate successor. In other words, generations beyond Rawls's limited "span of responsibility" might pay dearly for the acts of thoughtless predecessors. However, once again, these weaknesses in Rawls's theory are not beyond remedy. If I am correct in my assessment of his theory, there may be means *within* the theory for bringing Rawls's views on justice between generations into closer accord with "considered moral judgment" concerning the posterity question.

In addition to the original "guiding questions," we might ask a final question: *(e) Is the contractarian approach an effective means for articulating and attempting to solve the issue of the duty to posterity?* I believe that it is. Even more, I would suggest that Rawls's utilization of the contract method as a means toward solving the posterity question may be his most significant contribution to the issue. "The original position," Rawls's imaginative "expository device," displays, for ready analysis and review, the procedures of rational choice that lead to general principles of justice. By including in the rules of the original position such general conceptual constraints as *universality*, *generality*, and the prohibition against time preference, Rawls allows future persons to serve as virtual spokesmen for their own potential interests. Thus, through this suggestive thought experiment, some very subtle and difficult ethical puzzles concerning the unborn may be made more tractable.

Rawls's argument for justice between generations, whatever its particular limitations and errors might be, has suggested a promising and fruitful approach to the vitally important issue of the duty to posterity. Judging from recent responses to *A Theory of Justice*, both from within and outside the philosophical profession, both the contractarian approach to justice and the issue of the duty to posterity may, as a result of Rawls's efforts, become more prominent in learned writing, discussion, and teaching. A concern for the future is becoming ever more a part of the academic present. Rawls has introduced a provocative conception of justice into contemporary thought and has forcefully raised the question of the duty of the living to their unborn successors. Surely, through his successful effort to restore to philosophical discourse these recently neglected, yet enduring and substantive moral issues, John Rawls has ably and admirably fulfilled *his* duty to posterity.

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## NOTES

1. A definitive contemporary ecological ethic (incorporating modern philosophical concepts and current scientific data) has not to my knowledge been written. Many biologists have the inclination but lack the philosophical skills to do it, while the philosophers who might have the capability, have not displayed the interest or inclination to approach the topic. A noteworthy exception is Holmes Rolston's suggestive and illuminating paper, "Is There an Ecological Ethic?" (1975). Rolston presents some of the significant problems, opportunities, and insights to be found in an ecological approach to ethics.
2. In a brilliant and challenging paper, "Policy Science: Analysis or Ideology?" (1972), Laurence Tribe suggests that the use of this familiar and time-tested economic concept of "cost-benefit analysis" might contain some troublesome moral presuppositions.
3. Rawls is not, in this case, referring directly to self transcendence; rather he is speaking of the sense of justice. Later in this chapter, I will attempt to show that the motive of self transcendence is a basic component of the sense of justice, and thus that Rawls could very well be referring here to self transcendence.
4. The social-psychological theories of Mead and Dewey are exceedingly complex (a circumstance aggravated by the obscurity of their writing styles) and I haven't the space even to attempt an adequate summary thereof.
5. Unfortunately, the "law of import transference" can overwhelm prudence and justice and thus have lamentable results. For example, consider the case of the suppression and censorship of ideas and art-forms in which persons with effective political power perceive no "qualities" of significant, beauty, or "redeeming social importance."
6. I am grateful to Dr. Michael J. Parsons for bringing this criticism to my attention.
7. Even if we conclude that alienation and self transcendence are 'antitheses,' there is no contradiction in stating that a person is transcendent in regard to some X, while at the same time alienated from a distinct Y. The life of Thoreau is a case-in-point.
8. Thus Jesus said: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matthew 16:25). In a contemporary paraphrase of this scripture, philosopher William Frankena writes: "If we may believe psychologists like Erich Fromm and others, . . . for one's life to be the best possible, even in the nonmoral sense of best, the activities and experiences which form one side of life must (1) be largely concerned with objects or causes other than one's own welfare and (2) must be such as to give one a sense of achievement and excellence. Otherwise its goodness will remain truncated and incomplete. He that loses his life in sense (1) shall find it in sense (2)." (76-77) For a suggestive and influential application of "the moral paradox" to ecological issues, see Garrett Hardin's (1968) essay, "The Tragedy of the Commons."

9. There is further reason to resist the temptation to engage in a thoroughgoing *exegesis* of Rawls's book. As I discovered in an earlier (and now discarded) attempt to extract implicit affirmations of self-transcendence from *A Theory of Justice*, such an enterprise, of necessity, draws one into a logical and conceptual thicket. (The earlier draft of this section ran to over seventeen pages.) If such a task is to be properly attempted, I found, the logical cartography of Rawls's theory must be carefully drawn, and still more fine definitions and distinctions must be explicated. Worse still, most of this exacting logical and conceptual labor serves no further purpose in the dissertation. I will spare the reader, and myself, from such an ordeal. Instead, following a singly procedural paragraph, I will cite three clear indications that Rawls does, in fact, endorse the notion of self-transcendence. That will be the end of it.
10. He admits as much when he writes that "this problem . . . subjects any ethical theory to severe if not impossible tests." (p. 282)
11. Rawls believes that the original position displays what should, ideally, be a deductive exercise in rational choice. If the deliberations in the original position *are*, therefore, purely formal, a time sequence or "agenda" of deliberation is quite superfluous. I introduce it here simply for purposes of exposition.
12. I am employing here, as a "motivation assumption" the notion of "the regard of posterity" which appeared briefly in Chapter VI (pp. 189-90, above). I believe that "the regard of posterity argument" would carry some positive weight, both in the choice of the abstract principle in the original position and in the question of compliance in actual life. However, in order to save space, I have not attempted to develop a separate case for this motive. I must therefore not place great weight upon it in the derivation of a practical principle of just provision.
13. Rawls is expressing here his "Kantian interpretation" of justice as fairness. As I noted earlier, the suitability of the "interpretation" as a philosophical analogy is questionable, to say the least. Be that as it may, it seems clear that Rawls is characterizing his *own* theory in this passage, however well it may, or may not, apply to Kant's moral philosophy.
14. However, as I noted in §42, men should also perceive themselves as part of a larger community-in-time of nature, comprising other creatures, sustaining planetary resources, and the physical environment, combined into the ecosystem. That they generally do not in our own culture and age is, I suggest, a profound disorder thereof which impoverishes the human spirit and *alienates* man from his home planet. Unfortunately, it would seem that Rawls's theory of justice reflects this alienation of man from nature.
15. For the purposes of clarity and continuity, I have rearranged the order of these features. I trust that this has not altered Rawls's meaning or intent.