

“evil” in a post-Hitlerian world, not because the man himself did not commit great evil (all are in agreement that he did) but because his legacy has come to stand for evil itself. Such a benchmark, as Michael Allen Gillespie argues, leaves us ill-equipped to make judgments of people or events that are not quite as bad as the Holocaust.

Yet the best aspects of this collection arise from precisely this attempt to grapple with the generation of evil and the human efforts to come to terms with it. “Evil” remains an unsolved and intriguing question not only for political theorists but also for theologians, ethicists, historians, and philosophers. The collected essays take up the central question that—it is presumed—must be answered before one can take an ethico-political stand: How do we properly determine what evil is?

A plurality of the authors conceptualize this modern problem of evil as arising from the difficulty of identifying evil within liberal, democratic pluralism. Malachi Haco-hen, who most engages with and against his fellow essayists, argues that this problem, our inability to call out evil and contest it, is rooted deeply in liberalism’s history. Thomas Spragens, Jr., sees the American polity as trapped between those with an absolutist vision of good and evil and those whose “soft form of nihilism” (p. 191) leads them to a “pan-nonjudgmentalism” (p. 208) that paralyzes their ability to even recognize evil. While I may disagree with this particular diagnosis (who, exactly, are these nihilists, other than students afraid to develop a central argument?), these authors spell out the issues and the possible effects of such a dualism with intriguing histories and justifications.

Other contributors investigate the intellectual historical conditions that allow for or encourage our conceptions of evil. Particularly noteworthy here are the editor herself and Stanley Hauerwas. Grant identifies a particular dynamic of Rousseau’s thought in our willingness to blame evil on systemic or structural conditions. Such a conception, she argues, leads to a Manichean totalization that encourages radical revolutionary attitudes: If society is to blame for man’s fallen state, then the necessary corollary is that social structures must be (violently) overthrown and reworked anew. Hauerwas, in his essay, returns to St. Augustine to offer a denial of evil as existing in the world. His intriguing reading of Christianity’s history attempts to recenter humility, the idea that one can never know God’s intentions, as the proper implication of Augustine’s narrative of pride as the cause of evil results.

As with all collections, the essays are uneven. The need to carefully lay out the historical and intellectual conditions of previous attempts to grapple with evil occasionally overcomes any sort of contemporary application or even significance. Other essays approach banality, and not in the Arendtian sense. Something seems disingenuous in a long, footnote-laden, discursively complex analysis that, after much wheezing, teaches us something that is already

widely assumed in the West: that, for example, what we call “female genital mutilation” is an evil done to innocent girls. This is not to single out Elizabeth Kiss, whose essay treating this issue also develops a nuanced critique of torture. It is, instead, to ask why the contributors often stack the deck, scoring points against known (and commonly agreed-upon) evils instead of engaging with those who claim evil in more common American practices. It is easy to condemn Hitler or forced child marriage, but neither seems up for debate in contemporary Western society. What about other, more germane but less agreed-upon evils: what some call “male genital mutilation” and others call “circumcision”? Is imprisoning animals and eating their flesh evil? What about the privatization of water and food? Or “pro-life” or “pro-choice” legislation, both of which are denounced as perpetrating evil? If we are truly to confront and judge evil, should we not at least know where the contributors would take us?

Thus, the best essay in the collection, by Peter Euben, describes the localized and specific nature of everyday evils. Euben examines how one particular work of literature, Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day* (1989), raises questions of quotidian evil by contesting the protagonist’s conflict between duty (he has been a technically superb butler) and judgment (as a superb butler, he has ignored his employer’s fascism). Indeed, it may be possible that his employ makes it impossible for him to be a moral person, that “the dignity of his profession requires him to be complicit in his own humiliation” (p. 116). The honest reader of the novel, of which Euben seems ideal, comes away not discovering how best to judge evil, but instead questioning how his or her commitments, practices, and habits allow or even encourage the persistence of evil. This provocation alone would make Grant’s volume merit attention. Its ability to put such insights in conversation with ideas from other disciplines makes it exemplary.

**Poverty and Inequality.** Edited by David B. Grusky and Ravi Kanbur. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006. 200p. \$55.00 cloth, \$21.95 paper.

**Capabilities Equality: Basic Issues and Problems.**

Edited by Alexander Kaufman. New York: Routledge, 2005. 224p. \$125.00.

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— S. Abu Turab Rizvi, *University of Vermont*

Two trends, each a generation in the making, have affected the recent study of poverty and inequality. In 1979, Amartya Sen asked “Equality of What?” in his Tanner Lecture at Stanford University. There, and in numerous articles and books since, Sen and his collaborators developed a rich account of poverty, inequality, and of human well-being more generally considered. This work, though its original basis was in the classical political economy of subsistence and human freedom, grew to be buttressed by

a wide range of ethical, social, and other economic matters. In so doing, it encouraged the development of the second trend, the greater interweaving of developments in the different social sciences and in political and philosophical theory that might be brought to bear on the consideration of poverty and inequality. There has come to be a greater understanding by economists, sociologists, political theorists, and philosophers of what they might learn from one another.

These two edited volumes reflect these tendencies in different ways and in them Sen's approach plays a central role. In *Poverty and Inequality*, David Grusky, a sociologist, and Ravi Kanbur, an economist, bring together "an all-star cast of economists, sociologists, and philosophers and [ask] them to weigh in on the conceptual challenges that must be met in devising new approaches to measuring and understanding inequality and poverty" (p. xi). In *Capabilities Equality*, Alexander Kaufman, a philosopher, has brought together a series of contributions that focus specifically on the elaboration and evaluation of Sen's work on the capability approach (CA).

Sen's approach arose from his criticism of views that see poverty or inequality assessed solely in terms of income or welfare. While income may be necessary to achieving well-being, it is only a means, and people and societies differ in the capacity to convert income or commodities into valuable achievements. Welfarist approaches that emphasize utility or desire fulfillment also are defective, partly because the impact of the development process cannot fit neatly into a metric based on a single scale. Sen argues that people choose for reasons other than their own interest and that "happiness or desire fulfillment represents only one aspect of human existence" (*Resources, Values and Development*, 1984, p. 512). Importantly, social conditioning or adaptation to circumstances can sway perceptions of welfare or utility. Finally, the goal of utility maximization is to affect their satisfaction, a state of persons, and so discounts their agency and freedom. For these reasons, he champions another approach, one that emphasizes what people are able to do or be, which he calls their functionings. Capability is the freedom to achieve valuable functionings, which can be simple, such as escaping avoidable illness, or complex, such as being able to appear in public without shame.

Grusky and Kanbur start off their volume with a useful intellectual history of poverty and inequality assessment in economics and sociology. Their introduction, which ends by making a case for interdisciplinary research in this area, provides a useful scaffolding on which to place the contributions that follow. Amartya Sen's chapter uses the example of China's poverty reduction and inequality increase to argue that the CA allows one to capture important dimensions of the development experience that the income paradigm misses. Martha Nussbaum's chapter begins by stressing the commonality of her approach and

Sen's, especially with regard to the special position of women, but proceeds to take Sen to task for his reluctance to a) assemble a list of capabilities a society ought to pursue and to b) define the minimum amounts of these that are compatible with justice. Nussbaum also argues for an Aristotelian rather than Kantian underpinning for the social contract tradition. In his very clear contribution, the economist Francois Bourguignon addresses the impasse in the development of the income approach to poverty and inequality: While the approach has been almost fully mastered, reduction of income poverty does not always reduce feelings of social exclusion. This points to the need for a richer approach that focuses on opportunities or capabilities: The challenge is to measure poverty in this multidimensional way that is still feasible. He argues that we currently fall well short of this goal but that there has been some progress, as well as prospects for more. While it is written from an economic standpoint, his chapter recognizes work in the sociology of exclusion, the topic of the next two chapters.

William Julius Wilson defends the use of the concept of "underclass," a term he uses to encapsulate the jobless and socially isolated urban poor. He argues that it is not just income shortfalls but social isolation and weak attachment to labor markets that lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena of poverty in the United States. Douglas Massey also focuses attention on the geography of urban poverty, pointing out patterns of residential segregation by race, thus reinforcing Wilson's contribution, though his concerns differ somewhat from Wilson's (p. 130). The last contributor to the Grusky-Kanbur volume, Martha Albertson Fineman, a legal scholar, criticizes philosophical, sociological, and economic approaches to the family, arguing that they all need to reconsider the way in which family is conceived, the better to understand poverty and inequality in the United States. The traditional family structure, she writes, is increasingly less common, and in it there is a differential sharing of the costs and benefits of the family enterprise.

Each of the authors makes an important contribution to the multidimensional understanding of poverty and inequality. But the authors differ significantly in their strategies, and any hope of a significant and novel collaboration across disciplines is not evidenced in the volume. Partly, this is because the first three chapters focus on international development and the last three (more sociological) chapters on the United States. The authors are more apt to defend their own positions than to incorporate insights from other approaches. Nevertheless, the individual contributions are notably clear and well written and encapsulate each particular approach well. The volume makes for important reading for the general scholar and for the graduate student who wishes to find out how poverty and inequality are treated in different fields.

Alexander Kaufman's book is more tightly focused on the adequacy of Sen's CA and is dominated by contributions by philosophers. The first part of this volume focuses on Nussbaum's elaboration of Sen's approach. Her chapter here, which is very close in content to her contribution to the Grusky-Kanbur volume, reprises her list of fundamental human capabilities and her view that "a society that does not guarantee these to all its citizens, at some appropriate threshold level, falls short of being a fully just society" (p. 51). Richard Arneson argues against the threshold view, saying that the moral importance of keeping each individual at a "good enough" level, regardless of other concerns, is not clear. The section ends with Kaufman responding to Arneson, arguing that the CA extends beyond a threshold view. But this debate remains inconclusive, with Kaufman concluding, "it is a question that deserves further examination" (p. 76). Part II addresses the relation of the CA to other types of egalitarian theory. In a subtle chapter, Peter Vallentyne argues that the CA is close to, though not the same as, an approach that gives priority to opportunity for well-being. Timothy Hinton considers the relation of Nussbaum's analysis (based on unequal economic and social circumstances) to a feminist analysis emphasizing relations of domination and subordination, arguing that each approach enriches the other. Kaufman closes this section by arguing for the distinctiveness of the CA from the opportunities account of G. A. Cohen. He argues convincingly not only that Sen's focus on achievement as well as freedom to achieve is coherent but also that it enriches egalitarian thought.

Part III moves from conceptual issues to those of implementation. In separate chapters, Victoria Kamsler and David Wasserman consider attempts to expand the CA to focus on environmental and disability issues, respectively. A reason Sen has hesitated to provide a list of important human capabilities is his view that such a list should be the outcome of democratic deliberation. Sabina Alkire and David Crocker, in complementary chapters, address this issue. Alkire reports on and evaluates interesting field work on participatory discussions that elicit common values and priorities, even in highly unequal communities. Crocker, in another substantial contribution, argues that the CA to international development can and should draw on aspects of thinking on deliberative democracy. Together, these chapters encourage a different way of arriving at capabilities than by listing them a priori.

Kaufman's volume is more demanding on the reader than the Grusky-Kanbur collection since it deals with unresolved and intricate recent debates. It is also more specialized, although the excellent introduction by Kaufman helps the reader who is new to the area. It should be valuable to those who are interested in exploring how the CA intersects with different areas of egalitarian and democratic thought.

**Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism.** By Janet Halley. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006. 418p. \$29.95.

**Simone de Beauvoir's Political Thinking.** Edited by Lori Jo Marso and Patricia Moynagh. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006. 136p. \$50.00 cloth, \$18.00 paper.  
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— Mary Hawkesworth, *Rutgers University*

Dispelling the myth of the given, probing the tacit presuppositions of dominant discourses, challenging the naturalization of oppressive relations, investigating processes that produce invisibility, demonstrating the deficiencies of reductive arguments, and engaging difference and plurality have been hallmarks of feminist scholarship in general and of feminist theory in particular. Through sustained engagement with canonical texts, disciplinary discourses, and historical and contemporary events, feminist theorists have enabled new ways of seeing and thinking. Has feminist theory exhausted its potential, or worse, become an impediment to emancipatory projects? These two works provide markedly different responses to these questions.

In *Simone de Beauvoir's Political Thinking*, six talented feminist theorists offer new interpretations of Beauvoir, making the case that a brand of antifoundationalist feminist theorizing, attuned to ambiguity and complexity and committed to an ethics of freedom, affords a "radical approach to political thinking" that is particularly useful in a world confronting dilemmas posed by war, torture, and neocolonialism. By contrast, in *Split Decisions*, Janet Halley argues that feminism, an evolving historical practice informed by theories that fuel its will to power, has become "a governance project [which] has a dark side. . . . That dark side includes its vanquished, its prisoners of war, the interests that pay the taxes it has levied and owe the rents it has imposed. Feminism with blood on its hands" (pp. 32–33). Indeed, feminism has become so mired in "paranoid structuralism" and a "moralized mandate to converge" that the world is well advised to take a break from feminism.

Such bold and opposing claims call out for adjudication. Despite Halley's embrace of a version of noncognitivism, which suggests that no rational grounds can be adduced to conclusively defend her "preferences" as a "sex-positive postmodernist" (p. 15), Beauvoir's ethics of ambiguity afford far richer possibilities for reflective judgment even while recognizing the challenges posed by finitude, contingency, and indeterminacy. Beauvoir's conception of ethical action requires judgment in the face of uncertainty, lest our "strivings for freedom be crushed by the dark weight of other things" (*The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 1947, 7).

Halley's construal of and allegations against feminism are dark, but they are also remarkably idiosyncratic. Rather than conceiving feminism as a rich and diverse field of