
It is a common strategy among moral and political philosophers to present the reader with a series of innocuous and reasonable statements, thus lulling him or her into a false sense of security, before revealing that a commitment to said statements requires a commitment to profoundly counter-intuitive or radical conclusions. Peter Singer's *Famine, Affluence, and Morality*, and David Gauthier's *Morals by Agreement* represent obvious examples of this approach, but there are numerous others. In *Whose Body is it Anyway?* Cecile Fabre employs precisely this strategy in order to reveal what she sees as the hidden implications of a set of beliefs which are held by the vast majority of Anglo-American political theorists and which have, as a consequence, come to define the dominant normative approach to resolving questions of social justice and inequality.

Fabre points out that contemporary political theory has become dominated by thinkers who defend some form of liberal egalitarianism. Different theorists have different ideas about what egalitarianism requires, of course, but it is fair to say that there exists among the majority of Anglo-American political theorists a general assumption that it is the job of political institutions to ensure, as far as possible, a just redistribution of wealth and opportunities such that those individuals living under them might be said to live a life that is genuinely their own, and not one forced upon them by lack of such things as wealth or education or status. Hence, egalitarians of different stripes unite around the broad normative claim that it is the responsibility of social and political institutions to make sure that all members of the polity possess those material resources necessary for the living of a life which might be said to be 'free', where freedom is understood to be the capacity to pursue a conception of the good that they themselves have chosen. Fabre is an egalitarian, and thus also supports this view, although her egalitarianism is, in terms of its central principles, a good deal less demanding than that defended by many others. Fabre presents a conception of justice rooted in two central principles: the principle of *sufficiency* (which states that 'individuals have the rights to resources they need to live a minimally flourishing life') and the principle of *autonomy* (which states that 'once everyone has such a life, all individuals should be allowed to enjoy the fruits of their labour in pursuit of their conception of the good') (p. 4). Consequently, Fabre believes that we have obligations of justice to provide all persons with the basic material resources necessary to live a life that is minimally flourishing and that, therefore, social and political institutions are justified in coercively taking these resources from those who have them and giving them to those who need them. Having fulfilled our basic obligations of justice, Fabre argues, we are subsequently justified in enjoying those social, economic and other benefits which arise through our pursuit of our particular ends.

On the face of it, therefore, Fabre's conception of justice appears to represent an interesting, but not all that controversial, contribution to debates about justice, redistribution and autonomy. It does not require that institutions provide all persons with an equal distribution of goods or resources, as 'radical egalitarian' thinkers like Dworkin and Cohen believe, and it does not require that all persons be able to lead their favourite or ideal life. It simply suggests that all people need to have the ability to lead a life in pursuit of ends that have some kind of value. However, as Fabre goes on to show, the principles of sufficiency
and autonomy to which she appeals are in fact very controversial indeed, as evidenced when she outlines their implications with regard to the body. Fabre argues that a commitment to something like the principle of sufficiency—shared by many liberals—requires a commitment to, among other things, the confiscation of live body parts from the able-bodied so that they can be given to the needy, and the harvesting of body parts from corpses for the purposes of transplantation. Similarly, the principle of autonomy establishes the right of individuals to, among other things, buy and sell body parts on the open market, and to buy and sell sexual services on the open market for the purposes of reproduction or pleasure. Such conclusions clearly violate many commonly shared intuitions about the body, and about the implications of egalitarian redistribution, and will not sit easily with many readers. But Fabre’s arguments possess a compelling simplicity. Take the principle of sufficiency, for example. If the point of social and political institutions is to ensure that individuals possess the necessary material resources to live a life that they believe to be worthwhile, Fabre argues, then they will need, among other things, a functioning heart and liver, and it will be important that their lives are not blighted by constant pain. Fabre’s implicit charge is that, in all the many and interminable debates had by egalitarian philosophers about whether such things as education or wealth or status or culture are important to one’s ability to pursue a conception of the good, something important has been forgotten, namely, the obvious role that a functioning body has in our ability to pursue the kinds of lives that egalitarians would have us pursue. Egalitarians may be right that education is important to the pursuit of a valuable life, but it is not as important as a functioning heart. And while multiculturalists might be right that access to a culture is important to one’s capacity to live a flourishing life, it is surely less important (or, at least, as important) as access to a set of kidneys, or a liver, or healthy bone marrow.

Fabre is not the first to make this point, of course. Nozick did so too in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, although his aim in doing so was to de-bunk egalitarian arguments in favour of redistribution, and to illustrate the intuitive appeal of the principle of self-ownership. In this context, Fabre’s argument is original and not a little courageous. Rather than argue against Nozick’s reductio absurdum, as do most egalitarians, Fabre accepts it, agrees that the coercive redistribution of body parts is a necessary implication of egalitarian justice, and then proceeds to argue in its favour.

It is not possible to go into the details of Fabre’s argument here, suffice to say that it is technically rigorous, analytically tight, and rather more persuasive than many readers may hope. It is also far-reaching, and in the course of her discussion she tackles topics as diverse as the nature of rights, interests, autonomy, and the complex interactions between these and other ideas. She does so well, and in a manner which yields interesting and original insights into the nature of justice and the demands of egalitarian ideals.

Two critical points are worth mentioning, however. The first is that Fabre’s central argument is weakened by the fact that she leaves certain concepts undertheorized. That is, in order for her to make her central claim—that in certain circumstances, those who have need of a particular body part or organ have the right to require those who are able to provide one to do so—Fabre has to set a lot of things up very quickly. At the very least, she needs to define such ideas as identity, justice, rights, and the body in ways that are persuasive enough to provide a foundation on which to build her normative theory, but that are concise enough to allow her to get on to developing her main point. Fabre spends insufficient time on these establishing sections. For example, while she discusses the ideas of