Maurice Lagueux signe ici un ouvrage éclairant et approfondi sur un sujet complexe qui sera susceptible d'intéresser à la fois les économistes et les philosophes travaillant sur la méthodologie de l'économie. L'écriture est claire, agréable à lire et (malgré quelques rares erreurs typographiques et gallicismes dans la tournure) facilement accessible pour tout lecteur familier avec l'anglais.

Recension d'ouvrage

Intergenerational justice
Axel Gosseries and Lukas H. Meyer (eds.)
Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009

Antoine Verret-Hamelin*

The age of globalization has shown that most of the critical political issues now cross national borders. Climate change and distribution of resources are some examples of problems indicating that the nation-state is probably not the adequate scope of analysis. Domestic conceptions of justice must be *extended* to face these challenges. Furthermore, we must think about these two social concerns with a long term perspective. Otherwise, the responses that we would address them might be superficial: these social concerns, among many others, are examples of issues that not only cross borders, but also generations. International justice and intergenerational justice must both address the question of sovereignty, but the latter has to struggle with the mere *possibility* of cooperation. How can the challenges of intergenerational justice be taken up collectively while most people concerned by them are not even alive yet? What duties and obligations bind us to the next generations? Justice between generations is quite of a challenge to traditional conceptions of justice. Discussing this particular challenge in a volume published in 2009 by Oxford University Press, Axel Gosseries and Lukas H. Meyer assemble fourteen essays in a stimulating book entitled *Intergenerational justice*. While academics from the economic and the political disciplines have brought important contributions to the subject, this volume represents a significant contribution from the philosophical field.

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Even though only a few short passages discuss intergenerational questions in Rawls' *Theory of justice*, it remains the starting point from where justice between generations became an "intriguing philosophical topic" (p. 169) and began to be widely discussed among philosophers. What is of great addition with Gosseries and Meyer's volume is the excellent picture that they offer of the multiple ways in which philosophy can address intergenerational challenges. The non-identity problem, famously brought to light by Derek Parfit, and Rawls' just saving principle are certainly discussed, but fortunately, they do not represent the focus point of the authors' attention. Similarly, contract-based approaches are prominent, but do not suffocate the numerous alternative views. So, while we could say that this volume is a well-balanced contribution, it sometimes gives the impression to be a little scattered.

The first part of the book offers a broad picture of the theories we may use to approach problems regarding intergenerational justice. Most of the major schools of thought in political philosophy are represented, including Libertarianism (Hillel Steiner and Peter Vallentyne), Marxism (Christopher Bertram), and Communautarianism (Janna Thompson). While Daniel Attas tries to articulate Rawlsian Contractualism to make it fit into the intergenerational context, Stephen M. Gardiner and David Heyd explore the serious difficulties of trying to provide any solid contractual account of our obligations to future generations in two enlightening essays. The only approach left out of this collection is Utilitarianism, which the editors warn us about in the introduction. This is quite surprising since, on one hand, Contractualism is predominant in the volume and, on the other hand, there are interesting parallels, which are only mentioned by Attas, between Rawls' just saving principle and Mill's opposition to the endless economic growth obsession (pp. 215-216).

A great contribution in this theoretical section is the defense of perspectives less discussed among academics. Incidentally, these underground approaches are the two editors' contributions: Gosseries offers an informative evaluation of reciprocity models. Reciprocity-based models face some difficulties, especially when dealing with demographic fluctuations. However, their relevance lies on their particular adequacy with the intergenerational context,

which contrasts with many precarious attempts of extending intra-generational theories. As for Lukas H. Meyer and Dominic Roser, they present a detailed analysis of sufficientarianism. This is particularly relevant since threshold-based principles are often used but not so often put under careful examination. Similarly to the reciprocity models, the sufficientarian model is well-suited to the intergenerational realm: some of the reasons to adopt this theory are specific to justice between non-contemporaries and do not even apply to the intra-generational sphere. One of these reasons is how sufficientarianism defines a threshold conception of harm and thereby responds to the non-identity problem.

The second part of the book is dedicated to some specific issues salient in the intergenerational context. These papers discuss topics such as the indeterminacy of future generations' preferences (Krister Bykvist) and the classic problem of the legitimacy of a perpetual constitution (Victor M. Muñiz-Fraticelli). Not surprisingly, most of these specific issues are not merely explored on their own grounds; they are rather used as levers to challenge theoretical standpoints. In the first essay of the section, Rahul Kumar explores the concept of being wronged to show how Scanlonian Contractualism, without any additional innovation in the theory, can best avoid the non-identity problem. Furthermore, Gustaf Arrhenius argues that egalitarianism cannot, for the most part, solve paradoxes of population ethics.

Unfortunately, there is one important topic that is timidly addressed in a volume with such ambition: climate change policies. Clark Wolf's paper addresses the issue, but is in fact mainly preoccupied with the interpretation of Rawls' conception of justice, and its application to the environmental challenges is quite brief. When discussing our obligations towards future people, responding to climate changes should be inevitable. Ecoskepticism should not stop us: in extending justice to include future generations, uncertainties represent one of the main challenges. These uncertainties are partially what motivated the writing of the essays discussed here. However, global warming and climate changes are not like other uncertainties, since what is at stake with these issues is of such a large scale (take for instance the risk of the Himalayan glaciers' meltdown and what it would involve for billions of people). With environmental issues, the uncertainty

concerns the harm that our present technological and industrial choices will impose to future generations. It brings us to the commonly called 'time bomb' problem, which occurs when the negative effects of one's actions are delayed, hence undergone by future people. Since they are not alive yet, these people cannot request that their predecessors' actions be the object of an agreement with themselves. Moreover, the actual people do not feel the need to consider their successors' interests when making their decisions. This way, people at the present fail to cooperate with future generations. Meanwhile, we might decide to enter in a cooperation scheme with future generations, and they could be the ones refusing to cooperate. Indeed, uncertainties also characterize future people's compliance with the normative principles that we might adopt today. The asymmetric distribution of burdens and benefits, generating problems of motivation and compliance, is the main obstacle of intergenerational justice.

This "lack of mutuality" (p. 12) undermines the motivation of cooperating with non-contemporaries, and the conceptual attempts to surmount this problem are often implausible. Both attempts by Daniel Attas and Rahul Kumar, who try to ground obligations between generations on contractual terms, have no choice but to adopt controversial epistemic assumptions. Attas extends Rawls' original position to include all generations and then inserts a formal constraint of universality: participants in the original position would have to choose between principles that are already respectful of the universality constraint, i.e. that apply to everyone and are "worthwhile to follow only on the condition that everyone follows the same principle" (p. 203). Principles not respecting the universality constraint would simply not be on the "menu" (p. 204). However, it seems not very helpful to state that participants in the original position would have no other choices than the good ones. Rahul Kumar makes the same kind of epistemic assumption when he insists on the impartial justification, which is required by Contractualism when a normative principle has to be adopted. Because it is not sensitive to the individuals' particular identity, an impartial justification as such cannot exclude anyone, not even people of future generations. So, it seems to solve the non-identity problem. Yet, it does not solve the problems of mutuality and compliance; it simply ignores them.

Both of these attempts require people in the present to act in a cooperative manner while blinding themselves to the circumstances of cooperation, when these circumstances are not in their favor. Thus, their solutions rely on assumptions far too idealistic to be useful. In fact, with the kind of Kantian universalization they require, contractual tools such as cooperation and consent are no longer needed.

As we can see, the cooperative asymmetry between generations is the main challenge for contract-based theories. Nevertheless, even Bertram's idea of exploitation and Gosseries' idea of free-riding (which do not rely on contractual frameworks) emphasize the same difficulty. There is free-riding when someone "derives a net benefit from the fruits of someone else's labour" (p. 130). In the same way, exploitation occurs "if and when the distribution of rewards from that co-operation fails to be roughly proportional to the distribution of effortful contribution" (p. 153). But these notions are strictly negative: they may be intuitively appealing to point out what *not* to do towards future or past generations, but they remain silent concerning what, and how, normative principles should bind us to other generations. At the same time, these notions do not resolve the problems of motivation and compliance. How to prohibit intergenerational exploitation and free-riding is an unanswered question. These standpoints may not be contractual, but they still rely on *interpersonal* conceptions of obligations.

Interpersonal views of intergenerational justice face too many difficulties to be sustainable. An interesting alternative, which crosses several papers of the volume, is to redirect motivation from interpersonal (distant) relations to "*goods* valued for their own sake" (p. 289). Dieter Birnbacher explains that valuing a certain good is a self-interested behavior but generates an indirect motivation to promote its preservation in the long-run. It can be towards a large diversity of goods, such as the environment, art, science or, more importantly, institutions. This strategy can be articulated in communautarian terms, and this is exactly what Janna Thompson does when she argues that we are interested in valuing the conditions of possibility underpinning life-transcending interests, adequate institutions being a part of these conditions. It is also David Heyd's conclusion: without principles of justice

solidly based on contractual grounds, we still have a duty to promote justice. This is certainly not a principle of justice: it is rather a statement on justice's value. Whether its justification should be on impartial or natural grounds is an important issue, but what should be even more discussed is its application. How to promote justice without having specified principles of justice? The question brings focus on the political basics rather than their distributional implications. And Constitutionalism should be seriously considered as an answer to that question. The reader has to wait until the last essay of the volume to find a substantial discussion of the constitutional topic. Victor M. Muñiz-Fraticelli digs out the old debate concerning the legitimacy of imposing a constitution to the next generations who haven't deliberately chosen it. Not only is it legitimate, he argues, but it is also necessary. The simple but most convincing argument is how a constitution can secure through time the conditions of a healthy democracy. This way, a constitution must be seen as maybe the most relevant way of valuing justice through time, since no cooperative scheme can adequately justify distributional principles.

Considering the wide range of topics and theories that were covered, having more interactions between the essays would have been useful to the reader. However, the essays collected offer a high-quality analysis of the various problems underpinning intergenerational justice, and the critics formulated above simply underline the difficulty of solving such problems.

Recension d'ouvrage

Une entreprise peut-elle être « sociale » dans une économie de marché ?
Sophie Swaton
Charmey, Éditions de l'Hèbe, 2011

Justin Leroux*

Dans son livre, Sophie Swaton se consacre à un exercice de style, aux figures imposées par son éditeur Suisse : la collection *la question*, à laquelle l'ouvrage appartient, s'adresse à *tout public* avec la « triple volonté d'être plaisant, d'être didactique et d'interpeller »[1]. Pour être plaisant, le vocabulaire doit être simple et éviter autant que possible le jargon. Pour être didactique, l'ouvrage doit pouvoir rendre accessible une question complexe. Enfin, pour interpeller, la question doit être d'actualité et l'argumentation basée sur des exemples concrets et connus du plus grand nombre. L'exercice est difficile, d'autant plus que le tout doit tenir en 90 pages, et l'auteure s'en sort très dignement. La question qu'évoque le titre est intimement liée à celle de la possibilité ou non de moraliser le capitalisme, qui se fait de plus en plus pressante dans les médias, et place le livre à l'intersection entre philosophie et économie.

Il n'est pas question ici d'avancer un point de vue ou un parti pris, ce qui n'empêche pas une articulation mûrie pour autant. Dans la tradition de la collection, l'ouvrage est une succession de questions, faisant office de titres de chapitres, auxquelles répond l'auteure. L'ouvrage n'est donc pas explicitement structuré, mais on peut tout de même en discerner quatre parties. Selon un plan caractéristique des ouvrages philosophiques, la première définit les

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