

Preface

The purpose of the present book is to defend the processual character of political liberalism. This defence will bring together the thought of the greatest political liberal, John Rawls, who was also throughout his long career at Harvard the most influential political philosopher of the twentieth century, and the thought of the greatest process philosophers, Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, who spent most of their illustrious careers at Cambridge and Harvard, in Whitehead's case, and at University of Chicago, in Hartshorne's case. It is unfortunate that Rawls is not better known as a process thinker; and it is equally unfortunate that Whitehead and Hartshorne are not better known as political philosophers. My aim is to remedy these defects such that scholars in philosophy, politics, theology and religious studies will be better equipped to defend political liberalism against its illiberal detractors on both the political right and left.

Despite current illiberal tendencies in politics that are obvious, the twenty-first century may very well turn out to be the Rawlsian century. Samuel Freeman is one political philosopher who notes that some of the giants in political theory had their greatest influence in the century after they wrote (see Freeman 2007b: 5, 458, 472). John Locke lived in the seventeenth century, but the American state based on his views did not come into existence until the late eighteenth century; Adam Smith wrote in the late eighteenth century, but invisible hand economics did not spread across the globe until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and Karl Marx wrote in the nineteenth century, but the communist revolutions fought

in his name did not occur until the twentieth century and in places Marx did not anticipate. I think it is safe to say that pervasive pluralism is here to stay such that either we will find a fair, politically liberal decision-making procedure to deal with such pluralism in the twenty-first century or we will unravel into ethnic or racial or religious warfare, class or gender conflict, and fratricidal/sororal chaos of all sorts. To put the point even more dramatically, in the future we will either continue to advance the politically liberal process of inclusion and toleration of reasonable differences or we will perish. Because it would not be rational to allow the latter option to occur, the *ongoing* process of political justification in a democratic context is our only viable option if we hope to approximate justice.

The book has seven chapters. The first chapter deals with method and hence informs what occurs in the remaining six chapters. Specifically, it deals with the processual method of reflective equilibrium. This method is wider than and includes Rawls's more famous methodological device of deliberating about justice in an original position behind a veil of ignorance. The hope is that the mistaken idea that the Rawlsian method of justification in political philosophy is static will be thoroughly discredited. My primary interlocutor in this chapter will be Nicholas Wolterstorff. The second chapter continues the effort to bring together the twin concepts of 'political liberalism' and 'process' by tracing the origin and history of political liberalism and by detailing the politically liberal views of Whitehead and Hartshorne. The emphasis in these first two chapters is the ongoing character of both political liberalism and the method by which politically liberal principles are justified. In the third chapter I examine the most notable challenge to Rawlsian political liberalism from a thinker who is very well versed in process thought: Franklin Gamwell. Here I will try to sort out the relationship between metaphysics and political philosophy in a way that is conducive to the justification and flourishing of politically liberal institutions.

By the end of the third chapter my own processual defence of political liberalism will be open to view for readers' consideration. The next three chapters deal with alternative views that, each in their own way, are theoretically problematic because they lead us away from reflective equilibrium. In the fourth chapter I examine

the historian Timothy Snyder's magisterial book titled *Bloodlands* so as to alert (or remind) readers to the disastrous consequences of illiberal political philosophies of both the right and left. The fourth chapter prepares the way for the fifth, where I examine Martin Heidegger's right-wing, indeed fascist, political philosophy. And in the sixth chapter I will look at some recent defences of 'organic Marxism' by Philip Clayton and Justin Heinzekehr, who argue for a close connection between process thought and Marxism. This contrasts with my own efforts to get political liberals to be more explicit about their implicit processuality and to encourage process thinkers to continue to affirm their historic liberality.

In the seventh chapter I offer a politically liberal defence of both nonhuman animal rights and environmental ethics so as to call into question the assumptions that in order to understand our place within nature we need to travel towards either the green nationalism that often characterizes right-wing political views or a revised version of Marxism that is alleged to steer us away from anthropocentrism. Even in light of the mass killing in the Bloodlands discussed in the fourth chapter and the environmental crisis discussed in the seventh chapter, I think that it makes sense to remain cautiously optimistic regarding the processual effort to asymptotically approach a realistic utopia that is just.

