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## THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF NEEDS

This ambitious and lively book argues for a rehabilitation of the concept of 'human needs' as central to politics and political theory. Contemporary political philosophy has focused on issues of justice and welfare to the exclusion of the important issues of political participation, democratic sovereignty and the satisfaction of human needs, and this has had a deleterious effect on political practice. Lawrence Hamilton develops a compelling positive conception of human needs: the evaluation of needs must be located within a more general analysis of institutions, but can in turn help to justify forms of coercive authority that are directed toward the transformation of political and social institutions and practices. His argument is animated throughout by provocative and original discussions of topics such as autonomy, recognition, rights, civil society, liberalism and democracy, and will interest a wide range of readers in political and social philosophy, political theory, law, development and policy.

Lawrence A. Hamilton is Mellon Research Fellow at Clare Hall, Cambridge and Senior Lecturer in the Political Science Programme, Faculty of Human Sciences, University of Natal, Durban, South Africa. He has published a number of journal articles.

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**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge, CB2 2RU, UK  
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
 Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain  
 Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa  
<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2003

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*Typeface* Adobe Garamond 11/12.5 pt.    *System* L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X 2<sub>ε</sub> [TB]

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*  
 Hamilton, Lawrence A., 1972–

The political philosophy of needs / Lawrence A. Hamilton.  
 p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 82782 5

1. Common good. 2. Public interest. 3. Basic needs. 4. Civil society.  
 5. Democracy. 6. Political participation. 1. Title.  
 J C 330.15.H 36 2003 320'01'1 – dc21 2003043811

ISBN 0 521 82782 5 hardback

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You invent luxury  
I invent humiliation  
You invent love  
    I invent solitude  
You invent the law  
And I invent obedience  
You invent God  
And I invent faith  
You invent work  
And I invent hands  
You invent weight  
And I invent a back  
You invent another life  
And I invent resignation  
You invent sin  
And I **remain** in Hell  
So help me God  
    – Tom Zé and  
    Odair Cabesa de Poeta

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## *Preface*

This book is about human needs and politics. These are vast, complex areas of human action, interaction, conflict and value, and the reader may wonder why I chose to tackle both topics and not one or the other. The reason is simple. Quite early on I realised that both needs and politics have to be understood in their unexpurgated historical, causal, cognitive and normative contexts, and an understanding of one involves an understanding of the other. I do not profess to have got very far in either task, or in my related task of developing proposals for the evaluation of needs and institutions. That is for the reader to judge. However, the fact that I take this view about how to understand needs and politics explains why I cover two big topics in one relatively small book, and why I hope this contribution to political philosophy may also be of use to moral and legal philosophers, political scientists, economists, sociologists and policy-makers.

What I know about politics and political philosophy in general is, amongst other things, the fruit of many conversations and arguments with a number of people. It gives me great pleasure to single out and thank a few of them. One person in particular has pride of place: Raymond Geuss, my teacher and friend. Raymond was my original thesis supervisor, and I would like to thank him for his constant intellectual inspiration, guidance and discussion, and for his ability simultaneously to encourage freedom over ideas while demanding strict control over delivery. I am deeply grateful to Lisa Brown for many years of creative stimulation, and for providing invaluable criticism of my work at every stage of its development. She found things to discuss and correct on every page of a number of 'final' drafts. I am indebted to Amartya Sen, John Dunn, Stephanie Blankenburg, Ze'ev Emmerich and Geoffrey Hawthorn, all of whom provided searching criticism and patient guidance in reading and commenting on earlier draft chapters and sections. I thank two anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press and my original thesis examiners, Andrew Gamble and David Runciman, for their careful reading of the manuscript and for crucial suggestions. I owe

particular thanks to David Bilchitz, Lucy Delap, Des Gasper, Freddy Hamilton, Jeesoon Hong, Istvan Hont, Jaeho Kang, Andy Kuper, Melissa Lane, Clive Lawson, Tanni Mukhopadyay, Glen Rangwala, Sanjay Ruparalia, Morag Patrick and Andrea Sangiovanni for reading, criticising and discussing parts of the manuscript with care and fervour. Final thanks go to my parents: pillars of support and founts of knowledge for longer than I can remember. Although I have sometimes been unable or too pigheaded to follow all advice and criticism, all these people have provided invaluable help and stimulus. None of them, however, should be construed as responsible for any of the remaining mistakes and deficiencies in what follows.

I would like to acknowledge the generosity of the Cambridge Commonwealth Trust and the Cambridge Political Economy Society Trust for funding my doctoral research. I am particularly indebted to Clare Hall, Cambridge, for electing me as their Mellon Research Fellow, thereby providing me with financial support and an excellent environment to continue my research. I am very grateful to Cambridge University Press, and in particular Hilary Gaskin, for making the arduous task of transforming a manuscript into a book seem simple.

The final section of the second chapter is an abridged and modified version of my article, 'A Theory of True Interests in the Work of Amartya Sen', *Government and Opposition*, 34. 4 (1999). The first three sections of the third chapter are an extended and developed version of my article, "Civil Society": Critique and Alternative', in *Global Civil Society and Its Limits*, edited by S. Halperin and G. Laxer (London: Palgrave, 2003).

I would like to thank Tom Zé for permission to reprint several lines of the song lyrics from his track 'Ui! (Você Inventá)'. I have been aided in my translation by the translation found in *The Best of Tom Zé* (Milwaukee, WI: Luaka Bop, Inc., 1990).