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978-1-107-01569-2 - Capabilities, Gender, Equality: Towards Fundamental Entitlements

Edited by Flavio Comim and Martha C. Nussbaum

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## Capabilities, Gender, Equality

Questions of gender, injustice and equality pervade all our lives, and as such, the capabilities or “human development” approach to understanding well-being and basic political entitlements continues to be debated. In this thought-provoking book, a range of authors provides unique reflections on the capabilities approach and, specifically, Martha C. Nussbaum’s contributions to issues of gender, equality and political liberalism. Moreover, the authors tackle a broad range of development issues, including those of religion, ecological and environmental justice, social justice, child care, disability, and poverty. This is the first book to examine Nussbaum’s work in political philosophy in such depth, bringing together a group of distinguished experts with diverse disciplinary perspectives. It also features a unique contribution from Nussbaum herself, in which she offers reactions to the discussion and her latest thoughts on the capabilities approach. *Capabilities, Gender, Equality* will interest a wide range of readers and policy-makers interested in new human development policies.

FLAVIO COMIM is an Associate Professor of Economics at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Brazil. He is also an Affiliated Lecturer for the Department of Land Economy and the Centre of Development Studies and a Von Hugel Research Associate at the University of Cambridge. He has published widely in areas such as history of economic thought, economic methodology, development ethics, and the capability approach.

MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM is the Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago, appointed in the Law School and the Philosophy Department. Over the years, Nussbaum has extended and developed the capabilities approach, and she has received numerous awards for her work.

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*Towards Fundamental Entitlements*

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## Preface

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Professor Martha C. Nussbaum is one of the most distinguished and influential philosophers of our times, a towering figure in philosophy and the social sciences. Her work has inspired a generation of philosophers, economists, sociologists, educators, anthropologists, psychologists, social scientists, policy-makers, planners and development practitioners to reflect upon issues of justice, gender, human rights, political liberalism, religion, education, disability, among many others. This book delves into key elements of her work from a critical perspective and explores future challenges for the capabilities approach.

The origin of this book lies in a conference entitled ‘Promoting Women’s Capabilities: examining Nussbaum’s Capabilities Approach’, convened by the Von Hügel Institute of St Edmund’s College, Cambridge in September 2002. The conference brought interdisciplinary scholars from around the world to discuss the work of Professor Nussbaum and it closed with a riveting debate between Professor Nussbaum and Professor Sen on their work on capabilities. In 2001 a conference at St Edmund’s College had examined the work of Professor Amartya Sen. These two conferences were followed by the Pavia Conferences in 2003 and 2004 and the founding of the Human Development and Capability Association (HDCA). Not enough could be said of the inspirational leadership of the late Father Frank Carey, then Director of the Von Hügel Institute, in the realization of the Cambridge Conferences. His compassion and love for humanity and his faith in the fight against injustices were defining of these two special moments for capabilities scholars.

The contributions to this book include a number of papers based on the conference and also invited papers. The preparation process, in addition to two rounds of peer reviewing, benefited from comments from Professor Nussbaum on the conference papers and, following the publication of her *tour de force*, *Frontiers of Justice*, in 2006 and of *Creating Capabilities* in 2011, authors had the opportunity to further elaborate their papers.

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This book examines, from an interdisciplinary perspective, several aspects of Professor Nussbaum's work, with focus on gender, equality and foundational issues of her approach. While her research and writings cover a much wider universe, the book themes are strategic in her work and key for understanding the impact of her capabilities approach on political philosophy and human development.

To a large extent, Professor Nussbaum's work is revolutionary. She invites her readers to reinterpret the contribution of John Rawls and the meaning of political liberalism. She presents new views on transnational justice, disability and justice to non-human animals, new perspectives on gender discrimination, new challenges to educational policies, and new policies for considering the role of art, public spaces, emotions, the workplace and the government in the promotion of human development and global justice. Professor Nussbaum's work enriches our understanding of the 'human' in human development. Her capabilities approach provides a solid foundation for tackling complex issues. The present book offers a reflection on core aspects of her magnificent contribution to philosophy, political and social sciences.

Flavio Comim