

FOCUS: THE NEXUS BETWEEN OPEN BORDERS AND WELFARE STATES

Open Borders and Welfare States: Can't They Really Get Along?

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Abstract. This paper contests the welfare state's objection to international freedom of mobility. It shows that the trade-off between open borders and welfare states is empirically and morally questionable and it suggests a new way of conceiving the relationship.

Keywords: *International freedom of mobility; Libertarianism; Welfare States; Immigration; Citizenship; Economic and Moral theory*

Introduction

The Nobel laureate in economy, Milton Friedman, once said that open borders were incompatible with a welfare state (1978). In his view, immigration for work and immigration for welfare were fundamentally different types of mobility producing divergent consequences for the host country. While the former was said to generate additional resources and opportunities for the permanent residents, the latter was alleged to create additional burdens for them. The inverse relation between these different types of mobility was supported by his presumption that, at

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that time, immigration seemed to be economically beneficial to all parties involved as long as it remained illegal, i.e. as long as immigrants (as any other worker) could work without qualifying for welfare. In this sense, though illegal, immigrant workers were still able to improve their standard of living, while also collaborating to create better conditions for employers and consumers in the hosting country. More specifically, employers could choose from a larger labour pool, contributing to: (1) control of wages through the increase of competition among workers, (2) promote a greater loyalty by the employees, and (3) facilitate further entrepreneurship and generation of new jobs to both native-born and immigrants. At the same time, consumers had a greater purchasing power, since the costs of production and distribution were significantly reduced, due to lower wages. As a result, through the case of illegal immigration, Friedman is supposed to have exposed the overall advantages of workers' mobility across borders. On the other hand, as illegality implies a wrongdoing that should be criminalised by states and their institutions, turning a blind eye to it, in order to profit from the economic advantages created by labour mobility, was, to Friedman, an inadmissible move made to protect what should, for many reasons, be discontinued: the welfare system. To properly enjoy and fully potentialise the advantages of labour mobility, according to him, borders should be open for the movement of persons at the expense of the welfare states.

After almost forty years since Friedman's lecture, and despite the rise of anti-immigration rhetoric in the public discourse, evidence continues to suggest that an increasing of labour mobility across borders can boost global economic growth (e.g. Legrain 2014; Klein and Ventura 2007). This is because a larger mobility of workers would potentialise the so-called international wage convergence, generate a better income distribution and, under certain conditions, raise the global output (Krugman et al. 2015, 102-7). This model is based on the assumption that borders being open, workers would move to countries where the real wages are higher than their source country. In the short term, this would raise the wages in the source country where the labour force would be reduced and, conversely, lower the wages in the destination country where the labour force would increase. The process would then continue until the wages in both destination and source countries, allowing for the differences in productivity and currency, are equalised, and the international income distribution generates an increase in the global output as a whole. This effect could be verified in the case of the massive immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to destination countries such as Argentina, Australia, Canada and United



States from origin countries such as Ireland, Italy, Norway and Sweden (Ibid, 105). Klein and Ventura (2007) add that, in the long-term, allowing substantial flows of immigrants (not only skilled, but all workers) from low to high productivity countries could increase the global output by up to 45%. According to them, optimal productivity of workers is highly dependent on their experiences in labour environments where they can fully develop their capabilities. These environments are the ones offering stable institutions, access to technology, and the possibility of improving their skills. This means that immigrant workers are able to become more productive when moving to countries where these environments are more readily available. Enabling their movement across borders becomes then, a key factor in increasing global productivity. Linking Klein and Ventura's model back to the international wage convergence, but focusing more on relocation of capital across borders, Kennan (2013) estimated that gradual opening of borders could contribute to a wage raise of more than 100% for migrants and non-migrants in both source and destination countries. Besides that, the remittances sent by those who decide to migrate are also said to play a significant role in the economic growth of developing and low-income countries. Chang (2014) affirms that remittances can be as high as three times the total amount of aid given by developed countries. In some countries, as in Tajikistan, remittances amount to more than 40% of the GDP. It is important to notice that remittances are sent not only to those who, in a situation of controlled borders, are prevented from moving across borders, but also to those who, for personal reasons, decide to endure the adversities and stay back home. Accordingly, in this perspective, (gradual) opening of borders could be seen as the Pareto optimal policy, i.e. a policy that would make most people better off without making anyone worse off. As zero adverse impact is unachievable, modest compensations are to be given to alleviate potential losses incurred by the few worse off. Who should be compensated and by whom remains fairly unclear though. It is also unclear whether and to what extent states should care about global humankind in general.

Whereas some economists see freedom of labour mobility as an extension of the free trade logic (along with free capital and services as the four economic freedoms), the vast majority of them are still reluctant to accept this move (see Chang 2014, 436; Stephenson and Hufbauer 2011). To Ruhs (2013), for example, the economic effects of human mobility largely depend on the management of the rights granted to immigrants after their admission. If, for instance, immigrants are to access welfare benefits fully or partially, a positive outcome for the hosting countries and

their residents requires a balance between the costs of the migrant rights relative to their contributions. Then, because the visibility of these contributions may vary according to skills, a rational approach demands a selective admission process attentive to the skill composition of the immigrants in relation to variable “‘needs’ of the domestic labour market and the national economy” (Ruhs and Anderson 2010). At the same time, because liberal democracies are ideally increasingly guided by human rights and there is a limit to the restriction of rights for immigrants, the number of admissions should also be regulated. From this perspective, the trade-off between open borders and welfare states shifts focus: the welfare state becomes incompatible with open borders. Starting from the perspective that the main goal of states is to maximise benefits for citizens and minimise adverse impacts that immigration could cause, it is assumed that states are allowed to act in this discriminatory manner. The Pareto optimal criterion here is conceived from a national standpoint. From this particular perspective, considering a clear group target, it can be said that the criterion is taken more literally: the instrumentalisation of immigrant rights in favour of citizens would virtually guarantee that citizens are not harmed by immigration, since, theoretically, the absence of benefits for citizens would mean no admissions to immigrant workers and their dependents. This reasoning, however, when applied to the context of high-income countries, where most resources are concentrated, becomes a powerful tool for maintaining the *status quo*, since, given that the resources are limited, any move towards global equality would most probably represent a loss for some citizens of such countries.

In all these approaches that maintain the incompatibility between open borders and welfare states, the common ground is that the movement of persons across borders is viewed mainly by its instrumental value in achieving either global economic growth or net economic benefits to citizens and residents of a state. Human mobility, borrowing Sussman’s (2003) terminology, is then reduced to the financial worthiness of the ‘exportation of bodies as pure materiality’, as in the cruel context of the political arithmetic of the eighteen-century. Once more, the danger of these approaches is that—instead of enlightening the complex discussions on immigration and borders by assuming a secondary role of economics in policymaking below universal moral standards—it ends up in overvaluing the importance of numeric symbols in the formulation of the so-called informed decisions aiming at profitable consequences. The result of these forms of reasoning is a critical dehumanisation of human lives, turned into resources to be rationally managed in

the name of efficiency. Considering these potentially serious consequences, what I propose in this paper is a reflective discussion on the matter, starting from, but also going beyond, the short-sighted and goal-oriented accounts on human mobility that only serve the cause of maximisation of either global or national outputs.

I will start the paper by defining some of the relevant features of the concept of 'open borders' and 'welfare states' (Part I). Playing along with the rules of considering immigration purely instrumentally, I will argue that it *is possible to question the alleged inevitability of the trade-off between open borders and welfare states* based on some counter-evidence to the fiscal and social strains (Part II). Moving beyond this perspective, by considering human mobility with its intrinsic value, I will claim that the trade-off *might be overcome* with the proposition of a different starting point for economics since it appears that it is fabricated within a narrow context of neoclassical economics or similar models (Part III). My grounding understanding is that open borders is a fundamental freedom on which the autonomy and equality of opportunities for each and every person depends. At the same time, the welfare states, especially the Scandinavian ones, have played a key role on the development of these values among their citizens, with their experiences being relevant to the global efforts in combating economic inequality. While neither overlooking the spread of potential negative effects of freedom of mobility and membership for individuals, nor being biased towards citizens, it looked like the most serious undertaking of the Pareto criterion would require the emergence of both open borders and welfare states. This way of thinking led me to a deep dissatisfaction with the current ineluctable way of understanding the relationship between open borders and welfare states thereby driving me to explore some ways in which *both could be compatible with each other* by challenging and then reframing the starting assumptions that are conducive to the postulation of the contradiction.

Defining both sides of the trade-off

Open borders: Running an Honoured Marathon

Open borders is not a synonym for no borders. As such, it does not imply that states' borders are to be dissolved to give place for a world government. It rather means that even though states and their right to jurisdiction remain, the movement of persons across borders becomes free. In other words, states' territorial rights are revised and they lose some rights to exclude persons from their territories (see Duarte 2015). Furthermore, open borders make for the achievement of equality

of opportunities and freedom of choice possible—two fundamental pillars of liberal democratic theory today, but that are in a new context, specially framed beyond nationalism, i.e. under the context of our universal commitments to equality and freedom. Deriving from freedom, open borders means that, for instance, whenever a person is born, she should be able choose to live in another country that better corresponds to her conception of a good life, instead of having her fate determined by the place of birth. Freedom to choose a place to live in, in this sense, means not only a suppression of arbitrary determinants in one's life, but also a positive development of a person's capacity to participate in shaping one's own moral world and, in Razian terms, in creating one's own life (Raz 1986, 426). In this context, freedom, more precisely understood as personal autonomy and freedom of mobility, appears as a condition for the possibility for persons to perfect, transform, and create themselves. Deriving from equality, open borders imply, for example, that a person born in less developed countries may have the chance to overcome the initial social disadvantaged position when migrating to more developed environments. After all, how proud would someone be of winning a marathon, having had the chance of starting half way ahead of the others and leaving the competitors no choice but to lose? Pretending there is nothing wrong with such a dishonourable victory would be, as Carens puts it, to admit contemporary 'feudal birthright privileges' (2013, 226). He argues that the restriction of mobility used in the Middle Ages was strategic to maintain the feudal system. Back then, it appeared correct to restrain socially disadvantaged persons from overcoming their limitations, by restricting their opportunities and giving them no choice but to back down. What Carens wanted to do with this analogy was to draw attention to the fact that in spite of choice and equality of opportunities being very much stressed in the political discourse, we are still, 'almost as effectively', forcing foreigners from developing countries to back down (2013, 255). Equality of opportunities, in this sense, demands open borders as a requirement of justice against the perpetuation of benefits for the old and new nobility. Of course, equality of opportunities, in a full sense, requires more than a mere possibility. Despite the possibility to migrate within the European Union, Bulgarians do not really have an equal opportunity for exercising mobility in comparison with Danes, for example, as their incomes sharply differ. A more complete policy on the matter should then address a range of conditions that would make equality of opportunity more than a formal concern, engaging in debates on minority rights like compensations and affirmative action as well as of the effects of



capitalism in itself. When discussing immigration and borders, we are still very far from these more concrete discussions since, even the mere possibility of giving people the formal right to mobility across borders, is not yet established. It is not, in any way, being proposed here that people from high-income countries should pay for the tickets for people from low-income countries to migrate, but something much more fundamental than that: a recognition that our commitment to universal equality leads, at least, to the acceptance of a formal equality of opportunities among persons by removing the legal barriers that prevent their freedom of movement.

Although open borders can be derived from our universal moral commitment to freedom and equality, even those who defend these values may oppose open borders. Liberal nationalists, for example, challenge it by understanding one's place of birth as more than a mere accident. For them, the place of birth reveals important cultural, historical, and more permanent socio-political dimensions of persons that cannot be erased by a cosmopolitan abstraction. Although no one can reasonably disagree with moral universalism without falling into racist discourse, leading Blake to affirm that we are all cosmopolitans now (2013), the real debate rather revolves around the primacy of either moral universalism or moral particularism as guides for action. Miller (2002, 57) for example, argues that a moral universalism is unable to offer a comprehensive account of moral agency. Such a comprehensive account, to him, is better achieved by conceiving the moral agent embedded in a historically constructed community of values. The moral motivations would then arise from the concreteness of the particularities that the agent represents. However, I take it that even if this could be the case in the context of such communities, the rights and duties we have as members of communities are very different from the rights and duties we have as members of a state, for example, rights and duties derived from citizenship. From the point of view of immigrants, history is not static either, but written everyday with new agents and places. I concede, however, that the motivation for moral agency appears much more clearly in communal contexts. A proof of this is in the larger appeal that passionate discourses of "anti-others", i.e. anti-immigration, have in public opinion (see Field 2015 from the House of Commons in the UK grounding his case against immigration on the appealing moral particularism of protecting 'our own country's poor'). The problem is that the force of the appeal does not make it right. It is frankly unreasonable to expect that the communal boundaries coincide

with borders of, not only nations, but also of contemporary multicultural and pluralistic states. In such multifaceted states, to assume the moral particularism as a binding common force is a prelude to failure. In the moral context, the binding-force to peacefully connect different communities and nations into one state seems to be a prior commitment to moral universalism, where despite all the differences, all persons understand each other as equal and free (autonomous). Therefore, I place moral universalism here as the basis for the justification of open borders, by which the place of birth does not compromise anyone's opportunities. Moral particularism might then justify boundaries, but not state borders. On those grounds one can, if one wants to, select friends and exclude personal enemies based on communal morality, but one cannot pretend to expand that practise to the state level given the current definition of liberal democratic states.

Welfare States: Neither Nassau Sr. nor Marx

On the other side of the trade-off is the welfare state. Welfare states are broadly defined as forms of government that undertake the promotion and distribution of social wellbeing and the protection of a minimal level of income for every citizen or legal resident against the insecurities of the market. Contemporarily, these states do not accept Nassau Sr.'s radical form of *laissez-faire* that rejects any form of social provisioning that does not belong to the cash nexus, nor do they accept a radical Marxist opposition to capitalism; they rather impose some regulations on the market. Consequently, any welfare state today incorporates key social policies towards a well-functioning system, even though they accept the role of the market in the efficient production, distribution and consumption of resources. They include more than a system of mere cash transfer or tax deduction for the needy, such as education, health, and other public services. Considering this, it is important to point out, especially to non-Europeans, that welfare states are not socialist states in any meaningful sense of the word. The surplus is not seen as something negative, but as something that will actually make the welfare system possible. In order to guarantee a minimal income to every citizen and compensate those negatively affected by the market, it is necessary that the active labour force is able to produce more than they need for themselves. The surplus must exist for the welfare to exist, but severe accumulation of capital is what brings about demands for social reforms. Being 'on welfare' is not synonymous to 'living on somebody else's money,' instead of making a living from one's own work. Workers can also be 'on welfare' despite having a high income from their work as we will see in a moment with a more specific definition



of welfare regimes. Refining this broad definition, Esping-Andersen (2013, 26-9), in a seminal work, proposed a distinction between three types of welfare regimes based on the variation of social de-commodification and stratification considerably affecting the ways the state, the market and the family are organised, namely: liberal (e.g. US), conservative (e.g. Germany) and social democratic welfare states (e.g. Scandinavian countries). De-commodification means the reduction of dependency on the market to survive through, in Polanyi's sense, the acquisition of rights such as to a pension, parental, sick or educational leaves, and unemployment insurance. These are social rights that can be attached to work performance, in relation to prior earnings, tax contribution, need or citizenship, and legal residency. Social stratification means a structure of inequality, i.e. the ordering of social classes. In relation to both factors, we see that when the social rights focus, for example, on the needy as in the liberal welfare regime, a division between the needy and the providers produces a dualism intensifying social stratification, even though the goal was to supposedly promote a greater equality between them. When social rights focus, instead, on the citizens and legal residents in general, as in the social democratic welfare regime, social stratification is reduced considerably. While being 'on welfare' might sound negative in the context in which social provisioning is means-tested, it rather denotes strong social cohesion and equality in the context in which social provisioning is universal: where everybody lives at the expense of everybody else.

Considering these differences, it appears that we have reasons to believe that open borders would affect the welfare regimes differently: the social democratic welfare regimes would suffer most due to their higher standards of distribution and equality. Opening the borders would then more seriously compromise the welfare states based on universal social provisioning. The problem arises when we notice that, according to recent studies (e.g. Wilkinson and Pickett 2011; Stiglitz 2013), these are exactly the states that are performing better in many areas of life owing to their astonishing capacity to promote equality. This means that to compromise the social democratic welfare regimes in the name of open borders could currently mean the loss of the ability for the improvement of the conditions for people in well-functioning of societies. Under the mask of the GDP, it looks like the three welfare regimes are comparable successful economies. However, looking more closely into the particular spheres of life such as health, violence, criminality, drug use, life expectancy, education performance, and social mobility, among others,

we see that the income gap in unequal societies is much more damaging than we once thought it to be. Intergenerational social mobility, for example, is much lower in countries with higher income inequalities, with the US and the UK at the bottom of the scale with less mobility and the Scandinavian countries at the top (Blanden 2005 cited by Wilkinson and Pickett 2011, 159). This suggests that a libertarian-like position liking freedom of mobility to free market and weaker social rights might negatively affect the autonomy and the equality of opportunities of individuals. In view of this, it becomes hard to accept Friedman's solution of opening the borders at the expense of the welfare system as something we have to aim for today. The belief in the higher efficiency of competitive markets is being largely demystified to give place for the need of more efficient societies based on equality (see also Pontusson 2005). At the same time, it is also hard to accept Ruhs' solution of controlling borders in order to promote an inner equality, especially if this inner equality, in the context of high-income countries, is sometimes only possible at the expense of the perpetuation of inequalities abroad—a dishonourable victory, to recall the marathon example.

The Trade-off from the inside of the box

Given these definitions of open borders and welfare states, looking from an 'inside' perspective where the trade-off seems to emerge, we can locate the tensions between both as operating on two circumstantial levels: economic and social. Although these levels are blurred in practice, they are divided here for analytical purposes. At the economic level, the challenge is to keep the national fiscal balance given the possible arrival of more tax receivers than taxpayers.² At the social level, the issue is to ensure that social heterogeneity will not compromise the welfare state's public support. Behind both the fiscal and the social strains is the selfish conception of the individuals defined as those conceiving the states and the

² I recognise that this way of portraying the economic objection to open borders is very limited and that I am risking to concede too much to my potential opponents when looking at welfare states mostly in terms of direct taxation. A fuller account on contributions should consider indirect taxation such as consumption taxation as well as the fact that the host states benefit from immigrant workers who were educated elsewhere. My goal is, however, to attempt to dialog with those who assume this limited view as a starting point.

communities only according to the benefits that they might produce to themselves. In this radical approach, individuals are thought to be incapable of supporting any causes that does not benefit themselves. They are portrayed as incapable of accepting any economic or status loss in order to improve the wellbeing of others, because this would be considered irrational. This extreme view of individualism is very different from the Razian conception of the individual as being the one able to create one's own life which is the basis of the argument of open borders. This is because in the Razian sense, freedom in the sense of autonomy has primarily an intrinsic, not an extrinsic value. Autonomy is compromised when individuals are conceived as being merely goal-oriented to succeed and to succeed in certain terms. This is to say that, like Raz, I am not entirely rejecting the instrumental worth of freedom, but rather considering that freedom, in the sense of autonomy, must allow individuals to choose to lose without being considered irrational. The instrumental value of freedom as moral particularism, sometimes offers the most appealing arguments because it provides clear guidelines for agency when prioritising the agent to the detriment of the others. The point here is that the instrumental value of freedom should remain instrumental, i.e. subordinated to its intrinsic and absolute dimension. If the line between the intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions is not clearly drawn, the scope of human agency can be limited in the way that any action that is not selfish and goal-oriented will appear as sanctified rather than simply correct.

Economic strain: Immigrants as free riders

From the purely economic standpoint, the trade-off between open borders and a welfare state arises when, due to the high levels of inequality worldwide, it is expected that, in protectionist states, free immigration would seriously compromise the fiscal balance between taxpayers and tax receivers. Considering this, a number of studies have been conducted trying to disclose whether immigration burdens or booms the economy in hosting countries (e.g. Borjas 1995ab, 1999; Hansen and Lofstrom 2003; Card 2005; Ruhs 2008). These findings are contested from all sides. This is not only because of a lack of data and differences in methodology (short or long-term approach), but also because of a combination of various specific and dynamic factors, beyond the rigid relation between natives and immigrants, that have a great influence on the net impact of immigration. Rowthorn (2008), for example, showed that such impact is relative to age, income, entitlement to welfare

provisioning, type of welfare system, and the interaction between their measurable contribution and usage of the welfare provided. It is also important to consider whether the cause of the immigration was, for example, persecution or the wish to learn a new language. Furthermore, the education level of the immigrants is also said to be a determinant factor, as the mobility of high-skilled workers tends to be facilitated assuming that, in contrast to low-skilled workers, they will contribute more to the public funds than they receive from the government in welfare benefits (Boeri and Brücker 2005). On the top of that, it should be accounted that many factors such as skill composition and skills shortage are dynamic and vary largely according to time and place (Ruhs and Anderson 2010).

Recently, Kerr and Kerr (2011) have found that in the European countries, immigrants rely more on social security and employment benefits than natives. The relation is even stronger in the Nordic countries, particularly in Denmark and Sweden (where more data is available): according to them, immigrants are 5-8% more likely to receive social benefits than natives, even 20 years after residing in these countries. Let us avoid playing the 'ignorance argument' when referring to a range of conflicting data and assume this really to be the case: that immigrants do seek more welfare benefits than natives. What does this tell us? Just to be sure, it certainly does not tell us anything about the character of the immigrants, as we will see in a moment when discussing the perception of the immigrant as the menacing 'other'. Arguing that it tells us something like this, is to commit the same methodological flaw as the seventeenth century studies that showed that people from cold countries were more hardworking than people from warm countries, based on an evaluation of the size of the countries' economies; and avoiding to mention that the larger economies of the industrialised countries were, in many cases, made possible thanks to the surplus generated during the colonisation period and the exploitation of people and resources in 'warmer' lands. The varying reliance on welfare benefits rather tells us then that immigrants are more vulnerable (for example, to suffering discrimination, having lower wages, being more susceptible to unemployment due to the lack of networks, communication skills in the foreign language, and probably being less educated than the average natives, among other factors). Then, countries that are more attentive to such inequalities, such as the Nordic ones, are more likely to offer admitted immigrants a wider access to the welfare benefits they need to overcome such unequal conditions. The obvious inference that most vulnerable persons need more welfare benefits (this independently of whether they are foreigners or



nationals), allows for a better integration of immigrants, which would then make the welfare benefits less necessary in the long run.

In opposition to this reasoning for accelerating the integration of immigrants in order to decrease their dependency on welfare as soon as possible by giving them the opportunity to become effective and self-dependent workers in a near future, Ruhs (2013) proposes the restriction of rights to immigrants during the first years of their stay in the high-income hosting country. The level of the restrictions, however, may vary not only according to the time of the stay, but also according to the skill composition of the immigrant workers. After an initial period of residency has ended, immigrants would either have to leave the country or be granted full rights. However, it turns out that this initial period might be crucial to the development of the necessary capabilities of immigrants. Not lifting them up precisely when they need it the most, would most probably seal their fate to minor and marginal roles in the economy of the hosting countries. This leads one to think that after the increased openness for immigration passed the initial period of residency, immigrants would most likely be expelled: being in the periphery of economy, their benefits to the hosting country would be considered marginal. Discussing the relationship between rights and skill composition, Ruhs observed that states purposely use, as they should use according to him, a different measure for high- and low-skilled workers as a policy to attract skilled immigration. According to this logic, states offer a larger range of rights to high-skilled immigrants while being more restrictive to the low-skilled. When selectively restricting rights, states are able to be more open to immigration, since the risks of immigrants becoming a burden to the public finances are significantly reduced. The problem with this approach is that it is not the high-skilled immigrant workers who need more rights in the hosting country, since they will, most probably, be able to pay for the care and services they need. But then, it is precisely because they can pay for it that the rights are more easily allocated to them. The conclusion that I inevitably come to is that rights are for sale. From this perspective, it seems that the entire meaning of rights is being corrupted and it becomes acceptable to be selectively attentive to the needs of those who are not really needy. In my view, despite the specificities, this position is shown to be sharply aligned with Friedman's analogy to illegal immigration: increase labour mobility across borders by decreasing their rights.

When discussing fiscal balance, it is also worth mentioning that the natural population growth in Europe is now very close to negative (Eurostat 2014a). With

deaths almost outnumbering births, the age dependency ratio indicated that in 2013 there were, in the EU-28, already two workers for every dependent person (young and old) (Eurostat 2014b). Immigration is already accounting for more than 80% of the population growth in Europe and it is possible that bigger flows could immediately rectify the ageing imbalances that cause fiscal stress (see Coleman 2008). Freeman (2013), however, describes this argument as being absurd. Although he acknowledges the temporary benefits of ‘constant influx of young and fertile immigrants’, this solution is, to him, temporary. We could only ‘buy us some time’ with this strategy, but not solve the problem. Indeed, Eurostat (2009) predict that immigration could have a positive impact on keeping the fiscal balance until 2035. However, for me, the temporary character of the solution does not make it absurd. Affirmative action, for example, is meant to be temporary and it is not, for this reason, absurd. More freedom of mobility could well serve as a temporary, but immediate solution, giving us 20 years to come up with a more stable solution. I believe it is much more unreasonable, for example, to stimulate natural population growth in a planet that already has more people than it can support. The baby boomers of the sixties, for example, are getting close to retirement now, and in order to keep the fiscal balance using this strategy, we would instead have to promote larger birth rates in every generation. But the worst problem is not the temporality of this solution, but the fact that incentives to increase the natural population growth could lead us to extinction when the resources on earth have completely dried out. This is what sounds more absurd to me.

In order to tackle this problem of an increasing dependency ratio between working-age persons and retirees, the intergenerational pension system (PAYGO) is being revamped towards more individualised savings systems. These individualised systems operate as a type of investment fund that can be implemented via government or privately; they are called funded pensions. Since they are based on direct ownership, i.e. a person’s life savings will generate her own pension after retirement, they appear as more reliable options for the future. As good they might sound, these systems are not miraculous. Bowman (2014) has explained the systematic problems of substituting the PAYGO system with funded pensions. One of the problems he identifies is that the investments in funded pensions are not as reliable as they appear to be, since the savings are subject to inflation and fluctuations in the market (e.g. stocks): a large pension fund today might not be nearly large enough in the future. Another problem is that it becomes very



demanding for workers, who will have to invest a considerable share of their incomes for a long period before generating an adequate pension income that will support them. Based on that, it is reasonable to expect that less successful workers will not be able to generate their own pensions and poverty among the elderly will increase. Furthermore, this system is also unable to offer a solution for workers injured in their early careers, the sick, the unemployed, the disabled, children, and other individuals who are dependent on social security and are unable to work. Finally, the most important contribution of a public pension system is, to Bowman (*ibid*), its capacity to reduce income inequality and poverty among the aged and vulnerable. Considering this, we can infer that, after all, there is no way out: a social problem must be treated collectively. So, in my view, we would be better off using the next 20 years of stable of economic growth fuelled by immigration to head in the direction of a new economic model, starting not from the perspective of the selfish being—radically individualistic seeking to maximise her benefits as much as possible, not even looking after the elderly—but from the perspective of the more complex being, we actually (still) are; a comprehensive economy guided not only by an egotistic nature, but by an altruistic one based on mutual care and respect.

By highlighting the relevance of mutuality, individuals should become more responsive to redistribution and become more supportive of the welfare system in general. With the spreading of more robust welfare systems worldwide, open borders and welfare systems can become complementary, rather than contrary to each other; this would remind everybody concerned that they have the same goal of promoting universal inclusion of persons in their institutions. This connection indicates that the solution to the problem of making open borders and a welfare state compatible with one another might be found on a larger application of policies and measures already used in the social democratic welfare states to keep the fiscal balance. It might be true that on the one hand, opening the borders could create an additional challenge to the social welfare states because a constant source of inequality would be entering their systems, and the balance would be more difficult to maintain. However, this aspect does not actually challenge the quality of the problem, but only its quantity suggesting then that a larger application of this social model worldwide could meet the challenge. After all, to eradicate poverty worldwide, as Pogge showed (2011), requires no more than two-thirds of the US military's expenditures. Based on that, we can say that to redistribute resources a bit more evenly would hardly overwhelm or break the welfare systems.

Social strain: Immigrants as undeserving creatures

From the social standpoint, the trade-off between open borders and a welfare state has to do with the potential loss of public support for the welfare system among the nationals when they see exploitation of benefits by ‘undeserving’ immigrants. This trade-off can have many dimensions. One of the dimensions can be framed as a question of citizenship rights versus human rights, in which the former is overemphasised. In such a conception, solidarity is still viewed as attached to citizenship as the primary binding factor. Citizenship is conceived as still attached to nationality, and national identity is seen as an important ground for solidarity. The tension emerges when the allocation of rights starts increasingly to depend more on state membership, being linked to residency, than on citizenship. This creates a fear that welfare states will lose legitimacy when solidarity does not follow this move. In this sense, one might see immigrants as ‘undeserving’ of welfare because they have resided elsewhere and, as such, might not share the same collective identity and might not have contributed enough to the system to be entitled to its benefits. Another dimension of this conceived trade-off assumes, however, a much more radical position when defining the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ of welfare. “Deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ become definitions not only applicable to nationals and immigrants respectively, but they acquire a racial, social, and gendered dimension diffused among immigrants and nationals. Legal citizenship or residency then goes to the background giving place to a more complex socially constructed image of the ‘undeserving’. Consistent with the complexity of this radical dimension, Anderson remarked that, in the public eye, not every foreigner counts as an immigrant: the term is ‘heavily raced, classed, and gendered’ (Anderson 2010, 105). The ‘undeserving’ are then, more radically, the immigrants as the ethnically diverse, poor, and more dramatically, heartless mothers who are said to have babies just to take advantages of the welfare system; but there are also the nationals fitting these stereotypes that are considered ‘undeserving’, though not as pronouncedly as the immigrants (see Anderson 2013 for an historical account of these conceptual relations in the UK). And this raises the question of whether a broader solidarity based on residency would really be an issue if it did not incorporate the other specific differentiations mentioned above.

Freeman, in his controversial thesis (1986), and endorsed by his recent article (2013) has clearly expressed such a fear of the effects of increasing racial diversity to the welfare states. He is implying that citizenry does not entail only a



common national identity, but a common ethnicity. To him, the increasing racial diversity in Europe brings the danger of its Americanisation due to the consequent erosion of support to the more generous welfare systems. Later, the same argument has been revived by Alesina and Glæser (2004) on an empirical basis. Alesina and Glæser observed that ethnically diverse countries spend less on social services than more ethnically homogeneous countries. Given this correlation, they concluded that as Europe becomes more diverse, like the US, it will be more difficult to suppress the discourse of fear that devastate public support for a more robust welfare state. Alesina and Glæser's influential study has, however, been criticised for relying too much on social spending as a measure of solidarity, without considering other important variables such as the attitude of nationals towards the inclusion of immigrants in the welfare schemes. Indeed, in more complete studies, taking into account factors other than public expenditure on social services, the findings looked different. Mau and Burckhardt (2009), for example, also analysed the opinions of nationals of the European Economic Area (EEA) on the extent to which states should be responsible for promoting equality between nationals and immigrants. They considered the level of acceptance and integration of the immigrants by asking nationals whether they believed immigrants should be granted similar rights as them and whether they believed that immigrants produce a net cost to the welfare system.

The results are surprising. Although in most EEA countries, nationals think immigrants take a greater share of the welfare benefits relative to their contributions (except in Portugal and Italy, where the nationals believe immigrants take less or as much as they contribute to the welfare system), in all these countries the majority of the natives believe that immigrants should have the same rights as natives (except in Switzerland with 45% agreement). Sweden, Norway, Portugal and Denmark were at the top of the list with more than 80% in agreement. This is to say that the European countries with higher expenditures on welfare programmes are also more inclusive when it comes to immigrant rights. Thus, the fact that natives in most EEA countries do think that immigrants benefit more from the welfare system, and that they believe rights should not be restricted for immigrants, is enough evidence to, at least, challenge the easy assumption that says that an increase on social spending on immigrants necessarily undermines public support for the welfare system. When including in this analysis the relation between heterogeneity and welfare state solidarity, removing outliers such as Switzerland, Belgium and Luxembourg, Mau and Burckhardt, contrary to Alesina and Glæser, found that heterogeneity has an overall

positive influence on public support for welfare. Taylor-Gooby's (2005) study, has previously found similar results when removing the US from the analysis. What we might conclude from this, based on new empirical data, is that Europe might not be in danger of having its welfare system Americanised as once feared, and that factors other than ethnic heterogeneity might be playing a stronger role on the public welfare support. Brady and Finnigan (2014), for example, suggest that immigration might undermine the public support to some, but not all, welfare policies. A difference among states might also be expected. But considering the question more broadly, Wilkinson and Pickett (2011) argue that income inequality is what strongly affects trust towards any perceived 'other'. In this sense, the US may not have a smaller welfare system owing to its ethnic heterogeneity, but rather owing to its high rates of income inequality.

One of the determinant factors in this relation between solidarity and ethnic heterogeneity is undoubtedly the varying perception of the 'undeserving' in all welfare regimes even inside Europe. Even following an increasing amount of sceptical literature refuting Alesina and Glæser's findings, it cannot be undermined that these variations in the notion of the 'undeserving' might change according to the circumstances and affect the public support for the welfare programmes in unexpected ways. A presidential campaign or a referendum can, as we are seen with Trump and Brexit, bring out choleric images of the "underserving". In some liberal welfare regimes, for example, depending on the spokesman, the concept of 'undeserving' might include the elderly, the uninsured sick, or even victims of structural poverty seen as losers. While in social democratic regimes, as opposed to this, the concept of the 'undeserving' tends to be much narrower than that. In these latter countries, most deprived persons are still seen as victims, whether they are nationals or foreigners. Remembering that Mau's and Burckhardt's data showed that the social democratic welfare regimes (Sweden, Norway, and Denmark) were in the very top of the ranking granting equal rights to nationals and foreigners when compared to conservative or liberal welfare regimes. This indicates that collective solidarity is, in fact, strongly related to the way the welfare system is organised and the immigrant perceived. Having means-tested, instead of universal access to welfare programmes, seems to inevitably result in high visibility of the differences and thereby engenders a notion that some are paying for others. When the 'others' then are represented as reckless opportunists (free riders) or as militarised invaders, the mere possibility of co-existence with such 'otherness' produces an involuntary

rage and a sensation of being extorted by them. The support from the public for a means-tested welfare system tends to be smaller than in universal welfare systems. What this relation reveals is that, perhaps, homogeneity is not a prerequisite for a generous welfare state as we are used to thinking, but rather a product of it. Therefore, it seems that not only education and the increasing co-existence with the 'others' would contribute to change the distorted perception of the 'undeserving', but also a change in the way means-tested welfare regimes are organised.

We cannot, underestimate the power of the media in constantly feeding people with a rather garbled and misrepresented image of the immigrant as the 'undeserving other' (e.g. Kellner 2013; Rahman 2013). It is hard to argue that this exposure is not already affecting even the universal welfare regimes; the resurgence of a cosmopolitan solidarity binding persons by a universal morality is urgently needed. It might be clear that being sympathetic to an 'undeserving creature' somehow requires a quasi-religious strength, but that is why it is important to highlight the value of the person as a human being in such choleric times. But, assuming for the sake of argument, that we all get delusional and believe indiscriminately that the immigrant is the menacing 'other' (threatening the national's jobs and careers, occupying their public spaces, and so on): would that be the end of the generous welfare states? The answer might be no, if we take into account Luhmann's (1991) unusual interpretation of the welfare states as the result of the, not necessarily collective, way of managing risks. According to his reasoning (used to explain the survival of the welfare states facing globalisation and individualisation), the worst fear of immigrants taking over and putting the nationals in all kinds of situations of vulnerability, would actually lead to an increase, rather than the decrease, support to the welfare system among them. This unusual reasoning makes a lot of sense if we think that when the threat is perceived as very high, it might not be a good idea to rely on just private insurance policies, but on the contrary, on public welfare programmes. This is because one is not certain of having the funds in the future to purchase a private insurance in the first place. Corroborating Luhmann's theory, Burgoon et al. (2012) found that the increased percentage of immigrants raises the public support for stronger welfare programmes. So, if the insecurity and vulnerability level becomes high, Luhmann seems to be right; the rational decision would be, contrary to the expected, to support a generous welfare state.

The Trade-off from Outside the Box

From the inside of the box, we saw that the trade-off between open borders and welfare states arises from the primary extrinsic approach on immigration and borders. Either open borders were defended in order to maximise global economic growth at the expense of the welfare states, or the welfare states were defended in order to maximise net economic benefits to nationals and residents at the expense of open borders. In both cases, the tension arose with the risk of severe fiscal stress and, in the latter case, an additional risk of a negative impact of heterogeneity on the public support for a stronger welfare system. We have seen, however, that, on the same grounds as an extrinsic approach on immigration and borders, immigration can actually immediately rectify the high age dependency ratio in Europe, contributing positively to the temporary fiscal balance. Furthermore, even in a worst-case scenario, in which heterogeneity would provoke a radical social fragmentation, it is possible that this would not weaken, but rather reinforce the support for welfare systems. The trade-off is then shown to be, at least, questionable. Both counter-arguments presented here, in response to the fiscal and social challenges of keeping both open borders and welfare states, as well as the arguments which they address, are circumstantial. They show competing views of what is more likely to happen based on both empirical and theoretical analysis. From the philosophical point of view, the data sometimes seemed unequivocal, but the premises on which the data was based appeared to be highly questionable; sometimes the premises seemed plausible enough, but the data showed that they were actually questionable. The limitations of this account were exposed when a large part of the discussion was dedicated to dealing with better ways of accommodating market-based solutions in conflict with a moral view of human beings, seeing them not as consumers, but as natural holders of basic rights. In order to overcome these limitations, I argue that we have to think from outside of the box of neoclassical economics and similar models and envision a new starting point for thinking intrinsically about what is essentially intrinsic and extrinsically on what is essentially extrinsic. This demand might sound pretty obvious, but when we see that more and more of the most intrinsically valuable spheres of human life are being commodified, rights now becoming a bargaining chip, we can see how quickly the obvious is forgotten.

Napoleon's Horse and the Forgotten Obvious

What is the colour of Napoleon's white horse? If your answer is 'white', congratulations, you are correct! But you are correct not because you are lucky, know history well or have a detailed and fresh memory of Jacques-Louis David's famous painting. Actually, if you are a history expert or an art connoisseur, you would probably say that Marengo was grey, but, in this case, your answer to the above question would be wrong. This is because the question already presupposes the answer in its formulation. The obvious problem with this is that it is not a real question, but a trap. Friedman's question was 'what was wrong with the welfare states?', and the answer was 'many things are wrong with the welfare states' and therefore they need to give place for a better regime. How many coconuts does a date palm tree produce in a season? I bet that, if you were not warned about 'trap questions', you would be tempted to answer it with a number, before you realise that date palm trees do not produce coconuts, but dates. This follows because sometimes we tend to search for an answer too quickly and forget to reflect upon the question itself. Something similar can be said to apply to the nationalists' set of economic questions: How many and what kind of people can come in order to maximise productivity without causing trouble? What rights could they have in order to balance it against their contributions? When such questions are in place, what we see is that regulated admissions will have to be in the answer, because the question already assumes it. From that, an answer with a clear number is expected, even if the forgotten obvious is not likely to be a numerical answer at all. Taking the second example more seriously, we see that 'persons' and 'coconuts' become interchangeable concepts, i.e. the same logic of trade in goods is applied indiscriminate of whether one is discussing coconuts or people. How many and which kinds of coconuts can be traded to maximise profit and minimise costs? How much can be invested in the production and distribution of coconuts in order to balance consumption? When treating persons as coconuts, economics extrapolates its original aim of managing production, distribution and consumption of goods to manage rights and human mobility in the same way. Human beings then become commodities. The problem with this approach is well defined by Michael Sandel, who says that economics is emptying the debate of morality when 'putting a price on noneconomic goods', such as on human lives (Sandel 2013). In his account, it is clear that, morally, not everything is for sale. Therefore, he argues that to decide what is subjected to the market and what is not is an urgent task in contemporary politics:

there is a great difference between having a market economy and being a market economy (Sandel 2013).

About Persons and Coconuts

Economics is indeed a very powerful tool in times when many things depend on money; it helps us manage the resources in an optimal way: gain, spend, save and invest according to demand and supply; it assists us on reflecting upon ways we can improve the everyday life of people. When, more specifically discussing human mobility, however, it can only matter after the main decisions are put in place to create opportunities for persons who immigrate or emigrate. To expect to manage human mobility according to its economic advantages is wrong for at least four reasons: (1) persons are not coconuts; (2) the meaning of one's life cannot be reduced to a monetary value; (3) basic rights should not be for sale; and (4) basic rights should not be inheritable.

(1) Human beings are not commodities and, as Kant has already wisely stated, they should not be used merely as a means, i.e. as pure instruments for achieving something else such as profit. If we challenge the settled assumption that says that each person should be respected as such, we can, perhaps, expect to have slavery back in the near future—if we agree that we do not already have it in the present (see Home Office, Modern Slavery Bill). Not to mention the opening of new markets for human organs and kids, the renting of the right to life and so forth. No doubt, it requires a bit of imagination to envisage new markets for what was previously not saleable (it is possible that the examples that I chose here are already a reality somewhere), because even if there used to be a limit to what is commodifiable, this limit has been breached: from the commodification of CO2 emissions to the commodification of freedom. But we have to keep in mind that it is not alright to manage immigration as the pure movement of 'material bodies', to recall Susmann's illuminating term. When they are not valuable enough, they are sent away to become somebody else's problem. This is very much like throwing the garbage in the neighbour's property in order to clean up things at home. We have to be attentive, however, that when portraying the 'others' as pure materiality, we get the impression that we can evade the responsibility to respect them as equal and free persons. Suddenly, the wrongness of treating persons as garbage becomes trivial. It dissipates itself in a sentence: 'We did what we had to do'. At this point we end up in a very dangerous mind-set for humanity.



(2) Putting a price on human lives would imply that we are living for nothing more than profit. How much is your life worth? It depends on how much and where you produce during your lifetime. The excellence of a carpenter, for example, would not be measured by one's mastery on the art of carpentry, but by the monetary value of what one's expertise is able to produce. To some extent, the division of labour already does that. Doctors, for example, are better paid than carpenters and companies are used to offer better wages for those they believe will contribute more to their goals. However, this does not imply, by any means, that in a situation of, for example, drowning, we are to save first the doctors and then, if possible, the carpenters or that we have to rescue our compatriots by letting immigrants drown. Human worthiness and genuine human values cannot vanish amidst numbers in any respectable society.

(3) Making rights a commodity would not only imply that economically deprived persons would not have a claim to equal rights, but there are other implications as well. We all know that, in practice, equality of rights is already subjected to economic inequality and that, for example, the right to emigrate means a lot more for those able to afford it than to the penniless. Even though this happens more frequently than imagined, there is a moral constraint pushing us to fight for distributive justice in order to make equality of rights more effective for everybody. What would happen if we decide to stop pushing in this direction? Well, it would be very different just to assume that rights are for those who can afford it, but the consequences do not only affect the needy. By bringing the commodification of migrant rights to the forefront of politics as a basic rationale, informed and dispassionate decisions, not only degenerates the very meaning of human rights, but also the meaning of justice itself. Following these pragmatic guidelines, governmental decisions are to be based on cost-effectiveness, not justice. These become 'business decisions' and the states, instead of being promoters of human rights, act like corporations that do what they are designed to do irrespective of the externalities that such decisions might cause. The constraint is that states are not corporations and they have never been designed to pursue their national interests in isolation of other states, reminding us that the birth of states came together with the birth of international law. When citizens themselves, as politicians or househusbands, start to appropriate this pragmatism, they fragment themselves into a moral person, on one side, and into a businessman, on the other. When confronted with a supposedly difficult decision, they allow themselves to decide as

a businessman and regret like a moral person; at that point, the personal responsibility for cruel acts has already dissipated. With no responsibility in place, right and wrong also cease to exist.

(4) If you now think that it is unjust for rights to be in the market for those who can pay for them, what does one say about rights being exclusive for those who are already born with them? People born in high-income countries are destined to have a much better life, fuller of opportunities and achievements, than people born in low-income countries. Some people in developing and low-income countries even hope to be born again elsewhere just to have the opportunity for a better life. They risk their lives to cross the borders. This is because where they are born, they are prevented from developing the capabilities that would enable them a basic and a decent life. A person born in Norway will, according to the statistics (World Bank), live as long as thirty years more than a person born in Angola. Imagining two persons born at the same time in those two countries, when the Angolan is dying, the Norwegian might be achieving a stable career. The Norwegian-born will have, at least, seven times more resources than the Angolan-born during one's lifetime and while the Norwegian-born will most likely finish school and probably get a university degree, the Angolan-born has only 50% chance of finishing elementary school. Certainly, Norway is aware of these discrepancies and it has done a lot more than larger economies to tackle poverty abroad. The problem is that to help the Angolan-born is still a question of charity, and while some states contribute more, others are able to get away with giving less or nothing without any sanction. Recalling the marathon example, we can see that some have won and others lost the marathon even before being born. Winning becomes a matter of inheritance, and no duty, but charity, is meant to mitigate others' losses. We then see that when mobility is restricted, citizenship becomes as valuable as inherited property in determining one's opportunities in life (Shachar and Hirschl 2007). It is not even a marathon anymore, but a Mugabe-like lottery in which the organiser of the lottery is, of course, the winner.

This list does not pretend to be exhaustive, but it is certainly sufficient to show that economics cannot deal with immigration issues alone without being bounded and subordinated to universal morality in a serious manner. In liberal democracies, our commitments to universal morality require us, above all, to regard all human beings as equal and free. This should be irrespectively of race, religion, sex or sexual orientation, political views, social status or nationality. In order for these



values not to be added to the list of the forgotten obvious, we have to start over, think outside the box and formulate a fresh starting question for economics. There might be other promising questions out there, but my proposal is the following:

What are the mechanisms that should be in place to maximise the overall wellbeing and minimise adverse impacts on human beings, as free and equal persons?

Conclusion and Perspectives

From the inside of the box, we have seen that the *trade-off between open borders and a welfare state is questionable* and, as such, it should not be taken for granted. This is because the two assumed strains, the fiscal and social, might not hold as expected. While it was expected that open borders would lead to breaking of the welfare economy due to the fiscal stress provoked by the arrival of more taxpayers than tax receivers, we saw that without immigration, Europe, and other places with low or negative natural population growth, would already have more tax receivers than taxpayers and their economies would be weakened given their current economic model. In this sense, the lack of immigration would, for these countries, mean more than economic stagnation, even economic decline. For the near future, immigration has the potential to secure economic growth by rectifying the age dependency ratio for twenty more years, giving us time to come up with more stable solutions. The solutions currently presented for changing (or mixing) the intergenerational pension system to funded pensions are still unsatisfactory because they fail to take into account the persistent social inequalities. For this matter, I have argued that a better solution would require us to step back from the generally individualistic approach that guarantees rights for those able to pay for them, and move towards a more comprehensive economic model that takes seriously into account, our universal moral commitments. While it was expected that the increased ethnic heterogeneity would undermine the welfare system's public support, we saw that not only is the available data is highly inconclusive and contested, but also that, in the worst case scenario, assuming that the tribal behaviour is really the basis of our contemporary societies, the overwhelming threat caused by an increase of ethnic heterogeneity would possibly enhance, rather than a diminish, the support for the welfare systems.

From outside of the box, we have seen that the trade-off between open

borders and welfare states might be more than circumstantially overcome by having a different starting point for economics. A starting point that does not prioritise either global or national economic growth, but addresses the wellbeing of human beings as free and equal persons. With this in mind, I finish the paper with a start: a fresh question towards a new economic model. This start is needed because we should not keep justifying our bad behaviour in order to achieve purely economic goals anymore. Note that the question proposed does ask for a simple numerical answer. It requires thinking instead. To purely manage numbers, is an ability that, in society, does not replace thinking. I define 'thinking' beyond strategic abilities because by thinking, one could also decide to lose. When framing our lives in society strategically, by which certain goals of maximising cost-efficiency for ourselves are settled, there is no doubt that the answers to our questions will arise directly and clearly. This straightforward method can produce the view that one cannot argue against facts and high probabilities, but then numbers, not agents are taking the decisions: businessmen, not moral persons. However, by accepting this method and calling it a rational approach, we delegate precisely what makes us rational beings in the first place, i.e. our ability to think and distinguish right from wrong. A genuine rational decision does not take the assumptions and data for granted without questioning them first; it requires doubt, followed by certitude and criticism.

It might be that my question is too broad and that requires economics to account for some things that are not clearly measurable, such as wellbeing. It might also be that the question is embedded in notions that are, in any meaningful sense, at the periphery of economics: such as moral judgments and the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic values. But I believe that these tensions are exactly what make this question relevant. In such a view, a genuinely informed decision on human mobility and wellbeing takes into account also things that are not immediately measurable or evident; it requires observation, deliberation, and judgment. A reframed question for economics certainly does not entail a *complete* reorientation of empirical research to normative standards meaning that the questions of 'inside the box' are to be made irrelevant. They complement each other and the challenge of political philosophy that is attentive to our current problems is to interplay between both. To diagnose how the world appears, is, in this sense, essential to create a world as how it should be based on realistic steps. Economists already ask such normative questions when exploring what mechanisms *should be* in place in order to maximise the overall wellbeing and minimise adverse impacts on citizens.

Normative questions are not a prerogative of philosophy. What I proposed here is the expansion of this question, beyond the egotistic view of the individual that can only help but him/herself to the broader frame of free and equal individuals that can also chose to lose in order to help the other. In other words, the proposed question requires us to think not only from the inside, but also from outside the box.

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