

Editors' Conclusion: Future Directions for Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity is primarily a de-centralising principle, which aims to empower the individual by ensuring that decisions are made, and problems are resolved, closest to where they arise. In turn, decision-making and action taken by those directly affected allows for problems to be resolved more quickly, and more accurately than if a higher-level decision maker who is distanced from the problem, were to become involved.

This book has provided an overview of the development of the principle of subsidiarity, from ancient times in the philosophical writings of Aristotle and Aquinas, as discussed by Aroney in Chap. 2, through to its more practical operation in the European Union as a procedural, political and legal principle, as discussed by Gabriel Moens and John Trone in Chap. 9. The principle's subsequent development as a political philosophy capable of informing scholarship on a range of issues such as individual autonomy, democracy, the welfare state, federalism, globalisation and human rights was also explored. It has not been possible, in this one volume, to discuss every possible aspect and application of the principle of subsidiarity. However, we hope that this book has illustrated the key aspects and applications of this diverse principle in order to encourage a wider consideration of the principle in scholarship across a diverse range of discourses including philosophy, theology, politics and law.

On this note, although the principle of subsidiarity has its basis firmly in Western philosophical, theological and legal traditions, in a similar manner to Weinberger's discussion of sphere sovereignty and subsidiarity in Chap. 4, or Chaplin's discussion of sphere sovereignty and social pluralism in Chap. 5, further scholarship on subsidiarity may extend to drawing parallels with other religions such as Judaism. Parallels between the principle of subsidiarity and the decentralist characteristics of non-Western philosophies and religions, such as Buddhism or Hinduism could also be explored.

Besides its enunciation in Catholic social teaching, as discussed by Brennan in Chap. 3, we should not overlook the many opportunities for further scholarship on subsidiarity to occur within other Western traditions, such as an exploration of the

relationship between subsidiarity and other key concepts in Catholic social thought such as solidarity, the common good, dignity of the person and the governance of the Church itself; and the presence of the principle in the works of philosophers such as John Stuart Mill, and in political philosophies such as deliberative democracy.

In Chaps. 6 and 7 respectively, Zimmermann and Sirico applied the principle of subsidiarity to draw attention to the disempowerment and disillusionment of the individual in the welfare state. When government power increases, personal freedom must decrease, because an excess of government power diminishes choice and opportunity for people to excel. Arguably, if a nation embraces subsidiarity, the power of its government must be limited enough so that it does not take too much freedom from the people. Conversely, 'powerful' governments that make more and more decisions for the people eventually destroy personal freedom and all the incentives for individual action and economic growth.

In this sense, future scholarship on subsidiarity could also extend into other areas of economics such as taxation, and the rights of property owners. After all, the ability to live in freedom, to make free choices and be responsible for them, is an essential component of subsidiarity as a decentralising principle. As such, the opposite of subsidiarity is analogous to an organic society in which a central government regulates and controls all aspects of life, thus hindering personal freedom and, as such, economic prosperity.

Chapters 8, 9, and 10 discussed subsidiarity as a decentralising principle in a political, governmental and constitutional context. For example, the operation and effectiveness of the principle of subsidiarity in the European Union was discussed in Chap. 9 by Moens and Trone. In Chap. 8, Brohmer discussed the principle's operation in the context of the German Constitution (*Basic Law*), and the unwritten characteristics of subsidiarity that are evident from an examination of the administrative and judicial functioning of the German Federal Republic. In Chap. 10, Evans argued that the principle could be used to reform the Australian federal system of government, which has become increasingly centralised despite the framers intention to maintain state powers and autonomy wherever possible.

Given that the world is becoming a much smaller place due to advances in travel, communication and increased international cooperation, Follesdal discussed the intricacies of the principle's application in the context of globalisation, global governance and international human rights. As noted above, whilst we have been able to touch on issues such as human rights, there is much room for further scholarship on subsidiarity in the context of human rights, as well as in areas such as deliberative democracy.

In addition to this book's focus on subsidiarity in a public context, subsidiarity also has a potential application in the private sphere, for example, in corporate and University governance. Both Corporations and Universities have centralised systems of governance, often with very limited decision making abilities being devolved to lower level management and individual employees. Similarly, subsidiarity also has relevance in the areas of employer-employee relations, human resources, marketing

and business management, and in the running of other institutions such as not-for-profit organisations and trade unions.

In short, the principle of subsidiarity is somewhat of a chameleon due to its ability to adapt to, and to inform scholarship across many disciplines and in social, religious, philosophical and legal contexts. We hope that this book will contribute to an increased contemplation of this often neglected, but highly useful, important and relevant principle, and to the development of subsidiarity scholarship in areas that have yet to be explored.