

Nussbaum's List

1 Main ideas

1. Some functions are necessary for a “fully human” life. “Fully human” means ‘worthy of a human being’ or ‘dignified’, I think. It is contrasted with the merely animal.
2. Public policy should provide the “social basis” for the capabilities to perform these functions.
3. Grounding. The list of capabilities is a “political” one, meaning it is acceptable to a wide variety of philosophies for the purposes of guiding public policy. Contrast: a ‘non-political’ theory is derived from premises about the ultimate good and/or applies to private as well as public life.¹
4. List: pp. 77-80.
5. Since it's just capabilities, rather than the exercise of those capabilities (“functioning” in the jargon used here), there's no objectionable coercion.

2 Contrast with ...

1. GNP. Insensitive to distribution.
2. Utility (subjective welfare). Overly sensitive to adaptation (pp. 62–3).
3. Rawls (resources, stuff). Insensitive to different needs in different conditions: children vs. adults, pregnant vs. non-pregnant, paralyzed vs. able-bodied (p. 68).

¹ The source for these ideas is John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Columbia University Press, 1993). In earlier articles, Nussbaum derived her list from some doctrines found in Aristotelian philosophy. See Nussbaum, “Human functioning and social justice: In defense of Aristotelian essentialism” *Political Theory* (2002) 20(2):202–246. When presented that way, the list was not political, in the specialized sense under discussion here.

