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Book Review (reviewing Roberto Mangabeira Unger, Knowledge and Politics (1975))

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Book Review

Knowledge and Politics. By Roberto Mangabeira Unger.* New York: The Free Press, 1975. Pp. 295. $12.95.

In fewer than three hundred pages, Professor Roberto Unger attempts to do the following things: 1) give an account of the main ideas which, since the intellectual revolution of the 17th century, have informed our conceptions of nature, society, and the human self, and show the interconnection among them, and their relation to the dominant social and political institutions of the modern state; 2) display the philosophical shortcomings of these ideas, and the inadequacies of the actual institutional arrangements to which they correspond; 3) present an ideal conception of the self and of society which captures the strengths, while avoiding the weaknesses, of the modern (or as Unger characterizes it, the "liberal"[1]) intellectual tradition; 4) identify those features of modern social and political organization that intimate, in a cloudy and ambiguous way, the possible transformation of the master institutions of the liberal state and the emergence of a form of life in which Unger's ideal of the self would be adequately realized; and 5) place the birth and demise of liberalism in the context of a theory of universal history. It is strange that after so rich a feast, the reader is still hungry—without quite knowing for what.

I.

In the first three chapters of *Knowledge and Politics*, Professor Unger is concerned with what he calls the "metaphysical" aspects of liberalism.[2] It is his aim, in these opening chapters, to describe the conceptual foundations of liberal epistemology, ethics, and political theory. This part of Unger's argument is devoted to the analysis of a "set of interlocking conceptions"[3] or ideas. According to Unger, these ideas, taken by themselves and in abstraction, are only "the representation of a certain type of social life in the language of speculative thought;"[4] in order to fully understand them, it is necessary to articulate their connec-

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1. R. UNGER, KNOWLEDGE AND POLITICS 8, 11, 57-58 (1975).
2. *Id.* at 5-6.
3. *Id.* at 145.
4. *Id.*

tion with liberalism as a mode of social existence.[5] This latter task, which assumes the form of an "historical inquiry"[6] into the structure and dynamical properties of liberal institutions, is taken up in the fourth chapter of Unger's book. In his fifth chapter, Unger sketches an ideal of the self and begins an account of how that ideal might be realized in the world. The book's concluding chapter continues this account, and integrates Unger's theory of the self with the "historical inquiry" initiated in Chapter Four, by suggesting how the conditions required for realizing the ideal might emerge from the actual transformation of liberal institutions themselves. Although Unger's argument has a complex organization, its main elements can be presented rather simply. What follows is a summary account of the argument, or at least of its more important and interesting features.

Liberalism, considered both as a set of intellectual propositions and as a real form of social life, achieved its definitive form in the 17th century. As the liberal world took shape, its ideas and institutions displaced those of an older world. The two interconnected ideas which informed the beliefs and attitudes of this older or preliberal world were: 1) the idea that every being has an "intelligible essence" or inherent nature that makes it one kind of thing rather than another, and which can be apprehended by human intelligence;[7] and 2) the conviction that what is natural and what is normative or sacred are continuous and inseparable, both in the individual person and in the world as a whole. The first idea underlies the natural law tradition in Western metaphysics, and the second is at the root of all premodern forms of religious consciousness.[8]

The preliberal world was characterized not only by a peculiar intellectual outlook, but also by a specific social institution, or more precisely a specific principle for the arrangement of institutions—a "principle of social order."[9] Unger entitles this the "principle of estates."

> The distinctive feature of the principle of estates is the union of social circumstance and political or legal status. Within the system of estates, every individual has a fixed social place that governs almost the entirety of his life in society: the kinds of

5. *Id.* at 118.
6. *Id.* at 145.
7. *Id.* at 31, 41.
8. *Id.* at 158. Unger's account of the preliberal mind would have been more complete if he had illuminated the connection between these two ideas. For an extended discussion of the relation between the natural and the normative in the pre-modern religious consciousness, see 2 E. CASSIRER, THE PHILOSOPHY OF SYMBOLIC FORMS (1955); M. ELIADE, COSMOS AND HISTORY (1959); 2 M. WEBER, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY 399-420 (1968).
9. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 164.

> things he is expected to do and to know, the goods he possesses, and the duties or entitlements he has. Membership in one's estate is usually determined by birth. And each estate has a legal definition, strong ties of internal solidarity, a limited set of permissible jobs open to its members, and a type of power or political representation that distinguish it from other estates. Both European feudal society and what is described as the post-feudal European *Standestaat* or society of states exemplify the principle.[10]

The principle of estates is the dominant preliberal principle of social order. In the abstract way in which Unger formulates the principle, it applies equally to European feudalism, the post-feudal *Standestaat*, the societies of Mediterranean antiquity, and the great civilizations of Asia.[11] The principle of estates reflects in real life both the metaphysical doctrine of intelligible essences, and the belief that what is natural and what is normative are ultimately continuous.[12] It is this "totality"[13] of ideas and institutions that liberalism undermines and eventually replaces.[14]

According to Unger, all liberal ideas are built upon two basic premises. The first is the denial of the preliberal conviction "that all things in nature have intelligible essences" and that the human mind is therefore able to "understand what the world is really like."[15] The rejection of the principle of intelligible essences "leaves no stone of the preliberal metaphysic standing."[16] The second premise is expressed by the idea of transcendence, which asserts the radical discontinuity of the normative and the actual, or the 'transcendence' of the latter by the former.[17] This elementary notion assumes a variety of different shapes; but wherever it appears, the idea of transcendence achieves the same fundamental effect by declaring the separation of what preliberal metaphysics so completely joins together: the separation of the mind from the body, of the understanding

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10. *Id.*

11. Of course, not all preliberal institutions rest upon the principle of estates. Many are founded upon the principle of kinship. These two principles, however, share in common their most important feature: the ascription of formal rights and responsibilities to individuals on the basis of their membership in certain *groups* to which they belong by *birth*. *See* UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 164-65. It is therefore convenient to regard the principle of kinship as merely a special case of the principle of estates. With this proviso, one may properly describe the principle of estates as the dominant preliberal principle of social order.

12. *Id.* at 229.

13. *Id.* at 125-33, 148.

14. *Id.* at 77.

15. *Id.* at 31, 77, 79, 119-20.

16. *Id.* at 32.

17. *Id.* at 158-64, 228.

from the passions, of the state from society and society from nature, and finally, of God from the world. The idea of transcendence marks a profound devaluation of everything worldly, and leads inexorably to the disenchantment[18] of the world itself. Although the idea makes its initial historical appearance in the religious sphere—as the remarkable invention of those "Near Eastern salvation religions that fashioned the conception that the world was created by a deity who stands above it"[19]—its consequences are felt in the very corner of our metaphysical picture of the world and man's place within it.[20] In the chapters he devotes to liberal metaphysics, Unger attempts to show that acceptance of the root premises of liberalism has important consequences for epistemology, ethics, and political theory, and to demonstrate that in each case these same consequences produce a philosophical puzzle which resembles a contradiction (or "antinomy").[21]

Liberal epistemology, according to Unger, replaces the idea that the world has an inherent order which can be adequately grasped by human reason with the assumption that the order of the world is itself generated by the creative and informing activities of our theoretical intelligence.[22] Expressed in a more familiar way, liberal epistemology asserts that every fact, or bit of intelligible reality, is at bottom a theoretical construct. There are no theory-independent facts or propositions. Reality itself is theory-laden. Because this is so, there can be no neutral standard, no theory-independent Archimedian perspective from which to evaluate the relative merits of different and competing theoretical constructs. Unger claims that by rejecting the doctrine of intelligible essences, liberalism abolishes the independence which nature (and the 'natural') enjoy in preliberal metaphysics, and thereby undermines the classical conception of truth itself. Be-

18. M. WEBER, *Science as a Vocation*, in FROM MAX WEBER 139 (H. Gerth & C. Mills ed. 1946); M. WEBER, THE PROTESTANT ETHNIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM 180-83 (1958).

19. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 158. *See also* M. WEBER, ANCIENT JUDAISM 118-38 (1952).

20. For an account of the impact of the Judeo-Christian conception of creation on our ideas of nature and natural science, see H. Jonas, *Judaism, Christianity, and the Western Tradition*, COMMENTARY, Nov. 1967, at 61-68 (1967). The consequences of this doctrine for political theory are discussed in F. Oakley, *Medieval Theories of Natural Law*, 6 NATURAL LAW FORUM 65-83 (1961). *See also* H. WARRENDER, THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF HOBBES (1957).

21. Unger insists that the connection between liberal ideas resembles but is not a relation of entailment; likewise, he asserts that the conceptual puzzles of liberalism look like, but are not, logical contradictions. *See* UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 12-16, 107.

22. *Id.* at 32.

cause the very idea of theoretical reason requires a meaningful notion of truth, the liberal theory of knowledge destroys itself.

Liberal ethics (which Unger divides into two main types, "the moralities of reason and desire"[23]), begins with a particular picture of the self, and its various powers or faculties.

> Reason or understanding is the faculty by which the self determines what the world is like. The terms understanding and knowledge also describe the pictures of things in the world produced by the use of reason. Desire or will is the faculty by which the self determines the objects of its appetites and aversions. The appetites themselves are also called desires. A choice is a decision about which of several courses of action to pursue, when some of the courses of action are more capable of satisfying a desire than others. An inclination is a predisposition toward certain kinds of desires and toward things or situations capable of satisfying those desires.[24]

On this view, which Unger attributes to the moralities of reason and desire alike, reason is powerless to adjudicate between choices, and is reduced to a merely instrumental role in which its sole task is to discern the means for implementing a choice which the appetitive or desiring part of the self has already made. As a result, no reasoned justification can ever be given to establish the moral rectitude of a particular choice. From a moral point of view, therefore, every choice is necessarily arbitrary. According to Unger, the moral arbitrariness of choice is a consequence of the divorce of reason and desire—of the "is" and the "ought," of fact and value—and at bottom such arbitrariness is merely another facet of liberalism's thoroughgoing rejection of the doctrine of intelligible essences.

Each of the two branches of liberal ethics attempts to save choice from moral arbitrariness. The first branch (the morality of desire, which may be loosely identified with the utilitarian tradition) seeks to achieve this result by defining the good as the satisfaction of desire, and ethics as the discipline that instructs us in how to achieve the good. The second branch (the morality of reason, which Unger associates with Kantian ethics) asserts that reason establishes the standards of right conduct and thereby provides the touchstone for evaluating the morality of any particular choice. According to Unger, neither attempt is successful: the former fails because it cannot provide criteria for distinguishing the morality of different desires, and the latter is capable of generating only formal rules, which are utterly devoid of content and therefore useless as guides in the concrete deliberations of moral life. Liberalism is therefore unable to escape the conclusion that all choice is morally arbitrary. Just as theoretical

23. *Id.* at 49.
24. *Id.* at 39.

reason becomes aimless in the absence of a coherent notion of truth, practical reason is rendered senseless by the assumption that the actual choices we make in our moral life can neither be attacked nor defended by reason itself. Liberal ethics is as self-destructive as liberal epistemology.

In Unger's view, liberal political theory suffers from a related defect. Beginning with the assumption that individual human beings are in permanent conflict with one another for control of the relatively scarce means which may be used to attain the two universally shared ends of material comfort and honor, it sets itself the task of explaining how this conflict can be disciplined and moderated in such a way that each individual may be permitted a maximum of freedom in the pursuit of his own "particular objectives,"[25] without jeopardizing the system of cooperative work, of "human interdependence,"[26] which makes men "indispensable allies"[27] in their joint struggle against the eternal and nature-imposed conditions of scarcity itself. "A society of individuals who seek to achieve their particular objectives and to satisfy their needs for comfort and honor must be characterized by mutual hostility and mutual dependence. Both hostility and dependence are based on the nature of human ends and on the scarcity of means to satisfy them."[28] Preservation of individual freedom, and its reconciliation with the requirements of mutual dependence are "the two fundamental problems of politics."[29]

According to Unger, liberal political theory attempts to solve both problems by invoking the idea of a system of impersonal rules. If the rules of social association are impersonal, then they do not embody or favor a particular conception of the good. Impersonal rules are neutral as between the competing desires of different individuals. Thus, while a regime based upon rules of this sort is capable of establishing an effective public order, in doing so it does not treat "one man's goals [as] worthier of success than another's"[30] and thereby assures that order is "instituted in such a way that no one's liberty is unjustifiably preferred or downgraded and that everyone has the largest amount of liberty compatible"[31] with a like liberty for others.

Any solution to the problem of social order which invokes the principle of objective value does not take individual freedom seriously. If we begin with the assumption that the world lacks

25. *Id.* at 65.
26. *Id.*
27. *Id.*
28. *Id.*
29. *Id.* at 66.
30. *Id.*
31. *Id.* at 67.

an inherent moral structure, and that individual choices are therefore morally arbitrary, we must accept the idea of a system of impersonal rules as the only justifiable solution to the fundamental problem of politics. This is why one cannot embrace liberal ethics without also accepting the conclusions of liberal political theory, and vice versa.

Unger describes the central dilemma (or antinomy) of liberal political theory in the following way. In order to reconcile the requirements of individual liberty and social cooperation, we need a system of public rules which are both general and impersonal. But how are we to define the categories of acts and persons which the rules regulate? Or more precisely, how are we to justify any particular description of the categories in question? There are no criteria for evaluating the propriety of any proposed description or piece of legislation. Criteria of this sort cannot be found in the idea of freedom itself (since that idea is too formal and empty to be helpful), or in the utilitarian principle that happiness should be maximized (since that principle neglects to tell us which interests shall be considered and how they are to be weighted), or in the notion of a social contract (which, like the idea of freedom, yields only empty generalities). Legislation must be concrete and particular—it must do more than merely state that order and freedom are to be reconciled. And yet whatever particular rules are enacted into law will benefit, unavoidably, "the purposes of some individuals more than those of their fellows."[32] It is the great weakness of the liberal theory of politics that it cannot provide any grounds for justifying this inequality in treatment. The inequality can neither be eliminated nor legitimized.

The same problem repeats itself at the level of adjudication: individual cases must be decided; they can only be decided by appealing to substantive principles and purposes which are not themselves part of the formal legal order; although these principles and purposes inevitably will favor some individual goals over others, there are no grounds upon which this preference can be justified. Thus, the solution which liberalism offers to the "two fundamental problems of politics" reinstates, at the level both of legislation and adjudication, the same arbitrariness which the solution was designed to eradicate. In this sense, liberal political theory is self-defeating.

According to Unger, the premises of liberal epistemology, ethics and political theory share a common metaphysical root. Each begins with the rejection of the doctrine of intelligible essences, which asserts that truth and goodness "are standards

32. *Id.* at 66-67.

and goals of conduct that exist independently of human choice."[33] On this view, "men may embrace or reject [truth and goodness], but they cannot establish or undo their authority."[34] The doctrine of intelligible essences treats truth and goodness as objective standards. Liberalism, by contrast, asserts their fundamental subjectivity, construing every truth-claim as the product of a theoretical construct and every moral decision as the result of an arbitrary and groundless choice. But this assertion renders unintelligible the very idea of an independent criterion by means of which we might assess the truth of our theories and the goodness of our choices. By rejecting the doctrine of intelligible essences, liberalism deprives us of the measuring rod which we require in order to have some reasoned basis for deciding which of our theories about the world are correct, and which of our individual choices and public laws are morally good. This jeopardizes the coherence of both theoretical and practical reason, since the meaningful exercise of each depends upon the assumption that a reasoned basis of this sort exists, at least in principle. Of course, we could avoid this dilemma by simply accepting the doctrine of intelligible essences: but according to Unger there are strong reasons for believing that doctrine to be false.[35] On Unger's view, liberalism properly rejects the doctrine of intelligible essenses; in doing so, however, it deprives human reason of the objective standards which thinking, willing, and lawmaking require. The central question that liberal metaphysics poses is whether such standards can be supplied without embracing the preliberal doctrine of intelligible essences. It is Unger's contention that liberalism itself fails to provide a satisfactory answer.

Just as preliberal metaphysics has its real institutional reflection in the principle of estates, the liberal view of man and the world also finds expression in a specific set of practices and institutions which taken together compose a unified "form of social life."[36] The "society of which the liberal doctrine is the theoretical representation" is the liberal state.[37] "The liberal state is the society established by the decisive social and cultural changes of the seventeenth century that culminated in the French and industrial revolutions."[38] According to Unger, there is one institution which is peculiarly characteristic of the liberal state. This is the bureaucracy, which Unger calls "the master institu-

33. *Id.* at 76.
34. *Id.*
35. *Id.* at 77-78.
36. *Id.* at 147.
37. *Id.* at 151.
38. *Id.*

tion of the liberal state."[39] The main features of the bureaucracy are these:

> First, the bureaucracy is committed to organization by impersonal rules, but these rules may be explicit or tacit. Second, a hierarchy of authority exists among the members of the institution; there is an expectation that power will be exercised within the guidelines provided by the rules. Third, individuals in the institution have roles; there are specific jobs to get done. These jobs are defined in a standardized way with reference to their objectives and to the skills and talents they require. From the standpoint of the institution, the most important thing about the individual is whether he has the abilities demanded by the role to which he is assigned.[40]

There are two principles of social order at work in the liberal state. Each, like the principle of estates, may be regarded as "a hypothetical rule for the disposition of individuals and groups in social life . . . as the actualization of a general conception of social life."[41] The two principles are those of class and role. The "objective marks" of the principle of class are "the partial separation of social and economic circumstance from legal and political entitlement, and the preeminence of inherited and earned wealth as a determinant of social circumstance."[42] Role, by contrast, is

> the principle according to which social order is conceived and set up as a division of labor. Within the division of labor there are particular jobs; for the performance of each of them certain skills and talents are required. Each role embraces a limited and often small part of the life of the individual. Every individual occupies a plurality of roles, which he may view as entirely disparate and as connected in his life solely by the fact that it is he who occupies them. Birth operates in an indirect way by distributing unequally both natural talents and opportunities for the learning of skills. Nevertheless, merit—defined as the sum of past efforts, learned skills, and natural talents—is the established ideal of the division of labor under the principle of role. All other bases for the definition of social place are illegitimate from the perspective of that principle.[43]

Although the principles of both class and role inform the social organization of the liberal state, they are in conflict with one another.[44] As the liberal state develops, its master institution —the bureaucracy—increasingly dominates the organization of administrative and economic life. Because its structuring principle is the principle of role, the triumph of bureaucratic organization marks the ascendency of role over class as the dominant principle of social order. According to Unger, the principle of

39. *Id.* at 170.
40. *Id.*
41. *Id.* at 150.
42. *Id.* at 164-65.
43. *Id.* at 165.
44. *Id.* at 166.

role is the ideal[45] which the liberal state, the bureaucracy in particular, strives to realize in practice.

The meritocratic principle of role attempts to draw a sharp line between the actual and the normative by declaring that the social position which an individual *ought* to occupy should not be determined by the group (the estate or economic class) into which he happens, *as a matter of fact*, to have been born. This aspect of the principle of role distinguishes it from both the principle of estates and the principle of class, and makes the principle of role an ideal of individual freedom. Its insistence on the distinctness of the 'is' and the 'ought,' of fact and value, connects the principle of role with the basic ideas of liberal metaphysics, and in particular with the rejection of the doctrine of intelligible essences. In each case, it is the primacy of the individual subject that is emphasized.

While the principle of role advances a conception of individual freedom, according to Unger it violates that same conception by making merit the basis upon which social positions are distributed.

> One of the decisive elements of the conception of merit, alongside skill and effort, is natural talent. But the distribution of genetic endowments is absolutely capricious in the sense that it is not itself a reward for anything. It is incapable of justification. In the absence of special conditions, which I shall mention later, the exercise of power by some men over others on the basis of the natural allocation of talents must therefore come to be felt as a surrender by society to the arbitrariness of nature and as a submission by the dominated to the personal superiority of the dominant. The brute facts of natural advantage are made decisive to the distribution of power.[46]

The dilemma posed by the principle of role may be stated quite simply: because the principle makes the organization of society dependent upon certain naturally given talents and abilities, it gives decisive importance to factors that must be regarded as capricious and arbitrary from the perspective of the ideal of individual freedom which the principle of role itself attempts to express. Consequently, the principle of role exhibits the same self-contradictory character as the main ideas of liberal metaphysics. Like the liberal theories of knowledge, moral conduct, and political association, the dominant principle of social order in the liberal state—the principle of role—abandons us to a predicament in which we are unable to avoid relying upon considerations which at the same time we cannot help but regard as

45. *Id.* at 165.
46. *Id.* at 169, 172-73, 273.

arbitrary and unjustified. This is the antinomy not only of liberal thought but of the liberal state as well.[47]

I have now sketched Unger's account of the liberal world and its historical predecessor. The last two chapters of *Knowledge and Politics* are devoted to a discussion of what he terms the "postliberal"[48] world. Although this postliberal world has yet to assume a concrete historical form (and, indeed, may never assume one), its constitution is intimated by certain developmental tendencies within the liberal state itself. In attempting to form a rough idea of its contours and guiding principles, it is essential that we begin by regarding the postliberal world as a total form of social life, a "totality," which may be conceptually distinguished from both its liberal and preliberal counterparts. It would appear to be Unger's view that these three totalities, taken together, exhaust the possible basic modes of historical experience. Presumably, the main task of any universal history would be to describe, in detail, the connecting links which bind these forms of life together while marking the transition from one to the next.[49]

Because it is a "totality," the postliberal world has both a metaphysical and an institutional aspect. The object of postliberal *metaphysics* is to resolve the antinomies of liberal thought without resorting to the doctrine of intelligible essences.[50] Put somewhat differently, postliberal metaphysics seeks to provide a determinate criterion for the evaluation of theories, choices, and institutional arrangements which will not obliterate the notion of individual autonomy that constitutes the great discovery and main theme of liberal philosophy.[51] The metaphysical scheme which Unger outlines in his chapter on the theory of the self represents an attempt to satisfy this requirement. Unger's argument goes something like this: 1) there is "a unitary human nature, though one that changes and develops in history"[52]; 2) if we assume that to "achieve the good is to become ever more perfectly what, as a human being, one is,"[53] then this "unitary human nature" or "species nature" constitutes "the final basis of moral judgment in the absence of objective values and in the silence of revelation"[54]; 3) taken together, the main attributes

47. *Id.* at 118.
48. *Id.* at 238.
49. Although Unger does not make this point explicitly, I believe that his book contains the outlines of such a tripartite theory of universal history. *See* UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 226-31.
50. *Id.* at 194-95.
51. *Id.* at 238-40.
52. *Id.* at 221.
53. *Id.* at 227.
54. *Id.* at 221.

of this "unitary human nature" define "certain relationships between the self and nature, the self and others, the abstract and the concrete self"[55]; 4) the "common character" of each relationship is that in it "the conscious self is opposed to and united with something external"[56]; 5) a satisfactory account of our "species nature" must therefore recognize that "the self is in fact distinct from the world, and ought to become more and more independent from it" *and* that the self is at the same time "part of the world, and should increase progressively its union with the world"[57]; 6) it is possible to construct such an account of our "species nature" out of intuitions and experiences gathered from our everyday life.

The conclusion which Unger wishes to draw from this argument is that his description of our "species nature" provides a determinate standard for the evaluation of moral and political proposals (and, presumably, for adjudicating certain theoretical questions as well), without denying the importance of subjectivity in human life. In this way, Unger's description purportedly captures the great strength of liberal metaphysics—its commitment to freedom[58]—and at the same time manages to overcome its antinomies without appealing to the doctrine of intelligible essences. The secret of its success lies, of course, in the fact that the description itself incorporates subjectivity as one of the constitutive elements of our "species nature."

In the last chapter of his book, Unger offers a rather detailed account of an institutional arrangement that would adequately express the synthetic principle of postliberal metaphysics developed in his ideal theory of the self. Unger calls this arrangement the "organic group." In order for postliberal metaphysics to be 'brought down to earth,' the organic group must replace the bureaucracy as the master institution of society. Unger describes how this might happen, and then goes on to discuss some of the central (and ineradicable) problems of "communitarian politics"[59]—the politics of the organic group. He concludes with a few brief remarks on the relation of philosophy to politics and religion.

Unger's description of the structure of the organic group, and its historical relation to the bureaucratic order of the modern state, contains his fullest discussion of the concrete political problems associated with the distribution of wealth and power. Many

55. *Id.* at 226-27.
56. *Id.* at 227.
57. *Id.* at 202, 227.
58. *Id.* at 227.
59. *Id.* at 284.

readers will undoubtedly find this part of Unger's book the most stimulating, or at least the most accessible, and there is a strong temptation to test the adequacy of Unger's philosophical argument against the cogency and attractiveness of the practical proposals which he offers in his concluding chapter. Despite this, I shall not discuss Unger's theory of the organic group in this review. As Unger himself would admit, the truth of that theory is dependent upon the truth of the philosophical ideas which he elaborates in his critique of liberalism and in his ideal theory of the self. Only after those ideas have been vindicated can Unger's theory of the organic group be said to rest upon a secure conceptual foundation. In what follows, my attention is directed to the philosophical, rather than the practical, aspects of Unger's argument. I do not discuss the substance of Unger's theory of the organic group because it contains no new philosophical principles, and throws little additional light on the key ideas introduced earlier in the book.

II.

Professor Unger's argument raises two important problems of method. They are problems that Unger himself discusses at great length, and although it would be overstating things to say that his entire project turns upon their successful resolution, like all methodological problems, they pose threshold questions which must be disposed of at the outset.

The first problem may be described in the following way. It is Unger's contention that our thinking is today totally dominated by a particular "vision" or picture of the world, which assumed its "classic form in the seventeenth century"[60] and which, in certain respects, is seriously deficient. In order to demonstrate that the liberal vision of the world is inadequate, it is necessary that Unger be able to appeal to a standard or criterion against which it adequacy may be measured. This standard cannot itself be part of the picture whose adequacy is to be assessed; if it were, it would lack the independence that permits it to function as a standard of critical judgment in the first place. But if liberalism is in fact a total picture of the world, how can we extricate ourselves from it sufficiently to achieve the Archimedian[61] independence required to assess its adequacy?[62] Either liberalism

60. *Id.* at 3.
61. *Id.* at 86.
62. For a thorough discussion of the problem of the standpoint of any total criticism, see G. HEGEL, SCIENCE OF LOGIC 43, 60, 67-78 (A. Miller trans. 1969); G. HEGEL, PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIND 131-45 (J. Baillie trans. 1967); G. HEGEL, LOGIC 27-28, 84-85, 86 (2d ed. W. Wallace trans. 1892).

is a total picture of the world, in the sense that its principles exhaust our capacity to think about or describe the nature of the world and its contents, or it is not. In order to account for the possibility of a "total criticism"[63] of liberal ideas, Unger is forced to make the latter assumption.

What is the Archimedian point from which liberalism is to be critically surveyed? According to Unger, the strengths and weaknesses of liberalism are to be measured by comparing its conception of the self[64] with an ideal conception that adequately describes the main features of the human condition.[65] And how is it that we come by this ideal conception? Unger maintains that the liberal *Weltanschauung* is in fact erected upon a more basic, and enduring, picture of man and his place in the world, and that this basic picture has never been entirely obliterated although it has been severely repressed by the triumph of liberal ideas.[66] The ideal which Unger employs to criticize liberalism is anchored in this basic picture, and the basic picture is in turn anchored (or at least given expression) in our moral intuitions and in the prereflective judgments of everyday life.[67] Reduced to its sparest formulation, Unger's contention is that the virtues of liberalism are to be measured by comparing its "picture of humanity"[68] with the one embodied in a particular set of intuitions.

As Unger himself recognizes, there are difficulties inherent in the appeal to moral intuitions as arbiters of judgment and choice: "Where is the line between the correct intuitions and the false ones to be drawn except by reference to the very theory the intuitions are supposed to support?"[69] There is, however, an additional reason why such an appeal represents a peculiar embarassment in Unger's case. According to Unger, liberalism begins with a rejection of the "doctrine of intelligible essences." Unger argues that this doctrine cannot (and should not)[70] be resurrected, and he acknowledges that any criticism of liberalism which begins with an appeal to the doctrine of intelligible essences simply begs the question by assuming what liberalism denies. It is therefore necessary that Unger disentangle his own appeal to moral intuitions from the ontological premises on which the doctrine of intelligible essences is based.

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63. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 1-3.
64. *See* text accompanying notes 22-28 *supra*.
65. UNGER, *supra* note 1, 118, 191.
66. *Id.* at 21-22, 196-99.
67. *Id.* at 21, 55, 197.
68. *Id.* at 197.
69. *Id.*
70. *Id.* at 77-78, 238-39.

At first sight, this might appear to be a difficult task. For while an appeal to moral intuitions may leave open many of the ontological and epistemological issues which the doctrine of intelligible essences sought to decide, it does assume, in common with that doctrine, the demonstrably self-evident truth of certain normative propositions. I do not wish to quarrel with this assumption; if appropriately qualified, it is an assumption which every ethical theory must accommodate in one way or another. However, if Unger exploits the notion of self-evidence in his own appeal to moral intuitions, while maintaining that the theory of "objective value"[71] is defective because it presupposes that "the mind can grasp and establish moral essences or goods"[72] (a fact which "has never been shown"[73]), then there must be some additional and independent reason for rejecting the latter theory other than the mere fact that it rests upon an appeal to the self-evidence of a particular normative conception.

There are two aspects in which Unger's ideal conception of the self may be substantively distinguished from its liberal and preliberal counterparts (as he describes them). In the first place, Unger's conception attempts to reconcile the conflicting claims of nature and freedom in human life, by giving due weight both to our desire for autonomy or independence and to our need for a satisfying union with others and with the natural world.[74] According to Unger, liberalism cannot adequately accommodate the latter dimension of our humanity, and the preliberal conception of the self's relation to the world fails to accord the former dimension a sufficiently important position.[75] It is the holistic character of Unger's conception of the self which presumably makes it preferable to either of the other two, and which gives it its intuitive appeal. Each of us knows, from first-hand experience, the conflict that Unger describes; a picture of the self in which the warring elements[76] are made to lie down with one another in peace has obvious attractions. On Unger's view, these attractions compel us to choose this picture over the one which liberalism offers, and over the naturalistic picture that dominates the preliberal world (and which is associated with the doctrine of objective value).

Neither Unger's theory of the self, nor its use as a device for criticizing the main ideas that Unger ascribes to liberalism,

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71. *Id.* at 32, 77.
72. *Id.* at 77.
73. *Id.*
74. *Id.* at 21. *See* text accompanying notes 50-58 *supra.*
75. *Id.* at 31, 157-64, 180-81, 226.
76. *Id.* at 24-28.

represent philosophical novelties. Hegel long ago took Kant to task on similar grounds.[77] In fact, one of the principle aims of Hegel's philosophy was to provide a satisfying account of the relation between freedom and nature, which would vindicate the infinite worth of freedom while rescuing nature from the unhappy position into which (on Hegel's view) it had fallen in Kant's critical philosophy.[78] To be honest, I find very little in Unger's "vision of humanity" which isn't already there—and for the most part explicitly so—in Hegel's philosophy.[79] Readers unfamiliar with the history of modern philosophy, and in particular with post-Kantian German philosophy, are likely to grant Unger's arguments more originality than they possess.

On page nine we are told:

> The predicament to which liberal thought responds was a central concern of Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and to a lesser degree, Spinoza, Rousseau, and Kant. My references to them, however, are designed to illustrate rather than to prove their adherence to the doctrines that are the subject of the critique. In this sense, the critical argument remains hypothetical, the reconstruction of a system of thought that their writings partially exemplify rather than a study of the complexities and crosscurrents that mark the development of an intellectual tradition.

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77. *See* 3 G. HEGEL, HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY 462-63, 472 (E. Haldane & F. Simson trans. 1896). *See also* G. HEGEL, PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT ¶¶ 1-39 (T. Knox trans. 1952). G. HEGEL, PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIND 440-45 (J. Baillie trans. 1967).

78. This theme runs, implicitly, throughout the whole of Hegel's system. Its most explicit formulations are to be found in his ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL SCIENCES. *See* G. HEGEL, LOGIC 180, 263-65, 377, 379 (2d ed. W. Wallace trans. 1892); G. HEGEL, PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE 13, 442-45 (A. Miller trans. 1970); G. HEGEL, PHILOSOPHY OF MIND 18-19 (A. Miller trans. 1971). Commentators on Hegel stress the importance of the reconciliation of free subjectivity and nature for the Hegelian system. *See, e.g.*, J. Findlay, *Foreword* to G. HEGEL, PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE at xiii, xxv (A. Miller trans. 1970); G. MURE, A STUDY OF HEGEL'S LOGIC 299 (1950).

79. Compare Unger's views on the following subjects with Hegel's. On self-consciousness: G. HEGEL, PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIND 218-67, 329-82 (2d rev. ed. J. Baillie trans. 1949); G. HEGEL, PHILOSOPHY OF MIND 153-240 (A. Miller trans. 1971); on science: G. HEGEL, PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIND 272-327, 446-53 (J. Baillie trans. 1967); on work: G. HEGEL, PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT ¶¶ 189, 190-208 (T. Knox trans. 1952); on love: G. HEGEL, PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIND 473-75 (J. Baillie trans. 1967); G. HEGEL, PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT ¶¶ 158-68 (T. Knox trans. 1952); on art: G. HEGEL, PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIND 713-49 (J. Baillie trans. 1967); G. HEGEL, PHILOSOPHY OF FINE ART (T. Knox trans. 1975); on social interaction: G. HEGEL, PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIND 229-40, 501-06, 559-610 (J. Bailie trans. 1967); G. HEGEL, PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT ¶¶ 34-50, 65-71, 72-77, 142-57, 182-256 (T. Knox trans. 1952); G. HEGEL, PHILOSOPHY OF MIND 244-91 (A. Miller trans. 1971); on the division of labor: G. HEGEL, PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT ¶¶ 198-208 (T. Knox trans. 1952).

This proviso is meant to insulate Unger from the objection that his "reconstruction" does not faithfully reflect the ideas of any particular theorist in the liberal tradition. Unhappily, Unger's "reconstruction" is so schematic that at times it merely burlesques the views of the great liberal thinkers; all of the interesting detail is washed away, and we are encouraged to forget that the so-called "antinomies" of liberalism were themselves the subject of considerable attention in the liberal tradition itself.[80] On occasion, Unger's "reconstruction" not only simplifies but positively misrepresents the views of particular philosophers. I think this is true, for example, in his brief account of the inadequacies of the "morality of reason," where he accuses Kantian ethics of being a barren formalism incapable of guiding us in our choice between equally universalizable maxims,[81] and in his discussion of Hegel and Marx, both of whom he characterizes as historicists and the proponents of a naive and indefensible objectivism.[82] Such distortion is unfortunate because it masks some of the important similarities between Unger's own ideas and the actual, detailed views of those he is criticizing.

Of course, it is not necessarily an objection that one merely repeats the ideas of other thinkers. If the ideas are true, their repetition may be a service. However, Unger's theory of the self suffers from a greater defect than unoriginality. The theory is vacuous as well.

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80. *See* text accompanying notes 127-36 & note 123 *infra*.

81. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 51, 53-54. It would, of course, be foolish to insist that Kantian ethics are not formal. Kant's stated intention was to discover the "supreme principle of morality" which underlies our common moral consciousness, and to explain how the same pure human reason could consistently be employed in both the theoretical and practical spheres. I. KANT, FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE METAPHYSIC OF MORALS 7 (T. Abbott transl. 1873). But although Kant's ethics are formal, they do not, for that reason alone, lack content. Among the commentators on Kant's moral philosophy who have discussed and dismissed the broad charge of "formalism" are J. RAWLS, A THEORY OF JUSTICE 251 & n.29 (1971); H. PATON, THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE 74 (1965); L. BECK, A COMMENTARY ON KANT'S CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON 118 (1960). *See* text accompanying notes 130-133 *infra*.

82. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 129-33. Both Hegel and Marx attributed a unique significance to the institutions and ideas of the modern age, and believed that a scientific account could be given of the historical process which culminates in the modern world. Neither was an historicist. *See* G. HEGEL, PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY 447 (J. Sibree trans. 1956); S. AVINERI, HEGEL'S THEORY OF THE MODERN STATE 33, 65, 85, 88-91, 115-30, 221-38 (1972); M. Riedel, *Nature and Freedom in Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right,'* in HEGEL'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY 136-50 (Z. Pelczynski ed. 1971); K. MARX, GRUNDRISSE 105-06, 450-515 (M. Nicolaus trans. 1973); L. ALTHUSSER & E. BALIBAR, READING CAPITAL 119-44 (1970); A. SCHMIDT, THE CONCEPT OF NATURE IN MARX 19-126 (1971).

In Unger's long chapter on the theory of the self, there is little to object to. It is certainly true that we are at once natural and nature-transcending creatures; that we crave autonomy and at the same time community with our fellows (and that the one is the condition of the other); that consciousness separates us from the world, while work reunites us with it; and that each of us is a unique bundle of particular attributes and abilities, and at the same time a human being who shares or participates in the universal powers of the species. But does this deepen our understanding of the human condition and its predicaments? Like a scientific hypothesis which is in principle incapable of falsification,[83] a theory of the self that simply recognizes the propriety of each of those implacable and conflicting needs which impel us toward the world and away from it, is true but unilluminating.[84] This is why Unger's theory of the self is ultimately dissatisfying—despite the passion and erudition that inform it.

The second way in which Unger's ideal conception of the self is distinguished from its liberal counterpart is somewhat more complicated, and turns upon a certain way of understanding the metaphysical relation between universals and particulars. The point is worth exploring in some detail, since on Unger's view "all the fundamental issues of modern philosophy" are "expressions of the . . . problem of the universal and the particular."[85]

Unger contrasts two ways of thinking about the relation between universals and particulars. According to one view, particulars are nothing but "fungible examples of some abstract quality"[86] or set of qualities, which we may call universal properties. We can think and talk about particulars only in so far as they illustrate or embody some universal property; particulars are intelligible only to the extent they are conceived as bundles of universal properties—whatever is left over is strictly noncognizable since only universals can be known. Universals, by contrast, have an independent life of their own. According to this first way of conceptualizing the relation between universals and particulars, "abstract qualities take on a life of their own because they are the sole possible objects of thought and language. Despite the acknowledgment that universals are abstractions or conventions, everyone talks and acts as if they were real things,

83. For a discussion of falsifiability as a necessary characteristic of any scientific theory, see K. POPPER, THE LOGIC OF SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY 40-43, 54, 78-92 (1959).

84. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 137.

85. *Id.*

86. *Id.* at 136.

indeed the only real things in the world."[87]

On the second view,

> the universal and the particular are equally real though they represent different kinds of reality. The universal is neither abstract and formal, nor capable of being identified with a single concrete and substantive particular. Instead, it is an entity whose universality consists precisely in the open set of concrete and substantive determinations in which it can appear.[88]

Unger illustrates this more complicated conception with the example of an artistic style.[89] If we ask ourselves what we mean by "the Baroque," our initial answer might be "a definable set of techniques, methods, and modes of expression." Such an answer would be inadequate, however; no determinate set of characteristics could ever exhaust our conception of the Baroque. Each Baroque artwork is an absolutely unique combination of stylistic attributes which discloses some new aspect of the genre—of its meaning and potentialities. One way of expressing this would be to say that each individual artwork is a perspectival interpretation of the concept of the Baroque; the Baroque is merely our way of describing the ideal unity of the infinite series of perspectival views that "bring it to light."[90] Thus, although the Baroque, as a concept, has no existence apart from the particular instantiations which disclose it (and is therefore not a "reified" universal), it nevertheless always outruns any determinate series of particular works. There is always more to the Baroque than we have yet seen. "The more we studied the examples of the style, the better we would understand its spirit. The study, however, would be fruitful only if one already had in mind a conception of the animus of the style, the image of reality and of man that unified its manifestations."[91]

Regarding these competing conceptions of the relation between universals and particulars, Unger makes the following points: 1) the first conception underlies and unifies the epistemological, ethical, and political branches of liberal metaphysics, and is the ultimate ground of every antinomy to which liberal thought

87. *Id.*
88. *Id.* at 143.
89. *Id.* at 122.
90. This view of concepts is very close to Nietzsche's perspectivism. For Nietzsche, the meaning of a thing or event or concept is determined by the totality of the infinite perspectives that can be taken upon it. "[T]he entire history of a 'thing,' an organ, a custom can in this way be a continuous sign-chain of ever new interpretations and adaptations." F. NIETZSCHE, THE GENEALOGY OF MORALS 77 (W. Kaufmann & R. Hollingdale trans. 1967). *See also id.* at 79, 80, 119; F. NIETZSCHE, BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL 19-22 (W. Kaufman trans. 1966).
91. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 122.

gives rise;[92] 2) the second conception is philosophically superior, and provides the key to an adequate account of the self's relation

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92. *Id.* at 133-37. The only philosopher who can even possibly be said to have held this view in the simplistic form in which Unger outlines it is Plato. Among those philosophers identified by Unger as the major proponents or founders of liberalism, only Rousseau did not deal explicitly with the problem of universals. Of the others, none held the view which Unger attributes to the tradition as a whole.

Hobbes's theory of naming states that a "common" name "is nevertheless the name of divers particular things; in respect of all which together, it is called an *universal*; there being nothing in the world universal but names." T. HOBBES, LEVIATHAN ch. 4 (1651). These universal or common names are rules derived from particular instances. *Id.* Hobbes did not believe that universals were the most real things, and he did not "talk and act" as if they were.

Locke holds that all knowledge is derived either from experience, or from the mind's reflection on its own activity. J. LOCKE, ESSAY ON HUMAN UNDERSTANDING 42-44 (A. Pringle-Pattison ed. 1924). "[G]*eneral* and *universal* belong not to the real existence of things, but are the inventions and creatures of the understanding, made by it for its own use, and concern only signs." *Id.* at 230. "[T]he mind makes the particular ideas, received from particular objects, to become general, which is done by considering them as they are in the mind such appearances, separate from all other existences and the circumstances of real existence, as time, place, or any other concomitant ideas. This is called *abstraction*, whereby ideas taken from particular beings become general representations of all of the same kind." *Id.* at 88-89. *See also id.* at 22, 42-52, 215-16, 230-32. For Locke, universals are abstracted from particulars; particulars do not receive their being through participation in universals.

Hume held that general ideas were an "impossbility." D. HUME, A TREATISE ON HUMAN NATURE 24 (1888). According to Hume, it is only through custom that a particular idea becomes general in its representative employment. *Id.* at 17-25.

For a more detailed discussion of the views of Locke and Hume on abstract or universal ideas, see J. BENNETT, LOCKE, BERKELEY, HUME (1971).

Spinoza viewed universals as a species of inadequate or confused knowledge which is derived from particulars. "For it all comes to this, that these terms signify ideas in the highest degree confused. It is in this way that those notions have arisen which are called *Universal*, such as Man, Horse, Dog, etc.; that is to say, so many images of men, for instance, are formed in the human body at once, that they exceed the power of the imagination, not entirely, but to such a degree that the mind has no power to imagine the determinate number of men and the small differences of each. . . . It will therefore distinctly imagine that only in which all of them agree in so far as the body is affected by them." B. SPINOZA, ETHICS Bk. II, Prop. XL, Schol. 1. *See also* 2 H. WOLFSON, THE PHILOSOPHY OF SPINOZA 131-63 (1934).

Perhaps the most difficult and complex statement of the relation between universals and particulars is Kant's. The entire Analytic of the CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON is an extended discussion of that relation, which Kant characterizes as the relation between the objects of our knowledge and the concepts whch we use as rules for its organization.

to the world, and the meaning of world history.[93] According to Unger, the second conception is superior for two reasons. First, it accords particulars a kind of reality which the first conception does not, by asserting that each particular advances our understanding of the universal in a way that no other particular can precisely duplicate. This gives particulars an ontological independence they do not enjoy under the first conception, and makes the dependence of universals on the particulars that manifest them both more intimate and more complete. Second, Unger's preferred conception permits us to understand how a universal concept may have a history. The concept is brought to light in time, as the (infinite) series of its particular embodiments unfolds. Thus, we learn more about the concept as time goes by. (I should point out that it is this feature of Unger's way of conceiving the relation between universals and particulars which give it its peculiarly modern cast, and which makes Unger's

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According to Kant, "a concept is *always*, as regards its form, something universal which serves as a rule." I. KANT, CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON *A106. The categories, or pure concepts of the understanding, serve as the most basic functional rules for organizing the perceptual data of experience. They do not function as criteria of reality or being; rather, they serve to delimit and define the most general ways in which we talk or think about objects, *i.e.*, in terms of their quantity, quality, relation, and modality. For example, we can say of *any* object, prior to an actual experience of it, that it will be extended, have some shape or other, some density or other, some color or other, will stand in some relation to other objects, and, given certain limitations, that it will be either a merely possible object or an actual one. The categories, then, serve not to pick out particulars and give them being, but rather to limit what can be said of *any* particular. It is for this reason that Cassirer, following the use of functions in mathematics, has described them as "rules for the production of the series" of particulars. E. CASSIRER, SUBSTANCE AND FUNCTION 19-20 (1923).

On Kant's view, particulars can only be known after having been organized or synthesized through the use of concepts; there has therefore been considerable debate among Kant scholars regarding the existential dignity of particulars in his epistemology. That debate, spanning almost two centuries, is too involved to summarize here. Its very existence demands, however, that we view with skepticism Unger's cavalier assertion that a single way of conceptualizing the relation between universals and particulars has dominated the whole of modern philosophy. *See, e.g.*, G. HEGEL, GLAUBEN UND WISSEN 13-40 (1962); G. HEGEL, LOGIC 82-94 (2d ed. W. Wallace trans. 1892); 1 A. SCHOPENHAUER, THE WORLD AS WILL AND REPRESENTATION 415-77 (E. Payne trans. 1958); 2 A. SCHOPENHAUER, THE WORLD AS WILL AND REPRESENTATION 191-200 (E. Payne trans. 1958); M. HEIDEGGER, WHAT IS A THING? (1967); 1 H. PATON, KANT'S METAPHYSIC OF EXPERIENCE 70-71 (1936); 2 H. PATON, KANT'S METAPHYSIC OF EXPERIENCE 375-86, 404-25 (1936); P. STRAWSON, THE BOUNDS OF SENSE 247-73 (1966); R. WOLFF, KANT'S THEORY OF MENTAL ACTIVITY (1963); 2 E. CASSIRER, DAS ERKENNTNISPROBLEM 664-82, 733-62 (1911).

93. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 142-44, 234, 246.

own identification of the conception with the classical metaphysicians quite misleading).[94]

Unger's conception of the relation between universals and particulars recalls a familiar philosophical puzzle:[95] how are we able to recognize a particular as the manifestation of a certain universal, unless we are already acquainted with the universal itself? Unger seems to recognize this important fact in his discussion of the relation between the "Baroque style" and its various "examples." A study of the "examples of the style" could be "fruitful *only if one already had in mind* a conception of the animus of the style, the image of reality and of man that unified its manifestations."[96] The paradox, of course, is that while a knowledge of the universal is required before particulars can be seen or understood as manifestations *of* the universal, it is only through these manifestations themselves that we come to have a knowledge of the universal in the first place. It is true that this paradox[97] raises difficulties for each of the two ways

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94. In fact, Unger's preferred conception is closer to the views of Kant and the Neo-Kantians, than to that of any other philosophical tradition. The functional nature of concepts, their status as rules for the production of a series of particulars, was first clearly expressed by Kant. I. KANT, CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON *A68/B93. This view of concepts finds its most complete and cogent formulation in the works of the Neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer. "The genuine concept does not disregard the peculiarities and particularities which it holds under it, but seeks to show the *necessity* of the occurrence and connection of just these particularities. What it gives is a universal *rule* for the connection of the particulars themselves. . . . [T]he characteristic feature of the concept is not the 'universality' of a presentation, but the universal validity of a principle of serial order. We do not isolate any abstract part whatever from the manifold before us, but we create for its members a definite relation by thinking of them as bound together by an inclusive law." E. CASSIRER, SUBSTANCE AND FUNCTION 19-20 (1923). *See also* 3 E. CASSIRER, THE PHILOSOPHY OF SYMBOLIC FORMS 281-314. (R. Mannheim trans. 1957). "The particular, the discreet value itself subsists only in reference to the part it plays in some form of universal, whether by this we mean a universality of the concept or of the object—and similarly, the universal can be manifested only through the particular, and can be certified only as the order and rule for the particular." *Id.* at 327.

A somewhat different form of this same general view is propounded by Husserl. *See* 1 E. HUSSERL, LOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS 337-432 (J. Findlay trans. 1970); E. HUSSERL, CARTESIAN MEDITATIONS ¶¶ 17-18 (D. Cairns trans. 1970); E. HUSSERL, IDEAS ¶ 131 (W. Gibson trans. 1931).

95. *See* note 97 *infra*.

96. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 122 (emphasis added).

97. *See* PLATO, MENO 80d-81a. *See also* J. KLEIN, A COMMENTARY ON PLATO'S MENO 90-92 (1965); J. Morvcsik, *Learning as Recollection*, in PLATO I 54-58 (G. Vlastos ed. 1971); J. FINDLAY, PLATO: THE WRITTEN AND UNWRITTEN DOCTRINES 125 (1974); B. Phillips, *The Significance of Meno's Paradox*, in PLATO'S MENO 77-83 (N. Sesonske & A. Fleming ed. 1965).

in which the relation between universals and particulars may be conceptualized, and it might therefore seem appropriate to conclude that it does not give grounds for preferring one conception to the other. I believe, however, that the difficulties are especially serious in the case of Unger's preferred conception, since any philosophical explanation which would resolve the paradox would at the same time compromise the very feature of that conception upon which its claim to superiority is based. If we must know the universal in advance of its particular manifestations, then it is difficult to see how the universal may be said to have a genuine history, in the sense of being progressively better understood as the series of its manifestations unfolds. It will not do, of course, to simply assert that the knowledge we have in advance is a general and indefinite sort of knowledge, which is filled in and given substance through our encounter with the universal's particular embodiments. This would beg the question since what we want to know is how a concrete particular can be seen as the manifestation of a general concept in the first place. Unless our advance knowledge of the concept is as detailed as the infinite series of its manifestations, the paradox remains. Surely, Unger wishes to avoid an idealist solution of this sort,[98] since its metaphysical effect would be to take back a substantial portion of the independence that particulars enjoy in his preferred conception of the relation between particulars and universals. In fact, such a solution would collapse the distinction between universals and particulars, and on Unger's view would lead to "absurd . . . results."[99]

Does Unger's theory of the self avoid this difficulty? Unger first sketches an ideal conception of the self and social association in very general terms. This ideal represents the universal term ("humanity") which is brought to light in the unfolding series

98. The classic example of a solution of this sort is Leibniz's predicate-in-notion principle, the principle that in every true affirmative proposition the idea of the predicate is "contained," either explicitly or implicitly, in that of the subject. From this it follows that every substance has a concept so complete that a full understanding of it would allow one to infer *every* predicate which would ever belong to that subject. "[I]t is in the nature of an individual substance to have such a complete concept, whence can be inferred everything that one can attribute to it." G. LEIBNIZ, THE LEIBNIZ-ARNAULD CORRESPONDENCE 44 (H. Mason ed. 1967). *See also id.* at 51-52, 54-55, 61, 63-64, 84, 94; LEIBNIZ, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, in LEIBNIZ: SELECTIONS 300-301 (P. Wiener ed. 1951). For a fuller discussion of Leibniz's predicate-in-notion principle, see B. RUSSELL, THE PHILOSOPHY OF LEIBNIZ 40-53 (2d ed. 1937); G. MARTIN, LEIBNIZ: LOGIC AND METAPHYSICS 126-33 (1960); C. Broad, *Leibniz's Predicate-in-Notion Principle*, in LEIBNIZ 1-18 (H. Frankfurt ed. 1972).

99. R. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 139.

of particular institutional arrangements ("history") that realize the ideal in a more or less complete way.[100] We are then told that there is a standard or criterion for determining which arrangements reflect or embody the ideal, and which do not: by applying this standard, we are able to recognize historical particulars as manifestations of our universal humanity or "species nature."[101] (Presumably, a similar test could be applied to determine how fully a particular human being had realized his humanity in the course of his own personal history.)[102] The standard that Unger proposes is this: arrangements adopted under "certain political conditions" are to "carry weight as an indication of the nature of man."[103] That is to say, we are to presume that arrangements chosen in a particular kind of situation are more likely to manifest our "unitary human nature"[104] than those chosen under different circumstances. Everything obviously turns upon the description of this preferred situation. According to Unger, our confidence that arrangements adopted in a particular situation do in fact manifest our true humanity will vary in direct proportion with: 1) the inclusiveness of the situation (the number of persons that it includes, and its continuity in space and time); and 2) the relative absence, in the situation, of all structures of domination. The second of these two requirements is based upon the assumption that "whatever does not arise from domination is human nature; domination is the one form of social relations in which men's conduct fails to express their being."[105]

Unger offers no justification for this last assumption. Perhaps he felt that it was uncontroversial, and did not require an elaborate defense. There are thinkers, however, who have explicitly rejected Unger's assumption, and offered strong philosophical reasons for doing so. Nietzsche and Freud are only the most dramatic examples.[106] Consequently, the merits of Unger's proposed test for determining which arrangements manifest our "true humanity" and which do not, would appear to depend upon the merits of his substantive account of what our "true humanity" actually is. While this dependence, taken by itself, does not constitute an important weakness in Unger's argument, it does

100. *Id.* at 195, 234.
101. *Id.* at 225-26.
102. *Id.* at 195.
103. *Id.* at 221.
104. *Id.* at 105.
105. *Id.* at 247.
106. *See* F. NIETZSCHE, THE GENERALOGY OF MORALS 26, 36-37, 42-43, 45, 47-48, 58-67, 84-88, 117, 120 (W. Kaufmann & R. Hollingdale trans. 1967); S. FREUD, CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS 41-45, 58-63, 70-92 (J. Strachey trans. 1961).

underscore the fact that everything ultimately turns upon the extent to which we find his ideal conception of the self powerful and illuminating. For reasons already indicated,[107] I do not consider Unger's ideal conception to be a helpful guide in framing either an intellectual or practical response to the irreconcilable conflicts of human life. Unfortunately, this deficiency is not remedied by the standard which Unger offers to assist us in identifying the ideal's concrete instantiations—since the standard, which is meant to supply the linkage between the ideal universal and its particular manifestations, is itself dependent upon the ideal conception for its own meaning and content. Because the ideal conception is so schematic and formal, there is reason to wonder whether it can supply the clues we require in order to identify those concrete particulars which advance us toward the ultimately unattainable goal of realizing the ideal on earth.

III.

The second important methodological issue raised by the argument of *Knowledge and Politics* concerns the ontological properties of the subject-matter of Unger's inquiry, or more simply, the nature of his subject-matter and the kind of unity[108] which it exhibits. Unger asserts that he is offering an account of "liberalism." But what is liberalism? What kind of being[109] does it possess? Is liberalism merely a complex set of philosophical ideas? Unger's emphatic answer is that it is not. Instead, we are told, liberalism must be treated as a phenomenon belonging to the "realm of consciousness."[110] Like all phenomena which belong to this ontological sphere, liberalism represents a fusion of ideas and institutions. Unger describes the nature of this fusion in the following way:

> To grasp what a phenomenon of consciousness signifies as a form of reflection, one must be able to describe the place it occupies in social relations. To understand it as a social practice, a work, or an act, one has to describe what the participants, the workers, or the agents think about it. The reciprocal link between outward existence and inner reflection is called meaning.[111]

In the realm of consciousness, "every social practice and institution is mediated through the categories of the mind, so that the manner in which people understand a social arrangement is

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107. *See* text accompanying note 78 *supra*.
108. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 14.
109. *Id.* at 115-17. I follow Unger in deliberately using the ontological term.
110. *Id.* at 108.
111. *Id.*

an inseparable aspect of the arrangement itself."[112] Now in addition to the realm of consciousness, it is possible to identify two other, and quite distinct, ontological domains. One Unger calls the realm of events, the other the realm of ideas. This is how Unger characterizes his three-tiered ontology:

> There are three modes of being: one of events, one of social life (which for some purposes can be called more narrowly a field of consciousness, mind, or culture), and one of ideas. These modes might be described respectively as the kingdoms of nature, culture and ideal truth. To each type of being, there corresponds a method: causality to the first; appositeness or symbolic interpretation to the second; and logic to the third.[113]

Things or events in non-human nature may belong to either of the first two modes of being (depending upon whether we treat them as symbols "for some human concern"[114] or merely seek to locate them in the causal chain of natural happenings). Human conduct may also belong to either of these two modes: "any act can be explained as a natural phenomenon by empirical science, or it can be interpreted as the counterpart to some kind of belief."[115] Finally, ideas may be treated as belonging to any of the three modes: to the first, if "viewed as simply a psychic event;"[116] to the second, if viewed as the intentional correlative of a particular act or social institution; and to the third, if regarded solely as a concept or proposition "by which something is predicated of something else or the objective validity or invalidity, truth or falsehood, of the predication"[117] is asserted. Unger appears to regard this "outline of a stratified ontology"[118] as both accurate and exhaustive.

According to Unger, however, this ontology is not the one which informs the liberal view of the world. Because liberalism itself can only be fully understood as a phenomenon of consciousness, and because the ontology of liberalism does not recognize the very mode of being to which all such phenomena belong, we are required, Unger tells us, to reject the most fundamental ontological principle of liberalism in order to describe and then criticize it adequately.

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112. *Id.*
113. *Id.* at 115-16.
114. *Id.* at 116. Unger recognizes that things or events may belong to either the realm of events or the realm of consciousness depending upon whether we *treat them as* symbols for interpretation or events in a causal chain. This suggests that Unger understands the "ontological" domains he describes to be spheres of *meaning* or intention rather than spheres of being.
115. *Id.*
116. *Id.*
117. *Id.*
118. *Id.*

Unger describes liberal ontology as having two rather than three tiers. In the liberal world, there are only two modes of being: the realm of events and the realm of ideas. "There is no conception more basic to the modern view of the world and to the liberal doctrine which expresses that view than the distinction between the order of ideas and the order of events."[119] In the liberal world, according to Unger, there is literally no room for the phenomena of consciousness. Why this should be so is somewhat unclear. Unger suggests that the inability of liberalism to acknowledge the unique ontological status of the realm of consciousness is ultimately due to its rigorous insistence on the distinctness of facts and values—a position that may be regarded either as one consequence of rejecting the doctrine of intelligible essences, or as merely another way of describing the rejection of the doctrine itself.

> The opposition of the order of ideas and the order of events results in the impossibility of seeing the link between reflection and existence in its true light. It forces method to choose between the logical analysis of concepts and the causal explanation of facts, neither of which is suitable to the interpretation of symbols. *The psychological contrast of description and evaluation dissolves the vantage point from which the two-faced, factual and moral aspect of the phenomena of consciousness can be elucidated.*[120]

Unger's description of the peculiar ontological properties of the phenomena of consciousness, and his contention that they exhibit a special kind of unity or bond—the bond of meaning rather than that of causal connection or logical entailment—seem to me to be both sound and illuminating (although certainly not novel, as anyone familiar with the methodical writings of Max Weber will immediately see).[121] What I find puzzling is his assertion that the liberal distinction between facts and values opens a chasm into which the realm of consciousness simply disappears, dissolving the "vantage point" from which the phenomena of that ontological domain may be "elucidated." I see no inconsistency in maintaining, simultaneously, the truth of the following propositions: 1) the world, or any of its constituent elements, can acquire value and significance only through a "spontaneous" act of valuation: in this specific sense, there is and can be no such thing as an objective value; 2) there are things and events whose being can only be fully explicated by taking into account their valuation by one or more human beings (who either may or may not be acting, thinking or willing with reference to one another); 3) it is possible to interpret the meaning of

119. *Id.* at 13.
120. *Id.* at 113-14 (emphasis added).
121. *See* 1 M. WEBER, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY 4-24 (1968).

things and events of this sort by "sympathetically penetrating" or "understanding" the intentional attitudes of those who have assigned a value to them; and 4) in order to do so, it is not necessary that the interpreter actually adopt as his own the values in question: in this sense there need be no community of belief between the interpreter and the person whose values he is attempting to understand. (A student of Jewish history need not himself be a practicing Jew, or even a Jew at all.) If one accepts these four propositions, it is possible to grant the truth of Unger's account of the ontological constitution of the realm of consciousness, and affirm his claim that the method of symbolic interpretation is the only appropriate technique for describing and analyzing the contents of this mode of being, without violating in any way the great liberal principle that facts and values (or description and evaluation) are entirely distinct. I am unsure how Unger would respond to this. Perhaps he and I understand the distinction between facts and values in different ways, or disagree about the philosophical consequences of the distinction. It may also be that we have different conceptions of what interpretation means. (There are passages in which Unger seems to say that the interpretation of phenomena of consciousness requires a "community of intentions"—which I take to mean a set of shared substantive values—"between interpreter and interpreted."[122] If this is in fact Unger's view, then we disagree quite sharply.) In any event, it remains unclear to me why Unger's three-tiered ontology, and the trilogy of methods to which it corresponds, cannot be constructed out of materials which are already available in the liberal vision of the world.

IV.

The main elements of Unger's analysis and critique of liberalism will be familiar to readers who are well-versed in the history of modern philosophy. Unger is not the first thinker to have identified the so-called antinomies of liberal epistemology, ethics and political theory—nor is he the first to have described their common form. In fact, the problem which Unger identifies as the central dilemma of liberal thought (the problem of articulating acceptable standards for theoretical and practical reason without appealing to the doctrine of intelligible essences) is not merely a difficulty which liberalism poses: it is a difficulty with which liberal thought has been preoccupied from its beginning. To characterize the liberal tradition as the source of the problem is only a half-truth; it would be equally correct to say that the defining mark of liberal theory has been its continuing effort

122. *See* UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 114.

to discover an acceptable solution. Whether this effort has been successful is an open question. It is misleading, however, to suggest that a "total criticism" of the liberal tradition is necessary in order to bring the nature of the metaphysical problem clearly into focus. The great liberal thinkers understood and grappled with the problem in a self-conscious manner.[123] By proposing a way of reconciling our attachment to the idea of freedom with the imperative need for objective standards in thinking and judging, Unger does not so much surmount the liberal tradition, as acknowledge a shared commitment to its deepest and most abiding philosophical concern.

As I have already suggested, it is not a telling objection to a particular philosophical position that it happens to lack novelty—it is truth, and not originality, which counts in philosophy. Consequently, I do not regard the unoriginality of Unger's "total criticism" of liberal thought as a serious defect (although I find his pretense of originality[124] unjustified and misleading). Unger's argument (I am almost tempted to say, his "style" of argument) is more seriously flawed by the cavalier and dogmatic fashion in which he dismisses many of the standard proposals for resolving the antinomies of liberalism. More often than not, Unger proceeds by assertion rather than argument. If the proposals he rejects are intended to resolve the same dilemma to which Unger's own theory of the self is addressed, they deserve a more careful and extended hearing than he gives them. Let me illustrate what I have in mind.

In the middle of Unger's discussion of the antinomy of liberal epistemology, the reader encounters the following paragraph.

> Or again, when faced with a choice between two radically different theoretical systems—for example, Newtonian and quantum mechanics—we hold on to standards of justification like the power of the competing theories to predict events or to control them. Such standards seem to be above the war of hypotheses. But that too is an illusion. We must still interpret the results of whatever experiments we perform and justify the methods of proof we have chosen. If there are no intelligible essences, the facts of the test experiment may mean different things in different theoretical languages. And the methods of proof will have to be defended by their relation to purposes we have, whether they be our interests in power over nature, in simplicity of explanation, or in the corroboration of religious belief. Assume for the moment that in the moral doctrine that develops the implications of the denial of intelligible essences such interests

123. *See, e.g.*, I. KANT, PROLEGOMENA TO ANY FUTURE METAPHYSICS 6-8 (L. Beck ed. 1950); I. KANT, PHILOSOPHICAL CORRESPONDENCE 252 (A. Zweig trans. 1967); G. HEGEL, PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIND 131-45 (2d rev. ed. J. Baillie trans. 1949); T. HOBBES, LEVIATHAN chs. 13-16 (1651).

124. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 1-3, 16, 106-07, 146, 175, 190.

> are taken to be arbitrary, and you will see that the antinomy of theory and fact remains unsolved. The apparent solutions simply carry the riddle to a higher level of abstraction.[125]

Now it seems to me this argument rests on a confusion. Even if it is true that the ideal of simplicity in scientific explanations cannot itself be (morally) justified, it does not necessarily follow that anyone actively engaged in the construction and verification of scientific hypotheses is free either to accept or reject the test of simplicity as a criterion for measuring the success of his particular theories. Max Weber made this point with characteristic clarity: the value of science can never be demonstrated. Nevertheless, for one actually doing science—for the scientist—there are certain definite yardsticks by which theoretical accomplishments must be measured.[126] Simplicity is arguably one of these, since the object of any theoretical explanation is to identify the *general* laws which operate in a multitude of particular situations.[127] While it is possible to regard the scientific enterprise, and the ideal of simplicity, as utterly lacking in moral worth or meaning, the nature of the enterprise itself constrains those engaged in it to treat simplicity as a standard of evaluation. The great strength of this argument is that it does not require its proponents to abandon the liberal premise that every scientific conception of reality is a theoretical construct. Whether one ultimately finds the argument convincing is less important than the fact that Unger simply neglects to consider it.

A second example of this sort of philosophical carelessness may be drawn from Unger's discussion of the morality of reason. Unger contends that the morality of reason fails to solve the basic antinomy of liberal ethics.

> Coherence demands that the universal principles of the morality of reason to be, like the golden rule, neutral toward the purposes of specific individuals. Given the postulate of arbitrary desire, there is no basis on which to prefer some ends to others. But as long as this formal neutrality is strictly maintained, the standards it produces will be, like the golden rule itself, empty shells. Until the shells are filled up by more concrete principles, they are capable of accommodating almost any

125. *Id.* at 34.

126. M. WEBER, *Science as a Vocation*, in FROM MAX WEBER 140-48 (H. Gerth & C. Mills ed. 1946); M. WEBER, *Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy*, in THE METHODOLOGY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES 49-112 (E. Shils & H. Finch ed. 1949).

127. *See* W. QUINE, *Two Dogmas of Empiricism*, in FROM A LOGICAL POINT OF VIEW 20-46 (1961); W. QUINE, *Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis*, in FROM A LOGICAL POINT OF VIEW 65-79 (1961); P. DUHEM, THE AIM AND STRUCTURE OF PHYSICAL THEORY (1954); B. Russell, *On the Notion of Cause, with Applications to the Free-Will Problem*, in READINGS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE 401 (H. Feigel & M. Brodbeck ed. 1953).

> pattern of conduct and incapable of determining precisely what is commanded or prohibited in particular situations of choice. Do unto others as we would have them do unto us, but what is that we ought to want them to do unto us. . . . The decision about what kinds of benefits to seek from the others, or which commands and prohibitions to cast in the form of universal laws, forces us to descend to the level of conflicting individual goals whose relative worth reason lacks authority to judge.[128]

Unger criticizes the morality of reason for its inability to provide a standard for distinguishing what is right from what is wrong, and for its disregard for our "existence as subjective beings with individual ends."[129] If we assume, however, that reason alone requires us to treat ourselves and other human beings as ends rather than as means or things—and this is an assumption which Kant not only made but defended[130]—then neither branch of Unger's criticism holds up. Some actions surely rest upon maxims which violate the imperative to treat every human being as an end. It may be difficult to discern the maxim that informs any particular action, and even more difficult to decide whether the maxim in question satisfies the requirement of respect for persons. But regardless of the substance of one's ethical principles, there will always be practical difficulties in their application: the morality of reason is no exception in this respect. The important point to note is that the principle of respect is sufficiently definite to permit us to distinguish between and to judge the moral choices we actually make. (For example, the principle tells us that the decision to lie to another person is—in most cases—an immoral one.)[131] At the same time, the principle of respect maximizes the area within which it is morally permissible to pursue ends of one's own choosing. Far from suppressing "our existence as subjective beings," this principle values and protects it in a fashion unmatched by any other ethical norm. Again, my aim in sketching this argument is not to demonstrate its truth, but rather to restore to it some of the philosophical vitality that Unger's summary dismissal of the argument so completely obscures.

A final illustration may be drawn from Unger's discussion of the antinomy of liberal political theory. According to Unger, one response to the problem of legislation has been "the doctrine of the social contract."[132] In one of its variant forms (in which

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128. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 53-54.

129. *Id.* at 54.

130. *See* I. KANT, FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE METAPHYSIC OF MORALS 45-49 (T. Abbott trans. 1873); I. KANT, CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON 180-81 (T. Abbott trans. 1873).

131. *See* I. KANT, FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE METAPHYSIC OF MORALS 18-19 (T. Abbott trans. 1873).

132. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 86.

it is coupled with certain utilitarian elements), the doctrine of social contract

> appeals to the conception of an ideal system of procedures for lawmaking that all men might accept in self-interest and the operation of which can be shown to lead to certain specific conclusions about the distribution of wealth and power. The work of J. Rawls, the American moralist, illustrates this view.[133]

The problem with social contract theory (including the Rawlsian version) is that it

> presupposes the possibility of finding a procedure for lawmaking to which any man, no matter what his values, would have reason to agree. The more indeterminate the procedure in specifying particular laws, the less would anyone have reason to object to it. But, then, the problem of legislation would simply be postponed. On the other hand, the more concrete the procedure, the less would it be likely to benefit equally everyone's wants.[134]

I shall not defend Rawls—or any of the other social contract theorists—against Unger's charge. It is important to note, however, that Rawls makes two claims regarding his celebrated description of the so-called "original position": 1) the description reflects our deepest, and most widely shared moral commitments and embodies values "to which any man . . . would have reason to agree;"[135] and 2) the description is definite enough to yield a specific solution to the "problem of legislation."[136] If these claims can be supported, Rawls's argument will have succeeded in doing what Unger asserts no social contract theory can do—and while Rawls carefully develops his philosophical conception of the original position, and offers reasons for accepting it, Unger merely declares the Rawlsian project to be metaphysically incoherent. When compared with the richness and detail of Rawls's own argument, Unger's meta-objection seems hollow and unconvincing.

If Unger's "total criticism" of liberal thought loses much of its philosophical force because of the casual and unnecessarily abstract way in which it dismisses certain classical responses to the antinomies of liberalism, it is further weakened by the thinness of its own ideal solution. Unger's strongest criticisms of the liberal tradition might as easily be directed against his own theory of the self: if we can reach any shared agreement as to what our "unitary human nature" or "species nature" is, the substance of our agreement must be so general and indeterminate as to be incapable of providing a workable standard for adjudicating the difficult questions which practical and theoretical reason pose.

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133. *Id.*
134. *Id.*
135. *See* J. RAWLS, A THEORY OF JUSTICE 18-23, 201-04 (1971).
136. *See id.* at 119.

This suspicion is borne out by Unger's actual account of the self. There is little in that account which is objectionable, and equally little that would be helpful in working through any really knotty epistemological, ethical, or political problem.

It is also difficult to see—and this is a point which brings me back to a problem noted earlier[137]—how Unger can jusify the appeal to intuition which he makes in constructing his own theory of the self, without compromising the great liberal principle that reality is always theory-laden and therefore (at least according to Unger) subjectively determined. Of course, one may wish to abandon this principle. It is difficult to understand, however, how the principle may be abandoned without at the same time accepting one or another version of the doctrine of intelligible essences. Certainly, an explanation is in order. Unger wants objectivity, but without the doctrine of intelligible essences. He asserts that this is what his theory of the self provides. But the only response Unger has to the skeptic who challenges his account of the nature of the self is to look within.[138] There is nothing wrong with this response; it is, however, one which is equally available to liberalism or any other theory.

I should not have been so harsh in my criticisms of Unger's own philosophical ideal had Unger himself acknowledged the extent to which that ideal is burdened with many of the same metaphysical paradoxes that have exercised the great liberal thinkers from Hobbes to Weber. *Knowledge and Politics* is a well-written book, and contains much that is true. To the extent that it reminds us of the enduring problems which must be confronted by anyone who would think about knowledge and politics in a serious fashion, the book deserves our respect and praise. However, to the extent that it casually dismisses liberalism's own attempts to resolve the antinomies of theoretical and practical reason, and too quickly replaces these attempts with a metaphysical ideal that gives the appearance of substance and novelty but in fact lacks both—to that extent, *Knowledge and Politics* must be approached with caution, and read with skeptical detachment. Unger's seductive style and the architectonic quality of his argument make this a difficult task, but it is a task that intellectual sobriety requires.

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137. *See* text accompanying notes 57-61 *supra*.
138. UNGER, *supra* note 1, at 198.

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