ROBERTO UNGER'S *KNOWLEDGE AND POLITICS*

Roberto Unger, *Knowledge and Politics*, (New York: The Free Press) 1975, $12.95.

Roberto Unger's *Knowledge and Politics* has not been accorded, although it should have been accorded, the kind of extensive public attention and examination welcoming John Rawl's *A Theory of Justice* (which was only *a* theory) and Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia.* The mark of distinction between Unger on one hand, and Rawls and Nozick on the other hand, is that Unger carries out the total (not a partial) critique of modern liberalism and individualism. Total critique presupposes an understanding of modern liberalism and individualism as a totality. It rejects partial critiques as only piecemeal reactions which have not grasped the cohesive (or incohesive) interrelations of the parts of modern, liberal, individualistic theory. Just as modern liberalism represents partial (not always consistent) accretions, its critics have accepted the presupposition of partiality in theorizing. Thus the critics of modern liberalism usually have tacitly accepted some uncriticized part of modern liberalism. The great breakthrough of Unger, in contradistinction to Rawls and Nozick, is his transcendence of partiality towards modern liberalism. This is a consequence of Unger's exploration of modern liberalism as a whole and the discovery of its fundamental antinomies. Moreover, Unger not only presents a total critique of modern liberalism, but he also proposes the alternative to modern liberalism, namely, that theory of human nature and political community which would solve the antinomies of modern liberal theory. In the process Unger does not separate theory from practice and experience. In other words, Unger's *Knowledge and Politics* is not just an abstract, intellectual treatise irrelevant to practical, political possibilities.

Since *Knowledge and Politics* is so carefully structured and argued I will base this essay on Unger's chapter headings with my own annotations regarding what Unger is discursively achieving. Thus follows the order of my treatment:

Unger's Chapter Headings (with my own annotations)	My Section Headings for this essay
Introduction	I. Experience and Method
Ch. 1 Liberal Psychology	II. Total Critique
an understanding of human nature and personality in terms of the relationship of reason and desire	
Ch. 2 Liberal Political theory	
the problem of rules and values, and legislation and adjudication	
Ch. 3 The Unity of Liberal Thought	III. Transition
the pivotal problem of the universal and the particular	
Ch. 4 The Theory of the Welfare-Corporate State	
the historical mode of liberal social life; the relation between order and consciousness	
Ch. 5 The Theory of Self	IV. The Alternative
a man's relation to nature, others and his own work and consciousness	
Ch. 6 The Theory of Organic Groups	
the problematical basis for communitarian politics	

I. Experience and Method

Two basic experiences underlie the project of *Knowledge and Politics*. First, problems, difficulties and puzzles recognized in the many of the social sciences have not been understood as having a bearing on the whole system of modern liberal ideas. Critical analysis has been piecemeal whether it has sought to confirm or to refute some aspect of liberal theory. Consequently, a disconcerting lack of resolution and completion is experienced when problematical bits and pieces are not seen as representative of the broader interrelationships of the whole of modern liberal theory. The prevailing mode of philosophy is analytical patchwork laboring (Locke called it the work of the underlaborer) instead of discourse pointing to and confronting essentials and ultimates.

That one should examine modern liberalism and individualism as a whole is also integral to the second experience that "there is a relationship of reciprocal dependence between specific solutions to problems in the theory of knowledge and in the theory of society." (p. 4): The epistemic and the ontological, the psychological and the political are the constituent parts of theory intimately interconnected such that a position taken in one area has determinable consequences for what one can or will state in another area of inquiry.

It is not the case, according to Unger, that modern liberalism and individualism in the broadest sense are the only contributions to modernity. Rather, modern liberalism and individualism are the ruling intellectual tradition which has generated a proliferation of different, dominant theoretical positions. However, the attacks on modern liberal theory have been partial rather than holistic, and the consequence has been that such partial theoretical departures have not meant the abandonment of other liberal premises or assumptions. In short, the recognition of the metaphysical starting points and the coherence or incoherence of modern liberal thought (p. 11) as this involves the world of men in action (the social and the political) and in theory (psychology and epistemology) is the foundation of Unger's book. From the beginning we are invited to ponder the relationship of the parts to the whole (theory) and the relationship of the individual to society (praxis). In this way Unger acknowledges the central aporia experienced by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle: if politics is the realm of the particular, the contingent and the opinable, how can there be *knowledge* (episteme) of politics, or how can there be political *theory?*

From these quandaries of experience Unger proceeds to the quan-

1. Page references to Unger's *Knowledge and Politics* appear in parentheses.

daries of method. Wisely heeding Aristotle, Unger understands that the nature and experience of the subject matter at hand is prior in concern to the critical method of inquiry that will be used in the critique of modern liberal theory and the construction of the alternative. The problem is: does modern liberalism comprise a whole in terms of a system of ideas abiding by the standards of logical consistency, entailment and contradiction? If liberalism is not a logical whole, then is it not a mistake from the beginning to contend that a total critique can be given of modern liberalism? This would be true if the logical interrelation of the order of ideas were the only way to conceive of modern liberalism as a whole. Unger's method (which is best exemplified by the continuous, discursive reasoning in his book) is to acknowledge a different sense of the whole in which its parts hang together, cohere and interrelate short of strict logical consistency and entailment. Instead of necessary relations connecting parts which comprise the whole, there is an order of relations defined by adequacy, harmony and appositeness (p. 14).

We need to remember that Unger does not conceive of modern liberalism as merely a theory that can be replaced by another theory: "It describes a way men have in fact come to experience their moral life and this experience will not be reversed by a philosopher's trick." (p. 17) This means that the ordered whole of modern liberalism includes both the logical order of ideas and the causal order of events and experiences that underlie the theory of modern liberalism. The synthesis of theory and practice leads to that method which transcends both the order of ideas and the order of events. Unger's method is described by the terms stylistic, typical, structural and dialectical. It is best understood by partaking of it in practice. The greatest practitioner of the discursive consequences of speech and reason *(logos)* was Socrates. It was also Socrates who suggested the method of exploring the analogical tension between polis and psyche. Likewise for Unger it is the relationship of appositeness or common meaning (a relation neither logical or causal), that reveals the whole of modern liberal theory and modern liberal society.'

Nevertheless, there is one ground upon which I take exception to Unger's approach. Unger denies that order and consciousness are in any sense prior one to the other (p. 19). What about the best regime

2. In chapters one and two of my dissertation, "The Political Status and Function of Plato's Myths" University of Notre Dame, 1977, I grapple with the kind of discourse *(logos)* that resorts to the use of analogies, metaphors and, ultimately, myths.

contemplated by Plato or the City of God revealed to Augustine? Are not they orders that are ontologically prior to any human consciousness and which exist as the final, perfective end of human consciousness in contemplation? Unger does not hold that such an end or order solely exists by cause of or by reason of human consciousness. Certainly it is in and through human consciousness that persons can participate in the best regime or the City of God. The interdependence of order and consciousness (as Unger acknowledges) and the affinity that human consciousness may have for divine order (this affinity, not identification, is crucial for the discursive and analogical, not logical, method of Unger) is the prerequisite for any kind of personal and political progress. But, contrary to Unger, they are not on the same level if only because order (in the sense of the best regime or the City of God) as the final end of excellence or perfection always exceeds human consciousness. More will have to be said later about this pivotal assertion of Unger regarding order and consciousness.

Before undertaking the total critique of modern liberalism, Unger reflects upon the modern experience of psychological and moral disintegration and resignation. Both are the consequences of the void of loneliness experienced by persons who no longer acknowledge any common humanity based on shared recognition and participation with others. Love, art and religion have been privatized as subjective and emotional given the narrow, modern dictates of reason. There is no *public* space for the acknowledgement and communication of "the image of that wholeness and perfection of being to which [one] has never ceased secretly to aspire" (p. 26). **To** redress this grievous experience of disintegration and resignation, a reconciliation of the relationship between self and society is required. Disintegration is the consequence of the autonomy and the separation of the self from the world, in sum, "a parody of transcendence" **(P.** 27). **On** the other hand, resignation is the consequence of subservience to times and conventions, the union of the self with the world, in sum, "a mockery of transcendence" (p. 27). Can there be the reconciliation of transcendence and autonomy of self without disintegration? Can there be the reconciliation of immanence and community without resignation? Further, is there the possibility of harmonious union between transcendence and immanence while at the same time respecting the tensions concomittant with their differences and oppositions? For Unger "to achieve this ideal is the good" (p. 22), and it involves parallel philosophical considerations of religion, politics and metaphysics as they involve the relation of the self to the world. It is

these kind of questions and concerns which mark the origins of ancient liberalism.' Unger's *Knowledge and Politics* must be placed in that long tradition of philosophic inquiry if only because he raises the perennial philosophic questions which modern liberalism has slighted, ignored or sought to abolish.

II. Total Critique

Unger's total critique of modern liberalism focuses first on modern liberal psychology and second on modern liberal political theory. On the basis of what constitutes the self of a person (a theory of personality) one can then proceed to discuss the ways such persons will interact (a political theory). Essential to any understanding of human personality is the way in which reason and desire are interrelated. But even prior to this interrelationship of reason and desire is the problem of the human mind's relation to nature, or the question of how theories relate to facts.

Unger sharply pinpoints the antinomy in the modern understanding of theory and fact. On one hand, all facts are known as such only through the classification and categorization of theory, i.e., the knower's mental conceptions construct reality for various practical and particular purpose. On the other hand, the existence and the progress of science requires that we somehow can choose between conflicting theories as if there were some independent criteria or truths of reality (such as intelligible essences discovered but not made by the mind). If the latter were not true, there would be an infinite regress of theory choices or agreements in the absence of any correspondence of our theories to a reality which is the independent and ultimate standard of truth. This is the modern epistemological dilemma especially pronounced in the philosophy of science.

Another way of seeing this same antinomy of theory and fact is to reconsider Kant's radical separation of ideas or theories which are formal and universal from events which are substantive and particular. The philosophic and scientific commitment to a formal and abstract universality is central to the antinomy of theory and fact. For Unger the richness of the substance of things and "the direct elucidation of the particular, as we do in art,...." (p. 36) is thereby lost in the philosophic and scientific enterprise which leaves theory and fact at odds.

3. For a discussion of the differences between ancient and modern liberalism, see Leo Strauss, *Liberalism, Ancient and Modern.* New York: Basic Books, 1968.

Compatible with this conception of the mind and of reason as fundamentally engaged in abstraction and categorization of objects and events in a seemingly infinite number of ways is the modern liberal argument that will and desire moves and determines the mind or reason. Whatever categories or classifications resorted to by the mind or reason are subject to whatever are the strongest prevailing drives of the will or the desires. The will and the desires in and of themselves, without respect to an intelligible, independent reality, have infinite potentialities.

According to Unger modern liberal psychology is founded on three basic principles. The first is that reason and desire are as distinct and separate from one another as theory and fact. The desires function to move and to activate reason without which reason would have no motivation to understand the world according to its constructions. Desire alone would be blind, but it is desire that determines choices. Different men, because they have different desires, make different choices even if their understanding of the world is the same. Desire is the decisive, final arbiter.

The second principle is that the desires are arbitrary and contingent vis-a-vis reason or understanding. Reason is without power to defend and to justify the choices of our desires. However, it is possible to look at the desires as determined facts of nature (empirical psychology) or as contingent choices of our free will (ethics). The former only attempts to explain, whereas the latter seeks to justify. We are left with an unresolved dichotomy of facts (explanations and descriptions) and values (prescriptions and justifications). It is part of Unger's achievement that in exposing this accumulation of dichotomies—reason and desire, facts and theory, facts and values, universals and particulars, form and substance, objective and subjective, public and private, the world and the self—the point is reached where an existential (not just an intellectual) crisis cries out for reconciliation.

At great length and with great care Unger exposes the antinomies underlying such dichotomies in modern liberal psychology and political theory. This is not to suggest that Unger supports any (especially utopian) attempt to do away with basic tensions which are inherent in human existence. What Unger seeks (and this is in agreement with ancient and Christian political philosophy) is the harmony and reconciliation of such tensions which, when they become dichotomies, tear apart, antagonize and threaten persons and communities.

Reason in modern liberal psychology still can play an instrumental role in the choice of ends. While reason cannot make you desire one thing instead of another, it can tell you how to attain different ends, whether one's desires are consistent with one another, or whether they can be attained efficiently given present means. Reason amounts to objective knowledge about the various means to any end which desire alone arbitrarily chooses. Reason is purely formal, whereas our desires are substantive. We can reason in public with others, but in the end our substantive desires are a private, subjective matter. Our ends are not public, and they are not rationally intelligible. Nor are they understandable in terms of any ultimate end of happiness (which, as our common end, can only be wished for, not chosen as it is not reducible to bare pleasure). At this point Unger reflects on the degeneration of reason into formal technique, and he questions whether the ancient reason or philosophy and theory, which habitually violated these neat dichotomizations, is possible any longer (p. 46). The partiality of the modern liberal position is that it plays one side of a dichotomy off another rendering the whole at odds with itself. Before modernity the activity of reason was the contemplation of reality as a harmonious whole.

The third principle of liberal psychology completes the breakdown or, more precisely, breakdowns the completion as regards any sense of the whole of things. The liberal principle of analysis makes knowledge a matter of the aggregation and the composition of all elementary or atomic sensations and ideas which are then resolvable again by analysis (based on the primacy of the single, concrete, individual, particular). This totally prevents any apprehension of the whole through the principle and activity of synthesis. There is no whole (be it being metaphysically, the common good politically) with an order, structure, or gestalt which is apprehended in order that meaning can be given to particulars.

What is at stake are two fundamentally opposed first principles or starting points through which the world can be known. Either the world has an apprehensible, intelligible order of its own, or it has no such order or structure of its own. Neither of these opposed first principles or starting points are ontologically neutral. Only according to their consequences for understanding our self in the world can we rationally choose between them.

In summation, according to Unger, modern liberalism espouses either a morality of desire or a morality of reason. The morality of desire is simple. any good for an individual will be that happiness

(pleasure) he achieves by the satisfaction of whatever particular desires he has over time. The emphasis is on a broad, trial and error experience of many diverse kinds and degrees of desires. The morality of reason is more complex. Reason only can establish certain universal and formal rules for the judgement of right and wrong. For Kant the morality of reason means that the will and the desires are constrained to follow the formal prescriptions of universal reason. Presumably the construction of an environment by reason would limit the possibilities of the desires. The morality of reason is the conventional rule response to the threatening chaos unleashed by the unlimited pursuit of the desires.

Unger argues that both these moralities are inadequate in themselves, and together they are incapable of synthesis. The morality of desire in itself is inadequate because it can never achieve any rational ordering, ranking or justification among divisive desires and ends. All desires and ends are equally subjective and arbitrary. The inability of a morality of desire to pass from description to evaluation results in a moral skepticism, not a moral doctrine that can be rationally supported (p. 52). But not only rationally or intellectually, but existentially as a way of life the morality of desire fails. The unending pursuit of one desire after another in the absence of anything but conventional guidelines means that the individual is doomed to continual dissatisfaction and unfulfillment. There is no experience ordering and transcending the bodily demands of one's present desires. There is no experience in the depths of one's soul of that peace that passes even understanding.

The problem of the morality of reason is that is is either coherent and unworkable or incoherent and workable (p. 53). The exemplar of it coherence is the golden rule of morality which as an abstract formula is absolutely empty and substanceless. The golden rule is unworkable because we have yet to decide what it is we should do unto each other. If the morality of reason were to make the effort of being more substantively and concretely determinative, then two possibilities are forthcoming. First, all the particularities of individual striving might be eradicated for the sake of reason's despotic rule of law and duty. Second, if rules of reason were too general, they would become too indeterminate and all the problems of the morality of desire would be thrust upon us again. Given the prevailing modern conceptions of abstract reason and undifferentiated human desiring,

there is no possibility of understanding and harmonious synthesis of reason and desire that Plato and Aristotle experienced and sought. The modern narrowing of reason to logical abstraction or self-interested calculation and the reducing of desire to bodily pleasure and need is the core of the problem.

Unger does not advocate a return to the positions of ancient philosophy. In fact, Unger is interestingly at odds with the ancient teaching regarding essences and human nature.[4] His real concern is to expose the war within the modern self or person. Thus he asserts that there are four prerequisites of selfhood or personality that explain the modern predicament (pp. 55ff.). First, the person must have a continuous identity over time if he is to make sense of his actions and thoughts concerning himself. Second, the person must share a common humanity with others such that his own identity is developed by the recognition of others and through partnerships in living together. Third, besides continuity over time, there is always the possibility that the will and the desires will change the direction of one's existence. Change must be accounted for because there are experiences (such asrebellion and conversion) which break through the caste of convention. And fourth, while sharing a common humanity with others, the person also stands out as a unique being or actor. Both the individualistic as well as the communalistic dimensions of the human personality need to be acknowledged and reconciled to achieve a wholeness of self. The morality of desire presents a chaos of individuals pursuing their own desires without any rationally apprehensible order governing their desires over time. At best, men are grouped together by conventions regarding common bodily necessities, but there are no ends that men share in common. On the other hand, the morality of reason and its lawlike universalism thwarts and dissolves the development of the individual as regards his specific concrete desires or his ability to reorient himself, all of which constitute his unique individual identity. Abstract, universal reason constructs a sterile existence for the creative individual.

In sum, the modern person is confronted with either a private self as a bundle of disordered desires or a public self bound to abstract rules of conformity. Public and private existence wage war with one

4. This matter will be considered in depth later. In any case, it is worth noting at this point that Unger's work is informed by such a breadth of education and learning that it never ceases to amaze the reader. One need only take a glance at the notes at the end of Unger's book.

another. Unger further realizes that the modern solution to the irreconcilability of the public and private is to offer persons a *role* to play publicly which will allow persons to gain limited recognition from others depending on their position in society's division of labor; that is, you play a role or do particular tasks or functions in exchange for which you have common interests with others. Yet you still reserve a place for your own private desires and interests. In the end your role saves "you from being nothing but [does not] allow you to become yourself" (p. 62). There is no development of a natural bond between persons which respects and recognizes individuality beyond being a function of private, subjective desires and interests. One resigns oneself to one's role or job in society, and the remainder of one's self (because privatized and subjectified) disintegrates. Such is the alienation experienced by the lonely self. This alienation is the consequence of the lack of a public space in which creative individuals can openly share their individuality with others in thought and in action.

We have reached the point where we have to query in what ways modern liberal political theory is founded on the dichotomous predicaments of modern liberal psychology. According to Unger modern liberal political theory is founded upon three principles: the principle of rules and values, the principle of subjective value, and the principle of individualism. All three principles are the consequence of the central problem of order and freedom (another dichotomy). At the basis of modern liberal society is a contradiction: men need each other to survive (hence some conventional order is necessary), but the very needs and desires of persons (freedom and individuality) are private, arbitrary and potentially antagonistic *as* regards the desire for self-preservation. The scarcity of goods, the desire for power and the hope of honor and glory are all characteristic modern commodities pitting the haves against the have-nots. The more one person has of property, power or glory, the less another person can have. There is no social experience in which "having more" means that others do not automatically have less. In effect, one's values are the social consequences of one's desires, wants, or needs, in sum, one's particular self-interest. There is no transcendent, publicly sharable standard of good (the more of which one apprehends and/or acts out the more everyone else has) outside the pursuit of one's own individual willful desires. Only by the imposition of conventional rules can there be any limits to or accommodation of self-interested, individual pursuits.

Modern liberal psychology requires that there be prescriptive rules or laws (commands, prohibitions or permissions) which regulate and,

and in some way, secure the desires of our will. Modern liberal political theory has established two necessary characteristics for rules or laws. First, they must be impersonal. In some way they must be *more than* or *not only* the expression of particular individual or group interests and desires. Second, such impersonal rules require procedures and standards that are general not particular. Frequently, this has produced the argument that individual natural rights precede rules (p. 71) thereby providing a basis for deciding individual entitlements. Yet this does not solve the dichotomous problem of rules and values which is but another manifestation of the problem of universals (general, abstract rights and laws or rules) and particulars (arbitrary, individual desires and values). Can the state (and how can it) achieve the harmonious integration of the universal and the particular? It is not surprising that so much of modern political thought is obsessed with the problem of the individual and the state. Is not this the consequence of the abstract, legalistic, rationalistic definition of rights and duties in counteropposition to the egoistic passions of individuals who constitute concrete social life? In sum, can there be a community ordering the relationship between individuals and the state such that what one person "has" or "seeks" does not threaten by domination, or does not diminish by its consequences, another person? These kinds of questions prepare the way for Unger's constructive alternative, communitarian politics.

The principle of subjective value is the outcome of putting all values on an individual basis. All values are subjective because individual. There are no communal values (except for relative, conventional agreements) since the primary unit for modern liberal political theory is the individual. Men are not political by nature. There are no objective values or standards independent of the choices of particular individuals. Consequently, Unger discerns that the rejection of intelligible essences or objective values leaves a precarious void that has to be filled by public rule-making and rule-applying. Even so Unger argues that the doctrine of intelligible essences or objective values is false (p. 77). It is difficult to determine whether this is primarily a philosophical conclusion on Unger's part or whether it is the consequence of historical events which no longer permit the elucidation of a doctrine of objective values. Perhaps both factors are relevant since it is Unger's declared method of argumentation not to separate philosophizing from historical experience and possibility. Nevertheless, the relativity and contingency of historical factors do not constitute by themselves a philosophical argument. What has happened or

what is possible may not at all be desirable or justifiable.

Unger briefly states three objections to the doctrine of objective values. First of all, it depends on a conception of reason which "has been discredited in nonmoral areas of thought" (p. 77). Second, the doctrine of objective values "denies any significance to choice other than passive acceptance or rejection of independent truths" (p. 77). The extent to which persons contribute to the shaping of their ends according to a rational judgment of their situation (i.e., *a* theory of action and participation) is nullified by the doctrine of objective value. This leads to Unger's third argument, namely, that the abstract nature of objective value does not provide an adequate basis for how we should act in particular, concrete situations. While this certainly may be the case whenever objective value or intelligible essences are intellectually dogmatized, it is very questionable whether Plato (who belabored the problem of participation) and Aristotle (who recognized choice and praxis as the crucial character of moral and political decision) are guilty of Unger's charges.

Unger's argument may have as much merit as Hannah Arendt's contention (in her book *The Human Condition)* that classical political philosophy failed to develop the possibilities of action because of its subordination of action to contemplation. Unger states:

> The sole possible alternative to the belief in intelligible essences as a basis of formalism would be the notion that in the great majority of cases common values and common understandings of the world fostered by a shared mode of social life will make perfectly clear to what category something belongs. Social practice will take the place of both intelligible essences and explicit consideration of purpose. (p. 93)

The great value of the arguments made by Arendt and Unger is that they compel us to reassess the classical political philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. We certainly should not read Plato and Aristotle as if they only offerred catechismal codes of morality. Perhaps it is the case that a rereading of Plato and Aristotle would break the spell of an intellectual tradition which has dogmatized Plato and Aristotle as rationalistic, essentialistic philosophers. The philosophic problem which haunts Unger's work (which he does not directly consider) is the relationship between essence (objective, intelligible, residing in the realm of contemplation or theoria) and existence (historical, individual, in the domain of action).

The advantage of concentrating on the interrelationship of essence to existence is twofold. First, there is a tradition still alive today which

has philosophically examined essence and existence especially in light of St. Thomas Aquinas' teaching. Etienne Gilson and Joseph Owens are two of the leading philosophers in this area. Second, to replace the universal-particular dichotomy with the essence-existence distinction is to change the problem from being an epistemological one to an ontological or metaphysical question. It is unclear whether Unger would accept the priority of being to knowing if it is the case that Unger's understanding of order and consciousness is his way of saying that there is no priority. It is indeed doubtful that it is possible not to choose a priority between being and knowing, and Unger's own critical analysis of modernity makes such a choice (for the sake of argumentation at the least) by emphasizing the epistemological relation of the universal to the particular.

As for modern liberal political theory, Unger correctly discerns the bind it is in. Having rejected any basis for objective standards for values as well as for facts, it must then engage in making and applying rules (legislation and adjudication) which lack any criteria for defining categories or standards. The nominalism and conventionalism on which modern liberal political theory is based means: "He who has the power to decide what a thing will be called has the power to decide what it is." (p. 80). This Hobbesian, power politics consequence holds true even if we were to argue that there is a basis in human nature and human reason for the reaching of consensus. This consensus (given the basic principles of modern liberal political theory) still would be a relative, unstable, conventional aggregation of interests and desires. There would be no community of sharing without individual loss on the basis of something more than and different from the sum of individual or group interests.

This leads to the third principle of modern liberal political theory, the principle of individualism. Groups are but the sum of the interests of individuals and any sharing of individual interests is the consequence of a contingent coalition of interests. The opposite of individualism is collectivism, the belief that groups do have a status independent of the sum of the individual members of that group. The Alternative is whetner the state or nation as opposed to the individual is the determinate source of all values. The problematical dichotomy of the individual and the state makes for the polarization of ideologies—individualism versus collectivism.

Of course, at the heart of any liberal political theory there must be an understanding of what liberty or freedom means. Given what has been said there can only be freedom in society in the context of some

theory of public rule-making or legislation. The problems with the substantive (utilitarian and contractual) and formal (Kantian) theories of freedom is that they fail to provide concrete guidance for rule-making and rule-applying. The philosophic roots of the modern liberal concept of freedom is the liberty do do whatever one pleases (the ancient definition of democracy or crowd rule). Unger suggests that if ever it becomes the goal of legislation to decide which capacities and talents among men are to be encouraged and favored or discouraged and impeded, and which are to be left free for men to choose themselves, then the modern liberal idea of freedom based on the individuality and subjectivity of values will be overthrown. In order to avoid a despotic or totalitarian outcome, a philosophically defensible theory is required regarding the development of human talents and the ideas and the actuality of shared values in a community. In short, in some way freedom must be reconciled with right order if there is to be distributive justice.

The previously discussed psychological antinomy of reason and desire has its parallel political antinomy of rules versus values. Regimes based on legal justice make decisions according to prescriptive rules (the morality of reason) whereas regimes based on substantive justice make decisions according to instrumental rules (the morality of desire). Neither of these regimes have an adjudicatory basis for consistently taking into account rules and values, nor can they dispense with either values or rules. Unger finds this to be true of the two major theories of modern jurisprudence—formalism and purposive theory. Formalism is found to rest on contradictory premises about language and value (p. 94), while purposive theory threatens the basis for legal justice via fixed entitlements and duties (p. 96). In actual legislative and political practice Unger concretely points to this problematic dualism of formal and purposive alternatives. The judge faces two conflicting roles: either trying to interpret correctly on its own terms a given established law or trying to determine whether a course of action efficiently leads to a desired goal. The legislature and administration have to choose between general rules as strict guidelines or contrived decisions made to fit the needs of the present instance. Because neither the theory nor the practice of modern jurisprudence and legislation are satisfactory in themselves nor reconcilable, a transcendent alternative is required if the spectre of lawless, arbitrary power or state domination is to be avoided.

For Unger such a transcendent alternative necessitates abrogation of the theory of subjective values in favor of a social experience in

which values are concretely shared. Such a situation supposedly avoids both the theories of abstract intelligible essences and of arbitrary conventional meanings. Persons with common interests will work out a common vision of the world based on agreed-upon values. But why would this lead to a stable, relatively non-conflictual way of life? Unger is aware of this problem (pp. 102-3) on both the theoretical and the political levels. In the end the theory of the self and the practice of organic groups offer Unger the answer and the alternative.

III. Transition

To arrive at the summit of Unger's achievement, his theoretical and practical alternative, it is necessary to pass through a transitional discussion of both the pivotal theoretical difficulty of modern liberal thought and the central practical problem of the historical mode of modern liberal social life. In this way we can reflect on our primary experiences in thinking and acting. Unger is quite aware of the problem of what joins thinking (ideas) and acting (events). Unger is quite clear that it is the order of consciousness, mind, culture or social life that mediates abstract, logical ideas and concrete, actual practices. How do persons comprehend their situation and organize their relation to others? The self-understanding of a people is their representative and symbolic form of existence which gives a unitary meaning to their diverse kinds of actions together as a people.

Naturally there are problems of discovering and interpreting the meaning behind acts and expressions constituting a people because we are dealing mostly with pretheoretical intentions which are in need of theoretical clarification. For Unger an interpreter must "participate in the same community or tradition of shared beliefs, beliefs that are both understandings and values." (p. 113). On the basis of reflection upon common existence an interpreter can judge and assess a people. The dichotomies of modern liberalism, fact versus value, and events versus ideas as well a the theory of subjective value have thwarted the awareness and development of a community of shared intentions between interpreter and those interpreted. However, Unger does not make the argument (especially in light of the problem of cross-cultural interpretations) that a common human condition or human nature is the philosophical basis for the interpreter's conclusions. Unger is also critical of what he calls the philosopher's trick by which hypothetical or ideal intentions such as the teleology of history (Hegel and Marx) or the universal mental apparatus (Kant and Freud) replace the real in-

tentions of interpreters and the interpreted. Nevertheless, we need to wonder whether the development of a philosophy of human nature or the human condition needs to fall prey to that kind of non-empirical, manipulative device which forces the history of peoples into a preconceived mold. A philosopher of human nature or the human condition can be empirically or experientially open to change and further development. New times and new conditions require new ways of expressing perennial truths. Also it is indeed a human experience that we are not fully cognizant of the perfections which are our end. Perhaps the problem of universals discourages Unger from acknowledging a philosophy of human nature or the human condition since Unger maintains that the doctrine of intelligible, unchanging essences cannot be made consistent with the dynamic relationship or parts and wholes (p. 130).

There is a further possibility that Unger does not acknowledge. If it is the case that the true interpreters of a people are its philosophers and if by nature among peoples the philosophers are the few, then the achievement of interpretation may be transpolitical, beyond the given historical and cultural existence of a certain people. This is not to say that what the philosopher achieves is private and of no relevance to a people or a culture. The achievement of the philosopher (and one could add the prophet also) is a philosophy or revelation of human nature or the human condition which is fundamentally public and sharable in its consequences or its translation, even though original access to it or the discovery of it may be open only to a few. Therefore, there may be truths (which operate as criteria or standards) which are transcultural and transhistorical, yet it is only within culture or history that they take on flesh and blood meaning and expression. Essence need not detract from existence.

Unger is rightly puzzled as to how the three modes of being—events (causality and nature), ideas (logical, conceptual, ideal truth), and consciousness (culture and social life) can be interrelated. "There is some profound correspondence among the internal structures of the three modes of being, though one whose source remains hidden to us." (p. 117) Unger says he has no definitive solution although the clarification of the relationship between universals and particulars undoubtedly is the key to this problem as well as the problem of the antinomous dichotomies of modern liberalism. While I do not presume to have any easy, final solution, I do feel compelled to suggest what Unger might be on the verge of proposing. The prevailing, modern scientific and philosophic understanding of *nature* and *reason* (the

modes of events and of ideas) needs a radical critique. Not only do these concepts fail by themselves in the interpretation of the human and the social, but also they too narrowly circumscribe the scientist's full understanding of nature and the philosopher's dynamic dialogue with ideas. They have a part in scientific and philosophic endeavor, but they do not constitute the standard or the norm for the scientist's or philosopher's activity.[5] Once this is granted then a discursive understanding of reason, harmonious with faith, feeling, desire and imagination is possible. Also our understanding of nature is not restricted to a causality which implies power, manipulation and control. Rather nature has its own beauty, order, harmony and unity that we can apprehend. In sum, a different attitude towards nature and a revived understanding of the activity of reason is required which in turn will not trifurcate into absolute, separate, exclusive compartments the three modes or orders of being.

Does Unger actually encourage a "new" attitude and understanding of nature and reason? While being most sympathetic with Unger's critique of modern liberalism I still retain a considerable amount of doubt regarding Unger's dismissal of Greek and Christian philosophy in supplying the answer to the dilemmas of modern liberalism. At best Unger has only encouraged what I would strongly propose; a reinterpretation of Greek and Christian philosophy because so much of it has not only been ignored but intentionally manipulated so as to suit modern approaches. Modern philosophers have set up the ancients to be dismissed with straw man arguments[6] or there has been the refusal to consider the ancients on terms other than modern undertakings.'

In the process of such a reinterpretation of the ancients, the ghost of history may have to be exorcised. "History" is not to be made the subject of any sentence, and it is not an agent. Events occur *in time,* in history as does the dynamic process of apprehending ideas. There is no march of history. The center of focus should be on the history of

5. Chapter two of my aforementioned dissertation is an examination of the philosopher's exercise of reason and discourse given an understanding of Platonic *logos.* The analytical, logical reason of modern philosophy is only one part of what Plato means by this term *logos.* The broader definition of *logos* includes metaphor, analogy and *mythos.*

6. I would classify Rawl's attribution of "perfectionism" to the ancients (in his *A Theory of Justice) as a* straw man argument.

7. See the influential lecture of H.A. Prichard "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?" *Mind,* Volume 21, 1912.

the individual soul. It is within the individual soul and its natural communal relationship to others that history occurs. This dynamic, historical understanding need not threaten or be in contradiction to fixed, intelligible essences as it is the case that such essences are other, transcendent, beyond history, i.e., our final end. Only because we have some affinity with such essences or perfection does our existence have meaning or purpose as we act or participate towards these ends. Furthermore, our final end is not simply objects of thought of essences, but Existence, pure *Esse*, God. Thus we have a personal (as well as an intellectual or rational) relation (an act of participation) with this end. Human existence roams in-between the particular and the universal. It is even better to say that our finite, in-between existence is an experience of both the tendency towards finiteness and nothingness, and striving for eternality. Thus the Pascalian, existential tragedy in our lives is not removed or removable by the apprehension of intelligible essences, although such an apprehension reveals the possibility of eternal fruition and serves as a guiding star in our strivings and seekings.

Unger's argument for a new view of the relationship between the individual or particular and the universal (pp. 143-4) needs to be founded on an explicit recognition of the existential experience that a person is a continuous (albeit changing) identity over time, who seeks to fulfill the essence of his being. Otherwise such a person descends into the abyss of nothingness. Unger unfortunately restricts to one sentence his understanding of the use of the parable or paradigmatic anecdote as representative of the way in which the universal and the particular are interrelated without sacrificing the richness of particularity or the stable ground of universality. But why does great literature capture this while many modern philosophers fail? The commitment to existential absurdity and nihilism or the demands of formal, abstract logic and univocal meaning as the only grounds for "explanation" prohibit any recourse to the exploration of the particular in the universal or the universal in the particular by the mode of analogical expression. Great literature reveals analogical tensions, and a philosophic hermeneutics (see for example the work of Paul Ricoeur) will examine the metaphorical and analogical. The relationship between the particularity of existence and the universal essence of meaning always needs to be puzzled out.

My critique of Unger's position is that he fails to explore adequately the interrelation of "essence" and "existence," especially as the meditative source for such an exploration is found in certain ancient

and Christian writings. Instead Unger has pondered the epistemological difficulty regarding the universal and the particular, all of which constitutes a less than complete break with modern philosophy. There still remains a lot to be gained from Unger's next move which is to offer relief and remedy on the practical, historical level of our own times.

At present we have made the transition to the welfare-corporate state and such a socio-political change has occurred simultaneous with changes in the way we think or our mode of consciousness. After analyzing this liberal social consciousness and its bureaucratic social order, Unger wonders whether the welfare-corporate state is a real alternative to the liberal society. Perhaps there is another possibility in the offing, such as the organic community of shared purposes, to which Unger ultimately dedicates his book.

First let us examine what Unger discerns as the four characteristics of the liberal social consciouness—instrumentalism, individualism, the role as social place and the ideal of religion. All four characteristics are in a condition of erosion as regards being the dominant, unquestioned social consciousness. After this we can examine whether the welfare-corporate state is a real alternative to liberal society and liberal social consciousness.

Instrumentalism is the position that nature and society are to be treated as manipulative objects of the human will. Reason is the discovery of those means (not ends) that enables society and nature to be the creatures of human will. Are there any limits to such manipulative possibilities based on the instrumental human will?

Individualism is the view that society is but an aggregate of separate individuals (atoms) who are in a competitive struggle of interests. The liberal individual is both dependent on society (his needs) and radically alone in society (his uniqueness). But there is more at stake. In every individual there is a "mysterious coexistence" (p. 155) of one's particularity and one's universality. Individualism which stresses one's particularity has the serious problem of achieving that particularity insofar as it needs to be developed through basic relationships one has with others (which are the existential ground for one's universality). To be recognized by others is to have one's identity affirmed. The limitations of individualism are obvious if there is no possible common, public meeting ground between one individual and another individual to test one's particular way of life.

Because of instrumentalism and individualism there is the problem of social place or role. According to one's job and the division of

labor everyone has specific roles. But a person has more than one role since he has various positions of status in pluralistic society beyond just his particular job. But while a plurality of roles is good, nevertheless this is external to whom we really are. We find our individuality to be unfulfilled if not alienated by the role organization of society and by the emphasis on the technical mastery of things. Insofar as we are no more than our roles, we too, like nature, are in a condition of dependence and domination. Bureaucratic organization and the modern understanding of merit based on impersonal roles, technical skills and the ability to get a job done efficiently do not answer the desire for a meaningful, personal place in the totality of nature and the whole of society or culture or community. Can we only realize our full personal worth privately in our family or among a few friends? "Men want to be human and the bureaucracy does not satisfy their humanity." (p. 174)

Unger dares to state explicitly that religion achieves the unified social consciousness which role organization and bureaucracy can not. Religious consciousness deals with the whole of experience, soul and body, divine and human. Quite correctly Unger discerns that the modern view of nature and society as objects of limitless manipulation is the consequence of desanctifying the world. The divine becomes an immanent world process (pp. 161ff.). However, an extreme religion of transcendence would only add fuel to the desanctifying of the world. As is habitually the case Unger does not argue for one extreme as opposed to another. It is not which side of the barricades you are on (there being only two sides), but removing the barricades by surmounting the conflicting extremes. How to achieve the completeness of one's being? The specifically modern problem is the secularization of transcendent religion (as Feuerbach recommended) represented by the positions of individualism and instrumentalism which endow nature, society of the individual with God-tasks. There is no longer any supramundane reality with a higher meaning. The autonomous individual is relativized and subjected to loneliness at the mercy of other individuals who make society, culture and history in their own image. Men no longer have God in common; they only have their separate selves and their finite future. There is no participation in anything greater than themselves. Whatever the world or history throws up will be our fate. The spectre of the ideological cause or movement that answers all questions with terrible simplicity haunts the political domain.

Because of the conflicts inherent in the social consciousness of

liberal society there has been a movement towards the welfare-corporate state. This welfare-corporate state has two defining properties: (1) the energetic responsibility of the government to intervene in the distribution of economic and social advantages; and (2) the great development and impact which basic intermediary institutions (such as corporations, unions and private associations) have as they fill the gap between the isolated individual and the impersonal state (p. 175). Most important of all, bureaucracy, a plethora of public bodies and a professional, bureaucratic class, appear in the welfare-corporate state. Yet none of these developments *necessarily* means a break with the liberal state and society. One might think that welfare measures and organizations respectively break with the rugged individualism and the lonely, alienated, individuals of liberal society. For Unger whether or not this is true depends on the distinctiveness of the social consciousness of the welfare-corporate state.

With some affinity to romanticism the social consciousness of the welfare-corporate state opposes the willful instrumentalism of liberal society in favor of a harmony between man and nature especially as regards man's respect for a given natural order. Contrary to hierarchic, centralized bureaucratism, there is longing for egalitarian communities of shared purpose. In some cases the laboring process has been restructured so as to give the worker a place and a solidarity vis-a-vis the whole of production. Unger sees the beginning of the repudiation of dichotomies (such as the state and society, particular and universal, immanent and transcendent, who a person is and what he does) as the community of shared purposes and ends is realized. Unfortunately, the welfare-corporate state (as well as the socialist state) harbor their own ambiguities and dualities. For instance, the commitment to decentralization and debureaucratization assumes that groups will spontaneously and autonomously reach ordered relationships just through their interactions. The attempt to reconcile the conflict between the individual and the state in modern liberal society has tended towards the sacrifice of the individual in the proposals of the proponents of the welfare-corporate state and the socialist state. Most important of all, it is not clear that the welfare-corporate state or the socialist state has an understanding of community in which persons share values and recognize each other's concrete individuality (p. 184). For Unger the ideal of community can only be realized when the forms of domination by class, role or merit are negated. It is too soon to tell given the history of social consciousness in the welfare-corporate state whether there will be some synthesis of these opposing dichotomies

which does not sacrifice one side to the other. Since history gives no answer, Unger can only continue to philosophize about that kind of self and that kind of community which would be a fundamental break with liberal, individualistic society.

IV. The Alternative

Modern liberal society and consciousness clearly leads Unger to propose an alternative which has some definite possibilities of realization in our future history. In the process of considering Unger's proposed alternative I find it necessary to question why Unger chooses to speak about the "self" as opposed to the "soul." The self is that individual locus of which qualities are predicated defining the individual personality. The self is a primarily individualistic notion whereas the soul suggests something essential and universal in every person. Unger does not deny that personhood always includes relations with others. Unger wants to avoid and surmount both a relativistic, solipsistic, historicist view of the self as well as the ahistorical, essentialistic conception of human nature. Again for Unger a more adequate understanding of the universal and particular is required in order to avoid the extremes of essentialism and relationalism.

> ...human nature is neither an ideal entity that subsists in its own right nor a mere collection of persons and cultures. Instead, it is a universal that exists through its particular embodiment, always moves beyond any one of them and changes through their sequence. Each person and each form of social life represent a novel interpretation of humanity and each new interpretation transforms what humanity is. (p. 195)

While acknowledging with Unger that each new birth is a new beginning and a unique person, it does not follow that this may have *transformational* consequences for humanity. Not only is it doubtful that Unger is right regarding the Greek and Christian understanding of an essential human nature (soul), but also Unger's notion of dynamic change through time goes too far. The use of the verb "transform" in the above quote implies something apocalyptical. But one need only admit additions to or detractions from a full comprehension of the way our individuality or our particularity participates in the wholeness of human nature. Human souls are by nature fundamentally in-between the bestial and divine, fundamentally deficient vis-a-vis God. No amount of new historical or individual action could overcome this. In sum, I favor erring on the side of

"soul" and all of its implications as opposed to Unger's choice of "self."

Unger acknowledges three basic kinds of evidence to assess any kind of theory of the self (pp. 196ff.). First, there is the history of the present and past types of social order that are favorable or unfavorable to the development of the self. Second, there is our own capacity for critical judgment and understanding in terms of the experiences and intuitions we have had regarding what constitutes ourselves. Since neither of these two add up to any great likelihood of agreement among persons, we also have to put forward a third view of the self that is a moral vision about what can be or ought to be the fuller development of human nature. There may be a diversity of progressive possibilities for humanity, albeit a harmonious and cooperative diversity.

Unger delineates two intimate attributes of the self—indeterminacy and consciousness. We are indeterminate beings because our instincts or inclinations do not predetermine our possibilities. We are an open possibility by nature, or as Unger says, we are a problem to ourselves. We are also uniquely self-conscious beings. We stand back and talk about or talk with ourselves. While we are capable of distancing ourselves from the world (as well as from ourselves), this need not imply, as Unger states, that the world is strange and foreign to us. More precisely, we should say that the self is distinct (not separate) from the world or nature. Indeed our knowledge of the world is incomplete, and we ourselves are deficient beings. Being in-between the bestial and the divine, we only have a relative home in the world of creation.

Yet it does not necessarily follow, as Unger recommends, that we need to conquer and transform the world because it has not been completely formed in a way suitable to man. It may be the case that the world is not our final resting place. More crucially, it is our very distinctiveness from the world that allows us to partake in the independent intelligibility of the world in a caring not domineering or willful way. Nature is defined in Aristotelian fashion, dynamically, as the potentiality of all that is for its proper actuality or perfection. Such actuality or perfection is not immediately, fully given, but it unfolds not only in time but also in the process of knowledge. Contrary to Unger, the natural world does exist independently of us and it is not transformed by the intelligible process by which we come to know the world. Unger takes the view of *homo faber: "...the* self is engaged in the reconstruction of the world and of its own being." (pp. 204-208) Rather than the self discovering its place in the dynamic process of the

world towards its many-sided perfection or final end, it is the function of the self to overcome its estrangement from nature. To produce a natural harmony is consistent with modern science and modern individualism and instrumentalism. The willfulness of modernity and its claims to the power of domination over nature, all of which Unger had rejected, now seemingly have reappeared as at least one facet of the self vis-a-vis nature according to Unger. Yet Unger rejects a view of nature which is a matter of human willfulness. Unger uses such examples as love, art, and religious worship to explain a kind of creative independence, yet natural harmony, man has with nature. Nevertheless it is altogether unclear what *ontological* understanding Unger has which makes this possible avoiding the consequence of the human will to power and transformation. Only insofar as nature is endowed with some independent intelligibility of its own is it possible to have a loving, caring relation with nature.

Perhaps the crucial confusion in Unger's theory of the self is the failure to distinguish making from acting.[8] Unger concentrates on the human capacity to make a world of objects which are more than objects since they are intimate extensions of the worker's subjectivity and are the means for persons to recognize themselves. Thus we have a world that can be completely known to the worker as his own self-creation. By making a world in man's own image, he overcomes all human alienation. But making is not the same as acting. To act is to enter into a world which already has an intelligibility to which we in our unique freedom (without freedom or choice there is no action) either contribute or do not contribute. Putting primary emphasis on making restricts us to a world loaded with products which dominate us or define us. By overcoming our alienation vis-a-vis a foreign world of nature we lose our freedom to act independently of the made-world. By emphasizing action we are reminded of our supramundane ends since it is in the freedom of our choices and actions that we become *who* we are in preparation for achieving the full perfection of our being. Who we are is not what we make in our work. We act in the world so as to fulfill that which pulls us beyond the finite world. To emphasize making and working is to suggest that we can be more or less at rest and at peace in a finite world of our own making. Moreover, it is not at all obvious or clear how the making of things that embody individual intentions will become the communal basis for people participating in each others purposes. This presupposes that

8. Note that Hannah Arendt in the *Human Condition* has pioneered in modern times the distinction of making from working and laboring as well as from acting.

the making of things is the basis for human sharing and rational, political participation and cooperation.

In making or working Unger thinks he can defeat individualism because the products of making and working are social and collective not individualistic. Again Unger does not consider the possibilities of community in terms of public, shared *acting* and *knowing*. Unger's model for community is technological and industrial rather than political in the Greek sense. For this reason Unger's model of a collective community is egalitarian as opposed to hierarchic (see p. 188). Unger never considers that in the political realm of speaking and acting there might appear a natural aristocracy of leaders as distinguished from followers. These would be leaders who can best articulate and act upon what the community holds in common. The speeches and actions of Abraham Lincoln automatically come to mind.

For two reasons these leaders would not necessarily be those who by chance have been well-endowed by nature with talents and skills. First, because no matter how well-endowed one still has to appear before others and gain their recognition, all of which requires more than natural genius. Secondly, these leaders will not be the kind of persons who glory in their own greatness. That they are "the best and the brightest" is not their claim to rule. They do not separate themselves from and thus dominate their followers. There is no violation of a public, open and free process of discussion. Rather these leaders truly *represent* the people by making more vividly conscious in speech and in deed the very shared, communal basis for living together. They have found the "good" which they know is not their own good nor their own possession.

Unfortunately, the very problem of political leadership and *representation* is not acknowledged by Unger as being at the core of the problem of community. Instead Unger concentrates on the ideal of sympathy whereby others stand to the self in cooperative not conflictual relationships. The consequent development of one's selfhood is in interaction with others, and it is not diminished by cooperative relations with others. The best exemplar of sympathy is the example of divine love which is both personal and unique as well as universal and perfecting. Such an exemplar of sympathy and love can be strengthened beyond what Unger proposes by recognizing the function of exemplary acts and speeches, i.e., it requires exemplary persons to keep the image of a properly constituted community before the people. A community must be open and receptive to such exemplary persons if they are to be seen and heard, and if they are not to be corrupted by

defying the community.

It is not that Unger is unaware of what would constitute exemplary leaders of action in a community. Rather it is the case that Unger's democratic egalitarianism leaves no place or position for such persons. Unger would have their exemplary qualities generalized and put in the hands of everyone as much as possible.

> The power to infuse a universal significance into one's finite life is recognized and admired by all men as the quality of inspiration. He who is so inspired cannot rest, or play, or even dream in peace until he has awakened his fellows from their slumber as he was awakened by others. All his efforts are driven forward by the same passion, and the task he has set himself before his eyes at every moment and in every circumstance. For such a man, partiality is a way to partake of the universal. At the same time, the capacity to put one's particular work in the service of an universal ideal presupposes that one is able to distinguish between the ideal itself and the particular form it takes in one's life, and thus to criticize and guide the latter from the standpoint of the former. (pp. 224-5)

This is Unger's ideal of "concrete universality" which overcomes the dichotomies of reason and desire and the universal and the particular in modern liberalism. But how can one diffuse without loss these inspirations which only come to the few? Unger recognizes a twofold problem: Can the division of labor be transformed into a political experience of the ideal of concrete universality such that the many can share in the inspiration of the few? Can the few who are inspired really achieve the full dimensions of their experience of universality if they are to sacrifice this end and return to live in the Cave of the many?

The answer to these two questions is only possible when one examines the very substance which constitutes a particular historical people and its leaders. In other words, what defining character, substance of beliefs, truths held in common and so forth constitute a people and its leaders? In what particular way, with what particular content of beliefs do a people and its leaders relate themselves to each other, to nature, and to others and achieve their own self-understanding? Such a self-understanding should at its best, according to Unger, recognize distinctions (individual distinctiveness or uniqueness) as well as identities (oneness). Granted the liberal state and society rends asunder the self from the world whereas its antithesis the welfare-corporate state and socialism homogenizes the self with the world. But what concretely and particularly in either the United States or any other society would be the basis for avoiding such extremes? Speaking about the realization of the complete self and the achievement of the good is recognized by Unger as insufficient. "Only

politics can make the ideal concrete, concrete in everyday life and therefore also concrete for theory, which anticipates, criticizes and contributes to politics, but cannot replace it." (p. 230) Agreeing that this is so, is there any concrete evidence, for instance in American politics, that there is some promise of a political solution to the problems that Unger elucidates so well?

Unger recognizes that there are limits to the realization of the ideal in politics and history. This recognition does not lead to despair or to resignation. In fact, Unger asserts that the actual conditions of society must be changed if we are going to remove the antagonistic conflict between the ideal or the extraordinary and the everyday. It seems that for Unger this realization of the complete self and the good is entirely an immanent process. "Human nature shows itself only through the historical forms of social organization and social consciousness." (p. 234) If there is some transcendent source of revelation Unger chooses either to leave it aside or to judge it immanently. Yet one can still avoid a this-worldly indifference and paralysis while having otherworldly hopes and longings which acknowledge one's end and completion to be wholly outside of time. Indeed we should "embrace perfect being in imperfect, and fugitive and earthly form." (p. 235) But to make good that which we are passing through is an elevation or resurrection that follows upon a descent or incarnation. Unger tends to favor temporal, historical priorities over ontological priorities. I am not certain that a people can maintain a reasoned and moderate perspective on their world and its history without a distinct faith, hope and love of that beyond time.

Nevertheless, Unger's historical ideal is the theory of organic groups. In examining this last chapter in Unger's book there are two basic questions. First, what is the status of the ideal for Unger? Second, what particularly and concretely is meant by a communitarian politics or organic groups? Unger asserts that his theory of organic groups avoids two unfortunate extremes. Utopianism would be the failure to see any connection between the immanent here and now and the transcendent beyond. The self is reduced to seeing no relation between reality and its ideals. Everything here and now is sacrificed to some set of ideals and goals. Idolatry is the reverse danger wherein there is no truth or ideal except what is fully realized immanently. It appears that Unger finds utopianism to be a greater danger in human life. An understanding of human nature in terms of the good will give us hope that we may avoid both idolatry and utopianism.

The notion of the good provides us with a criterion of value beyond

that of individual willfulness and arbitrariness although we must at the same time avoid the doctrine of an objective good that has no relation to who we are as choosers and centers of decision. The good of the individual is both universal (as regards the sociability of one living in a community and one's participation in one's species' nature) and particular (the unique talents and capacities of the individual). There is no permanent, unchanging essence of human nature abiding throughout all history. Rather there is a continuity of intelligible, interrelated problems that form the experiences of individuals. The kind of critical retort that Unger deserves here is that the condition for intelligibility and continuity is the very existence of permanent, unchanging essences. To acknowledge the existence of such essences does not annihilate the individual as a free, choosing being, since no one has a complete, exhaustive apprehension of such essences. We are left in the position of looking for shared, common purposes and values. Without some ultimate transcendent standard in the distance, there would be no reason (except of course expediency, convention, happenstance) to look beyond. To affirm that it is there is not to claim absolute, final knowledge. There is always the condition for further advancement with every person yet an infinity of striving with no final resting place would lead to existential absurdity. Such is the consequence when Unger denies "the existence of eternal moral laws that inhere in the nature of things" (p. 240). How can Unger so boldly contend that he knows this? Modesty may be on the side of those who tirelessly search in speech and in deed for ultimate meaning knowing it is there while not yet knowing it.

Unger seems more concerned about the conditions or processes whereby there is an achievement of shared values or moral union than the end (telos) of the processes. While agreeing that domination by either individuals or conventions violates the moral process of choice, it does not necessarily follow that autonomy or equalization of the ways persons interact makes for a moral position. Again Unger lacks a political or cultural notion of representation whereby we could establish the proper relationships between leaders and led. (These are not necessarily two absolutely divided groups; in fact, there may be an interchange of members of these two groups from issue to issue and from time to time.) The fulfillment of truly shared values and purposes does not require across-the-board equalization. It is in the process of public, rational deliberation among persons who are not equals in all matters (and of course any superiority is not based on power) that it would be possible to achieve a community of shared values.

Such a community is not a collection of autonomous individuals. Only unavoidable necessities would put fully autonomous individuals in need of others.

- Perhaps Unger's book and its questionings demonstrate a longing for such a community of discourse where there would be a convergence of moral views. His affirmation of being and the world as fundamentally good and harmonious is a good starting point. Furthermore, Unger has realized that we have lost touch with a notion of reason as prudence or practical wisdom which is deliberative regarding choices we make. The mode of prudence or practical wisdom is analogical, which is to say that all issues are linked together in a single moral universe (p. 258) given the interconnection of being and goodness. Analogically we compare and contrast particular, concrete instances of problems with one another. By analogy we determine which differences or similarities are more significant or relevant, in composing our moral universe. Unger stresses at length the distinction between theoretical and practical reason, yet strangely enough he contends that practical reason does not rely on the abstract principles (essences) of theoretical reason (p. 254). But Unger himself proceeds on the basis of clarifying theoretical premises as a necessary prelude to facing the riddles of practical judgement. Thus, after all, there is some important reliance on abstract theoretical clarification, which does not replace practical reasoning but which at least maps the terrain beforehand. If it is true that theory and practice resist perfect combination in a single person, then all the more important is the provision of some public space where theoreticians (the few) and practitioners (everyone) can dialectically communicate.

Besides the inadequacy of the modern notion, of reason, Unger is also aware of the failure to achieve community. Sympathy is the political equivalent of love or "the communion of purposes by virtue of which each views the other as a complementary rather than as an antagonistic will, and the willingness to see and to treat others as concrete individuals rather than as role occupants." (p. 261). Three principles underlie Unger's notion of a community of organic groups: (1) the community of life reconciling sociality and individuality; (2) the democracy of ends; and (3) the division of labor. The elaboration of these three principles is meant to provide an image for achievement rather than a blueprint or prescription.

A community of life for Unger is based on two prerequisites. There must be face-to-face dealings with all members of the organic group, and there must be allowance for a free variety of concrete individuals

who share their experience for the sake of common ends. In short, intimacy and extensiveness characterize such communities of life. Unger imagines a polis with happy universality among its citizens. Unger sees the realization of such a community in occupational groups rather than families or friendship circles because the latter two are partial and private. The difficulties of a communitarian politics reside in the present organization of work which emphasizes efficiency over everything else, as well as the consumptive desire for more and more. There is also the general threat that the community will be a dominating power restricting diversity and development. These three points alone show how great the barriers are to achieving communities of life.

By a democracy of ends Unger means that the bureaucratic, hierarchical, meritocratic form of organization will be more and more replaced by democratic or collective decision-making and reciprocal persuasion. In these ways shared values and purposes are achieved without domination and without reliance on the arbitrary possession of talents and abilities. Unger is aware that the democratic process of choice needs standards if it is not to destroy itself or revert to the subjectivity of values. This means that each individual should continually have the good of community in mind when deliberating. But Unger fails to explain why this will happen or the means he recommends for achieving a sense of the common good and the virtuous life.

The division of labor emphasizes the significance of the individual's particular good only as he is a member or worker in an overall organization. In a democratic community such as Unger envisages there will be a deemphasis on one's specialized tasks or capabilities in favor of broader, sharable relations and activities. An individual should be able to discern the more universal meaning in his particular work. Specifically, this may require rotation of jobs and a common duty to share unpleasant but necessary jobs all of which contribute to the purpose of the whole enterprise. One even imagines something like an Aristotelian polity in which persons interchange ruling and being ruled functions, in which there are bonds of friendship which do not exclude noble deeds. At this point one longs for another book from Unger in which there is more elaboration concerning leisure activities that solidify a community.

Unger's understanding of leisure can be related to his definition of freedom. Avoiding the liberal and antiliberal positions, Unger states that freedom is "the measure of an individual's capacity to achieve the good" (p. 278) and this good has both a particular and universal

aspect as an object of choice. Unger prizes individuality as the hallmark of freedom. Consequently, the antithesis of freedom in domination by group(s) or the community which is restrictive of the freedom to choose or to express oneself. The priority question again surfaces: is the individual absolutely or relatively prior to the community? Does not the community or groups within it become representatives of the good? Unger seems to concentrate almost solely upon the individual achieving or fulfilling his particular good. One does not notice anything like a consideration of self-sacrifice actions which have been characteristic of great persons who have been models for others. Perhaps Maritain's differentiation between the individual and the person would be relevant here because the emphasis on individuals raises the serious political or communal difficulty of a rampant pluralism in which there is no center which grips the parts or persons making them participants in a whole. Instead of "plurality" Unger would do better emphasizing the "diversity" of organic groups within a whole community. Most unsatisfactory is Unger's treatment of the relationship between a plurality of autonomous organic groups and larger associations eventually comprising the state. The latter exists for the purposes of peace as well as for the coordination of manyness into a "more perfect understanding and realization of the good." (p. 283). The state stands for a universal culture definitive of the species nature of persons. Again we have the problem of the particular in all its concrete diversity and plurality vis-a-vis the universal which transcends and unites into one. What one needs to flush out this problem is a representative treatment of the way in which that which is discerned as a universal (be it something shared like friendship or be it rational deliberation regarding a critical issue) is particularized in diverse persons as these particular persons aspire to this universal in speech and in deed. Some phenomenological, substantive essay of this type would be the real test of Unger's outlining of the problem. In other words, Unger demarcates the problem and the solution in an outline form which needs to be filled with real substantive experience.

Unger concludes with an affirmation of the limits of any alternative to modern liberal existence. To put it bluntly: "Only God, if He exists, would combine universality with immediate presense," (p. 276). There is a fundamental disharmony, incompleteness, tension, irreconcilability of the universal and the particular in all *human* thought and action. We can never humanly reach ideal perfection in historical existence. Religiously the problem of the universal and the particular is translated into the problem of the transcendent and the immanent. Unger sees that the union of the universal and the particular defines

immanence and the separation of the universal and the particular acknowledges the transcendent. God is both immanent (active within the world He created) and transcendent (a perfect Being/Person not identifiable with the world). Unger is quite careful to distinguish between religion as a kind of "sight" and philosophy as a form of argument. Argumentative reason is uplifted by religious sight or revelation:

> Revelation might tell us how through Him and in a world we can neither describe nor completely build, the opposition of nature and humanity could be overcome; how by seeking to imitate His universal love, according to the limited measure of our humanity, we can prefigure a circumstance in which the conflict of self and others would be resolved without the sacrifice of individuality; and how our participation in Him might give us the hope that we too might be able in another world to join together at last essence and existence, the abstract and the concrete self. (p. 293)

The last sentence of Unger's book is "Speak, God."

In sum, Unger's critique is thorough and devastating for modern liberal individualism. Unger's reconstruction efforts are insightful, even spiritual, but not wholly satisfying. All the critiques of liberalism, behaviorialism, moral relativism and subjectivism do not amount, in and of themselves, to a restoration of the dynamic being of persons in the world, which to my mind would be the restoration of Plato and Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas as applicable to the postmodern world. Nevertheless, Unger has written the kind of book that instigates a reflective groping for a comprehension of the whole, namely, our being poised precariously in the world but not of the world.

Carroll College DON ROY