REALISTIC IDEALISM

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The question with which moral philosophy begins is a question of how to live. To recover a measure of relevance to the question of how to live here and now, theorizing about justice would need to consider which principles have a history of being demonstrably the organizing principles of actual thriving communities at their best. Ideals emerging from such research are not precipitates of armchair theory but are a distilling of social scientific insight from observable histories of successful community building (Pennington 2011). What emerges from ongoing testing in the crucible of life experience will be path dependent in detail if not in general outline, partly because the challenges to which a way of life is a response are themselves contingent and path dependent (Mason 2004).

Habitable ideals—principles real people can live with—are those by which courts and citizens avoid and resolve conflict. We are tempted to presume justice is more fundamental than conflict resolution, but philosophy done well is neither as autonomous as that nor as naïve. Hampshire goes so far as to say, "fairness in procedures for resolving conflicts is the fundamental kind of fairness" (2001: 4). Darwall says modern philosophy's break with scholasticism began with a secular insight that a harmony of interests is not guaranteed (1993: 416).[1]

Moral theory done well tracks truth about the human condition: what it actually takes for people to live in peace. Thus, the relation between justice and conflict resolution is not a one-way relation of more to less fundamental: it is a dance of mutual specification, anchored to evolving facts about how people manage traffic, settle disputes, feel at peace with settlements made, develop a mutually intelligible and mutually liberating sense of what it means to mind their own business, and work toward making sure their neighbors are better off with them than without. Social structures that make it easier to resolve and avoid conflict go a long way toward fostering society as a cooperative venture for mutual advantage. To the extent that a society is such a venture, it is responding well to the human condition. People are learning to trust each other far enough, and adjust their expectations far enough, to constitute themselves as a kingdom of ends.

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[1] NOT SELF-CONTAINED

The previous chapter discussed recent work on ideal theory. This chapter characterizes an alternative kind of ideal theory, *realistic idealism*, as theorizing about what would count as an ideal response to a sober assessment of circumstances that demand a response here and now. Where there are facts, where facts are subject to change in ways that matter, and where there is something we can do, we have a problem. Starting with real problems imposes some discipline on the task of deciding what to count as ideal; there are limits to what can count as ideal solutions to real problems.

CHAPTER I. IDEALISM FOR SOCIAL ANIMALS

Is moral philosophy more foundational than social philosophy? Is the question of how to live more fundamental than the question of how to live *in a community*? My training as an analytic philosopher notwithstanding, I no longer assume the answer is yes.

Are we getting down to foundations when we set aside contingencies regarding the communities in which political animals live, and proceed as if we were pure rational wills? Here too, I see no reason to say yes.

To recover a measure of relevance to questions that practitioners need to answer— questions about how to live *as social beings*—theorizing about how to live together might take its cue less from what we now call moral philosophy and more from what we once called political economy. We can go beyond thought experiments. We can ask which principles have a history of being the organizing principles of flourishing communities. Let's say realism studies the human condition as it is, while idealism studies the human condition as it could be. Thus characterized, realism and idealism are distinct yet obviously compatible.

Realistic idealism, one of several possible forms of idealism, studies what should be in light of a sober assessment of what could be, here and now. Realistic idealism aims to identify real possibilities, then ask whether an ideal response is among those possibilities. Realistically, it need not be. An ideal response is a best response, and intuitively something more: we call the best available response ideal only if we accept a fairly strong version of the thought that we could not have done better.[2] Suppose we say Plan A is ideal, then find that Plan A is no solution at all—maybe it is infeasible because a key ingredient is missing. When we switch to

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[2] THIS KINDA REPEATS THE LASAGNA EXAMPLE FROM THE OLSARETTI CHAPTER. CONSOLIDATE.

our actual best response, Plan B, we do so with regret about a solution that *seemed* in reach and *would* have been better. If we also restock the missing ingredient so that Plan A will be a real option next time, that implies that Plan B is merely best under the circumstances, not ideal.

Realistically, not all problems have solutions, let alone ideal solutions. Sometimes studying a problem helps us see what would solve it. Sometimes we learn that the best we can do is cope. Of course, a genuine ideal is something beyond mere coping.

Let me emphasize that. An ideal does not *stop short* of, but goes beyond, mere coping. To imagine not needing to cope with reality stops short of theorizing about what it takes even to *cope*. So, of course, it comes nowhere near what it takes to be ideal.

II. HYPOTHETICAL VERSUS REAL IDEALISM

One enduring feature of the human condition is that we are, after all, political animals. (1) We are decision makers. (2) We are decision makers who want and need to live together. (3) As decision makers, we respond to circumstances. (4) As social beings, we respond to the circumstance *that we live among decision makers*—other political animals who treat our choices as part of their circumstances and respond accordingly.

Social theory done well is theory about a world of separate persons—separate not only in an aspirational Kantian moral sense but in a straightforward descriptive sense that each person is a locus of agency. People decide for themselves. We choose well only if we choose with a view to what we thereby give others a reason to do in response—that is, only if we do not take others for granted, do not treat them as pawns, and do *not* treat them as if they have a duty to be gripped by whatever vision is gripping us at the moment. If we are not theorizing along those lines, then we are not theorizing about politics.

Political Animals Live in a Strategic World: Rawls says his assumption that bargainers choose for a closed society 'is a considerable abstraction, justified only because it enables us to focus on certain main questions free from distracting details' (1993: 12). Is this a legitimate move? In principle, yes. We can ignore the fact that humans live in increasingly open societies, provided that this detail makes no difference to the question we aim to answer. Yet, it is easy to slide from ignoring to ignoring "with prejudice": setting details aside not because they *don't* affect the answer but precisely because they do.[1] To ignore with prejudice is to set aside details not because they obscure a crucial fact but because they highlight it. Although we must

set aside distracting details and focus on the problem, one thing we must never set aside as a detail is *the problem*.

Tucson's city government once sought to manage traffic flows by designating inner lanes of major roads as one-way lanes toward the city center during the morning rush. During evening rush, those lanes reversed and became one-way lanes *from* the city center. At off-peak times, inner lanes reverted to being left-turn lanes. In a world of ideal drivers, it might have solved the problem. In Tucson, with its daily influx of elderly drivers unfamiliar with local convention, where one bewildered driver is enough to create a dangerous mess (and giving people time to get used to the new rule could not solve the problem because newly bewildered drivers arrive every day), the system was a recipe for traffic jams, accidents, and road rage.

One way of describing the mistake is to say traffic managers set aside the problem. Alternatively, they came up with an ideal response to a hypothetical problem rather than a real one. A proper aim of serious traffic management is to minimize collisions, not to be a system that *would* minimize collisions between ideal drivers. Solving idealized problems is not a way of being a serious idealist. That a traffic management scheme would work for ideal drivers says nothing in its favor *even as an ideal*.

The job of Tucson's traffic managers was to optimize traffic flow, but instead they chose to do what *would* optimize traffic flow *if* drivers were ideal. They made a mistake. The real world responded with feedback, but unfortunately the world gives precious little feedback to philosophers who make the same mistake. One way of describing the mistake is to say they equate what *is* ideal with what *would be* ideal under counterfactual conditions.

We can go badly astray if we strive for what Rawls called a "systematic grasp of more pressing problems" by *assuming away those very problems*. And yet, egregious though this sounds, it is not always a mistake. A physicist can demonstrate friction's importance by modeling frictionless systems.[2] Theorizing about what justice would be like in a world without political animals (without "friction") could be illuminating, so long as we do not think we thereby show what justice is like in worlds like ours. Ronald Coase won a Nobel prize for proving (summarizing *very* roughly) that markets are bound to be efficient in a world without the frictions of transaction cost. His point was not that markets are bound to be efficient in our world, but that the cost of transacting changes everything. Analogously, when Rawls argued that ideal justice would be like *x* in a world without the friction of compliance problems, the proper inference was never that ideal justice is like *x*, but that compliance problems change

everything.

In this way, Coase identified a real ideal, not merely a hypothetical one. He did not conclude that free markets would be ideal if only human nature were not flawed, but that minimizing transaction cost can be an ideal response to a real problem. Rawls could have done the same thing. Rawls could have drawn conclusions about real ideals too, if he had speculated that compliance problems are as real as transaction costs, and that principles of justice, if they enable people to minimize such problems, can be an ideal response to a very real problem.

Ronald Coase demonstrated transaction cost's significance by modeling an economy that lacks the friction of transaction cost. This was no mistake; it would, however, be a mistake to think solving idealized problems yields approximations of solutions to real problems. It would be almost comical to see Coase's exercise—showing what is efficient in the absence of transaction cost—as showing what is approximately efficient in a world like ours. Nothing of the kind follows. It likewise is almost comical to see Rawls's exercise—showing what is fair in the absence of compliance problems—as showing what is approximately fair in a world like ours. Here too, nothing of the kind follows. In both cases, what is set aside is anything but a detail.

Ignoring feasibility versus ignoring desirability: When we ask whether we are looking at an ideal campground, we can ignore ravines standing between us and that supremely desirable campground. I agree with Estlund (2008: 269) and Cohen (2009: 10) that whether there are ravines between us and the campground bears on whether camping there is feasible, but not on whether camping there would in some sense be desirable. Further, and crucially, the cost of getting there from here can affect whether striving to get there from here is desirable but not whether being there is in some sense desirable per se.

So far, we are all on the same page, but here is the key. In the imagined case, I agree that to ignore ravines is to ignore questions of feasibility, and I agree that we can ignore feasibility and still be discussing an ideal. The fact remains: we abandon anything recognizably ideal if we ignore whether a campground is suitable as a place to camp. If we ignore what will befall us if we get there, we are ignoring not whether *getting there* is *feasible* but whether *being there* is *desirable*.

As mentioned in the chapter on solipsism, Estlund says conceding "that we shouldn't

institute the Carens Market because people won't comply with it, doesn't refute the theory" that people should comply (2011: 217). Estlund adds, "it is doubtful that the content of social justice is sensitive in this way to untoward motivational features of people" (2011: 227).

Untoward? The problem is, we choose how to conceive of justice. We choose a conception from a sea of contenders, most of which are imposters. Whether we see human motivation as "untoward" turns on whether the contender that we chose to *call* justice characteristically induces untoward behavior. If we see that the contender that we want to call justice has that characteristic feature, that is reason to stop calling it justice, or at least to stop calling it ideal. If instituting the Carens Market predictably would bring out the worst in human beings as we know them, the relevant lesson is not that the Carens Market is altogether infeasible but that as an aspiration it is altogether unworthy.[3] It is not a vision of justice.

The Carens Market does not solve a problem; it solves an idealized problem. The lesson is not that we have no way to get there, but that we have no reason to want to.

Some idealists think ignoring compliance problems is ignoring something analogous to whether reaching an ideal campground is feasible. Not so. Ignoring what an incentive structure would lead people to do to each other is ignoring what it would be like to be there. That would be to ignore what is desirable, not what is feasible.

To care about people becoming as good as they can be is to care about whether we are putting them in circumstances that have a record of success in leading people to become as good as they can be. If the incentive structure embodied by the Carens Market is a predictable failure, the fact that we long to call it ideal is no reason to set aside our knowledge that it is not what people need in order to have reason to trust each other.

Note, however, that this is no reason to deny that there are realistic ideals—ideals that experience gives us reason to call ideal. We can even go so far as to provide an abstract general characterization. Namely, incentive-compatible institutional structure is ideal in theory even when not feasible in practice.

To set aside that we live amongst agents—beings who decide for themselves whether to comply—is to set aside the defining problem of political theory. If an institution is ideal in a given setting, it is by virtue of what it leads people to do in that setting. **Keep this in mind: what isn't an ideal incentive structure isn't an ideal institution.** To knowingly choose a bad compliance problem is to knowingly choose a bad institution.

Realism is not conservatism: Conservatism, roughly speaking, is the view that it is all too easy to be overconfident that a change will be an improvement, given that every change we might deliberately make will have more than one effect, more than the intended effect, and further, the effect we don't see coming so often turns out to be the effect that matters. This quick and dirty characterization is enough to make the point that judging a utopian vision according to whether it is a competent response to the human condition is not a way of being conservative. Starting from here is a way of starting, not a way of staying. Realism is an orientation toward progress, not a form of conservatism. To a realist, we need to focus on reality because reality is what we aim to improve.

Note that feasibility here is dynamic. That is, what cannot be done today may one day be within reach. It is realistic to anticipate the ceiling of possibility some day looking different from how it looks today. In 1789, English politician William Wilberforce had no way to muster the votes to abolish England's slave trade, yet it was feasible to work toward a day when England would have the will to abolish it, so that's what he did. We can be biased in an unrealistically conservative as well as an unrealistically radical direction.

Indeed, the former danger seems more pervasive. We underestimate prospects for change more often than we overestimate.[4]

III. WE ARE DIVERSE

Theorizing about how political animals should live could start by observing the extent of disagreement and diversity in human society. One implication of diversity: diversity is only one of many places to start, and where we start matters.

Consider how idiosyncratic and incompatible our individual visions of perfection are, thus how unfit any of them are to be a blueprint for a community. Part of the essence of toleration, of mature adulthood—of being fit to live in a community at all—is acknowledging that our personal visions do not obligate others, indeed, not even if we are so gripped by confirmation bias that we can talk ourselves into believing that our visions cannot reasonably be rejected.

Presupposed by all this—the most primordial political fact of all—is the fact that I am not alone. I live among beings who decide for themselves, not pawns that I move and sacrifice at will. I may feel that people cannot reasonably reject my deepest convictions about justice. But they can, and they know it.

This fact makes politics what it is, and justice what it is.[3]

Consensus is Over-Rated. Some theories make it seem important that we cannot reach consensus on destinations. It is not. What matters is this: under favorable circumstances, we coordinate on norms of traffic management. We have no history of being able to see who has the superior destination. By contrast, we have a robust history of being able to see who has the right of way.

Freedom of religion is an example of the latter; we reached consensus not on what to believe but on who gets to decide. You need not decide whether my choice of religion is a good choice. You need only decide whether it is *my* choice. People saw that they could ignore the most colonial and brutal premises of their own religions and philosophies. What won the day was not a religion so much as people deciding that religion didn't have to come up for debate. There is no good reason not to let everyone decide for themselves.

What grew in the soil of religious freedom was more general than religious toleration. What flourished was liberalism: the idea that we need not presume to involve ourselves in running other people's lives. Our greatest triumphs in learning to live together stem not from agreeing on what is correct but from agreeing to let people decide for themselves. Freedom of speech has a similar point: *not* to get more speech—nor to repress real diversity in the name of faux-diversity—but to stop presuming to decide as a society.

When discussion is not needed, that fact constitutes success in specifying terms of engagement. We make progress by defining jurisdictions that respect people who want and need to share the road, but neither want nor need to share or even justify a destination. No one has to accept being relegated to a category of persons whose destination is less important.

Thriving communities minimize our need to justify our destination to others. Indeed, a traffic management system's utility lies in people not needing to justify themselves. We do not stop at intersections to justify our destinations. We stop because it is someone else's turn. In a healthy society, people's movements constitute a flow of traffic that moves smoothly, by virtue of people reaching consensus not on what their destinations should be so much as on who has the right of way.

Ideally, we want to co-exist peacefully with all of our neighbors, not only the ideal ones. Realistic idealism aims to identify what, if anything, is observably enabling people to

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[3] See Sleat 2014, and Jubb 2012.

thrive under actual conditions, not merely ideal ones. When disagreement is inevitable, a true ideal is to make disagreement non-threatening—to *make it safe to disagree*.

Aim not to minimize disagreement but to minimize the need for agreement. A fully adult political animal's ideal is not to win but to avoid needing to win. Realistic idealism does not delude us into thinking others should be on the same page as we are, and thus avoids cursing us with the illusion of a mandate to bully those who see things differently.

Is there any alternative to consensus as a political aspiration? Is there a realistic ideal? Perhaps it would be something like balance of power. When people do not feel that they can safely abuse those with different views and values, society makes progress.[5]

It is (a not quite realistic) ideal that political power be justified to all. We could make a joke of this ideal by saying we need only justify ourselves to "reasonable" citizens. If we instead take the ideal seriously, we start by acknowledging that respecting this ideal in practice involves minimizing how unjustified a regime's exercise of power is. How? One legitimate way to do this is to minimize the cost of exit.[6] That is hardly a total victory, but approximate success marks a society as genuinely liberal.

We were taught that the central problem of political philosophy is the justification of political authority, which is the right to coerce. But if we are trying to justify coercion, then we have already given up on ideals. There is nothing utopian in the thought that, ideally, we would not mind leaving each other in peace. Perhaps seeing the justification of coercion as the central problem of political philosophy is a big, unnecessary mistake, analogous to the mistake that we are warned against by the cliché "hard cases make bad law." Good law is above all a response to the human condition in normal cases. Perhaps the same is true of political philosophy. We could have treated, as central, questions like this: what enables good neighbors to be good neighbors? What do neighbors need from each other? What makes peaceful neighborhoods peaceful? How have some societies managed to make it normal that people mind their own business, and avoid getting in each other's way?

What enables most people to be so amazingly good at knowing what the people around them will count as minding their own business? Notably, theorizing does not help. We navigate the terrain of respect for separate persons with a compass far older than any theory. When deciding which car to try to drive home at the end of the day, we never consult a theory of justice we spent all day perfecting, except in self-mockery. Theory is not what teaches us

how to avoid triggering people's sense of injustice.

IV. JUSTICE IS NOT A PEAK

As noted in the chapter on ideal theory, Rawls's greatest work opens with the thought that 'justice is the first virtue of institutions' (1999a: 3). Rawls's sentence resonates, but it is not right. Historically, we make progress when we acknowledge that justice is *not* the first virtue. The first virtue of social institutions is that they enable us to be neighbors. Being neighbors is not everything, but it is a start. In practice, the first thing we need from social institutions is a settled framework of mutual expectation that keeps the peace well enough to foster conditions that enable society to be, in the most rudimentary and non-theory-laden sense, a cooperative venture for mutual benefit.[7]

Institutions with this virtue make it safe for us to show up and become a community, contributing services in reasonable expectation of reciprocation. Institutions with this virtue set the table for society to become the cooperative venture that Rawls wants it to be. They lay a foundation for a solidarity that frees us to brainstorm about what is fair—starting from here.

When we settle disputes, we don't get resolution by deciding that our vision has a right to be colonial, and that we can condescendingly dismiss rival visions as unreasonable. Instead, real resolution starts by aiming for real resolution. To be in the grip of a vision—*any* vision— is problematic. What we need is not to envision but to listen. That is, we need politics.

Peaks are not real, but pits are. We each have our own theories and visions about the nature of justice: perfect justice. But our respective visions of perfect justice are too personal and idiosyncratic to be a basis for moral life in a social world. It is implausible that justice is *any* of our idiosyncratic peaks. None could ever be good at managing traffic among diverse people.

We would need to have an ideal in mind just in case there were a destination such that arriving at that summit is just, while arriving anywhere else is not. Yet, there is another and more realistic way of seeing it: justice is not a place (or distribution) we need to get to. Justice is not a metaphysical property, except insofar as it represents an absence of properties that make for injustice. Conceptions of justice depicting justice as a peak are theoretical constructs. Pits of injustice by contrast are matters of all-too-familiar experience.

Justice in practice arguably has no essence, which would explain why we still have no uncontroversial articulation of such essence. Specifying the essence of justice turned out to be

like specifying the essence of 'non-circle'. The closest we come is to say justice (essentially) is absence of injustice. Justice is about avoiding pits of slavery, persecution, and subjugation.

Consider this: Something needs to be done—that is, we need to be somewhere other than where we are—when and only when our situation has features that make for injustice.

A noteworthy virtue of this perspective is that defining justice primarily in terms of "Thou shalt nots" (thereby making justice revolve around an absence of properties that make for injustice) treats justice as limiting what we can do with other people's lives rather than as dictating what we must do with our own. It makes justice a process, not an outcome. It does not treat justice as the end that justifies whatever means necessary; instead, it treats justice as applying more than anything to the means we choose in pursuit of ends of our own.

Justice so conceived is compatible with liberalism. It leaves moral agents with room to breathe, free to live lives of their own, which is what justice must be to be taken seriously as a practical guide to living well as the social and political animals we are. Resources we spend wrestling society toward our imaginary peak and away from someone else's are wasted. Insisting that justice is a peak, more specifically *our* peak, gets us into pits, not out of them.

We were taught (perhaps ultimately by Aristotle) to conceive of progress as a climb toward a pinnacle of perfection. There can be no upward slope without a peak. In the field of biology, since Darwin, the idea of a species having an Aristotelian telos had to give way to a different understanding: namely, populations adapt over time to an ecological niche if the niche is relatively stable across generations. Yet, the process of adaptation is not tracking any ultimate destination. There is no peak toward which gene pools climb. We believe ideals must be pinnacles at the end of history for the same reason we would once have believed that planetary orbits must be circular. Namely, that's what we were taught to believe by people whose teachings were not grounded in observation.

To be sure, there is such a thing as climbing. My objective here is not to debunk climbing but to draw attention to what climbing is in the real world. When societies climb, it is not toward a peak. When we climb toward a more just society, we climb toward an expanding, not a converging, frontier of possibility.

Ideally, societies enable people to avoid pits, pursuing their personal peaks in their own way, ideally at no one else's expense.[8] The peak metaphor misrepresents this aspect of reality. It may also fail to represent an essentially political element of political ideals: namely, political ideals pertain to process. Political ideals are about being in a position to climb; they

are not about being on an imaginary pinnacle where our story comes to an end and there is no more climbing to be done.

None of this is to deny that there is such a thing as justice. Rather, justice need not be equated with your convictions about justice. Justice need not be equated with your ideals defeating those of your rivals. On this point, Gaus (2016) is the one who gets it right. I agree with him, and I say that without needing to assume or imply that he entirely agrees with me. He and I have worked on this for a very long time, and have talked many times, but whether we agree is not the point. Instead, we agree that agreement is over-rated. What we can live with, what we can respect despite having diverging convictions—these things are under-rated.

V. CONCLUSION

(a) We are political animals. We live in a strategic world. Which institutions are realistically ideal for political animals depends on which incentive structures are ideal.

(b) We should beware of *starting* with ideals. Instead, start with problems. We were taught to see theory as grounding practice and therefore as needing to come first. In practice, theories are answers; questions come first. Theorizing as a process spirals between articulating problems and solutions. Introspectively, it will seem that before we were reasoning about one, there was a previous stage of reasoning about the other.[9] Inevitably, it feels right to ask "to theorize about *x*, don't you need some conception of *y*?" Suppose observation inevitably is theory-laden. (That very thought is so obviously theory-laden, no?) On the other hand, some theories (including some ideal theories) are *observation*-laden. Those are the theories we have reason to take seriously. Those theories began life as responses to something real.

(c) We should avoid solving idealized problems. Theorizing about what *would* be ideal if only the facts were different is a variation on the idealist theme, but not a realistic one. Call this hypothetical idealism, as opposed to real idealism.

(d) Acknowledge that your reasons for seeing the world as you do are not compelling. Theorize about a world of people who do not see it your way, and who are perfectly aware that there is no reason why they should. The key to a flourishing society is not minimizing disagreement so much as minimizing the need for agreement.

Honestly taking into account the fact of diversity comes down to asking: 'what terms of engagement are appropriate for people who do not even agree on which terms of engagement are appropriate?' The question is not cute. It is the crux of the human condition.

Rushing to treat our own intuitions about perfect justice as if they were rationally compelling is a paradigmatic way of failing to rise to the level of seriousness that justice demands.

(e) Question the platitude that justice is the first virtue of social institutions. In practice, what a theorist calls justice will be his or her personal vision. Among people who see things differently, the first virtue of social institutions is that they curb the hunger to impose a vision.

Social structures that make it easier to resolve and avoid conflict go a long way toward fostering society as cooperative venture, where people learn to trust each other far enough, and to adjust their expectations far enough, to constitute themselves as a kingdom of ends.

Over-specialized theorists will rush to get to familiar ground by pointing out ways in which a society can be thriving yet not just. What suffices to resolve conflict is not enough to guarantee fairness. Of course! Nevertheless, a resolution that stops the fighting will tend to do so partly by virtue of resonating with what those involved deem fair enough.

Some societies have a towering liberal virtue—the virtue of letting people pursue hopes and dreams of their own, in ways that enable them simply to accept each other as neighbors. Those societies are not guaranteed to be just, but guaranteeing justice is not what gives those societies their point. What gives those societies their point is, those are the ones that have a *chance* to be just.

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[1] For a kindred view, see Hope 2010: 135.

[2] Consider Jenann Ismael's work on the role of idealization in physics (2016).

[3] We can say the ideal here is not bare instituting but a conjunction of instituting and complying. The Carens ideal is a conjunction of "work doesn't pay" and "workers keep acting as if it does." To Estlund, the fact that we should not bring about the first conjunct when the second is false has no bearing on whether the conjunction as a whole is ideal. But what if realizing the first conjunct is what *renders* the second one false?

[4] Was Wilberforce over-confident in the justness of his cause? I think not, but that may be the wrong question. As I understand, Wilberforce's opponents were over-confident in the justness of their cause, as majorities usually are. Majorities talk themselves into feeling righteous when they bully those with minority views. To complicate things, majorities are not always wrong, and may even be right most of the time. But when majorities are wrong, and are holding back progress, they will be the last to know.

[5] Of course, liberal politics does not simply leave things where they were. It manages traffic (dictating that people get to choose their own religion, for example). It does not treat all destinations as equally valuable. It does try to make sure no one is left facing a light that never turns green.

[6] For more on the pivotal moral role of the right of exit, see Pennington 2017.

[7] This is how I read Williams (2005).

[8] We exaggerate how compelling our personal peaks can be to others, and thus exaggerate how central a place our personal peaks can have as organizing principles for a diverse polis. Still, for all that, they might remain in some way meaningful and relevant. Honestly, I do not know.

[9] Philp (2012) has more to say about this.