

Review of: "Duality, Liberty, and Realism in Entangled Political Economy"

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I have some reservations about this piece. First, the Abstract is too abstract to be useful. Second, sentences such as "Entangled political economy [EPE] sees the protection of liberalism from two perspectives" are problematic insofar as entangled political economy cannot see anything, advocates of the approach do. The core claims of EPE need to be stated at the outset. I find it strange that the authors defend the thesis that "if one considers the muscular problem of how to minimize coercion as opposed to the sentimental problem of maximizing liberty, then the problem's solution hinges on institutional design as opposed to allocative choice". This is surely an idealistic position to take insofar as the reader must conjure some kind of Philosopher King to design the institutions no? Otherwise, we must hold an idealistic faith in the capacity of institutional designers to have liberty at heart, which is at the very least empirically problematic and cannot stand as an axiomatic claim. Even then, is what's at stake protecting liberalism or protecting (negative) liberty? The paper is littered with gnomish pronouncements, for example "Rather, rational and reasonable people always reach compromises". Again, this is an empirically indefensible claim, so undermines the authors' claim to realism. The paper could begin simply with a slightly expanded version of the final paragraph of section 2.. Again, a problematic idealism emerges with the statement "Given predetermined preferences and constraints, Ockham's razor dictates that we reduce society to an anonymous ideal type, namely the representative individual." A very strange step for a realist to reduce society to an anonymous ideal type. Realists to my knowledge study history, context, and actual actors doing things to one another, not abstractions or ideal types. The realist moves from the particular to the general not the other way around. Fixing this problem in conceptualization would I think lead to similar conclusions, but my main issue with this paper is that the conclusions are well-known to everyone outside of libertarian/neoclassical circles and have been for centuries.