

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

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This is an intriguing article. It deals with a central question for anyone interested in liberty, which is how liberty and coercion relate. In a sense, it addresses the question of whether there is an optimal level of coercion. Such a view is critical of libertarian perspectives which see self-governance as enabling prosperity absent a state. It also embeds in the analysis political perspectives on realism, which emphasizes that governments are motivated by what benefits those who hold political power.

There are some ways that the contributions might be made clearer. One is to perhaps recognize that the duality approach is a core of the Max U approach to economics. Entangled political economy allows for more complex relationships, especially between the political and economic realms. One might even ask why we need to consider duality, except for that it is part of the formalism that has dominated economics.

Second, and related to the point above, it would help to clarify that Entangled Political Economy is something of a bridge between economic approaches to politics and political science approaches to politics. Realism, as a theory, embraces history, uncertainty, personality, etc. In that regard, it is like the Old Institutionalism of Veblen. But that view has largely been absent in economics. Hence, a positive statement that the Old Institutionalists and political scientists interested in Realism have some similar concerns would be useful in demonstrating what is unique about Entangled Political Economy.

Third, this article reminded me of WH Hutt's constitutional political economy, which focused on the design of institutions to ensure liberty. Hutt could be termed a realist in economics, as he focused on the economy and social system as it is, not in some idealized sense.

All of this is meant to be constructive, not critical. This article ought to be applauded for pushing the boundaries of economics and pushing back against both libertarians who think people can do without the state, as well as relating Political Realism to the fundamental problem of economic liberties. While there is a rich tradition in political science or political philosophy that considers Realism, there is not nearly as much that relates Realism to economic freedom and liberty. The latter is relegated to economics, or is criticized. Or to put it another way, this article lays the foundation for making clear that Political Realism is not simply part of political science, but is a defining feature of Public Choice scholarship in the tradition of James Buchanan, Geoffrey Brennan, and others in the Virginia School. Realism in economics, and Public Choice, is sorely underappreciated in political science, in my view. This paper is an important step



in overcoming these disciplinary divides. If it gets more political scientists to read Wagner and Buchanan – to seriously read, not to read to criticize – then it will have done a great service.