undefined "system." Wright's work helps us move forward to a number of new categories of change. A close look at evolving institutional change opens the possibility of moving beyond the avoidance of larger systemic design questions, both in the economic realm and also in terms of democratic political theory. Doing so is ultimately likely to add both rigor and new energies to the long term "evolutionary reconstruction" of our nation. We need to know clearly where we are going and where we want to go. And we need to begin to face and debate matters of structure, principle, and theory now and as we go.

Emancipatory Politics, Emancipatory Political Science: On Erik Olin Wright's *Envisioning Real Utopias*

Thad Williamson
University of Richmond, USA

This article examines Erik Olin Wright's concept of an "emancipatory social science." I consider two key questions: First, whether "emancipatory social science" makes sense as the basis for a systematic research program that might be embraced by political theorists and political scientists; and second, what additions or emendations to the concept, as presented by Wright in *Envisioning Real Utopias*[82] (henceforth "*Real Utopias*"), political science might offer. The thrust of my argument is as follows: Wright's framework of an emancipatory social science does in fact lay the basis for a systematic research program that progressive and left political scientists could and should take up. Moreover, Wright's method of surveying actual social practices as a way to consider what sorts of alternative arrangements we might consider bears a family resemblance to Aristotle's search for the best regime in *The Politics*.[83] But consideration of *politics* as a partially autonomous realm of activity generally takes a back seat in *Real Utopias*, and consideration of the specific politics of our time and place is almost totally absent. Given the purposes of the book, this is understandable and perhaps necessary, but *Real Utopias*'s relative inattention to these questions leaves plenty of room for political scientists to make vital contributions to an emancipatory social science. Here I argue that arguments for emancipatory, "real utopian" approaches can and should be connected to increasingly vocal criticisms of American "democracy" and its problem-solving capacity articulated by mainstream political scientists and political theorists. In a short concluding section I consider *Real Utopias*'s relevance beyond the academy as a political intervention, particularly in light of the Occupy Wall Street ("#OWS") movement of autumn 2011.

Defining Emancipatory Social Science

What is emancipatory social science? Wright says that such a social science involves three principal components: first, "elaborating a systematic diagnosis

[82] Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*.
[83] Aristotle, *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*, ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

and critique of the world as it exists"; second, "envisioning viable alternatives"; third, "understanding the obstacles, possibilities, and dilemmas of transformation."[84] We soon learn that the first task, diagnosis and critique, necessarily invokes normative standards of evaluation. Wright's critique of capitalism is taken up from the point of view of what he calls a "radical democratic egalitarian" conception of social and political justice, premised on the ideas that "all people [sh]ould have broadly equal access to the necessary material and social means to live flourishing lives" (social justice) and that "all people [sh]ould have broadly equal access to the necessary means to participate meaningfully in decisions about things which affect their lives" (political justice).[85] Wright goes on to specify that political justice involves both individual freedom (ability to make choices that affect one's own life) and a share in collective freedom (having an equal voice in collective choice that affects communal conditions).

This framework allows for an expansive view of what is to count as "emancipatory social science." Plausibly, in this view, discrete empirical studies of what Wright terms the "facts of oppression," or which attempt to show "how American society works" count as contributing to the work of emancipatory social science. Wright himself is engaged in work of this kind.[86]

But an important implication of Wright's view is that not just *any* kind of discrete empirical work should count as emancipatory. A study of, say, the marginal effects of increases or decreases in welfare expenditure on a recipient's likelihood of successfully finding employment, or of the marginal effects of minimum wage increases on total employment, both concern problems of poverty and issues facing poor people. But such studies are not inherently emancipatory for two reasons. First, the research is generally carried out within the assumed confines of the existing political-economic system. Second, the implicit purpose of such research often is to assist the managers of that system in making policy that better advances their goals. It is not to effect an emancipation of the welfare recipients or minimum-wage workers, or a transformation of the socio-economic conditions which create large numbers of poor people, but rather, at best, to effect some gradual improvement in the lives of such persons without having to challenge the fundamentals of the political and social order. In contrast, I take it that an emancipatory social science of *critique* must take as its premises both the normative aims Wright endorses as well as the view that an alternative is possible and achievable. To have an emancipatory character, descriptive work examining "how the system works" must proceed from the premise that alternative, fundamentally different social arrangements are available.

The work of criticism is one dimension of emancipatory social science. A second, equally important dimension is the notion of developing a science *of* emancipation—that is, a systematic way of thinking about what alternatives are possible, desirable, *and* available to us. At first glance, the use of the term "science" in this context is unsettling: it seems to call up echoes of Marxist determinism, and

[84] Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 10.
[85] Ibid., 12.
[86] See Erik Olin Wright and Joel Rogers, *American Society: How it Really Works* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010).

the idea that with sufficient knowledge we can predict how history will—or must—move. But in fact Wright's aims are very different. He explicitly rejects the traditional Marxist conception of an inevitable collapse of capitalism to be effected as a result of capitalism's internal crises, as well as the growing power of a revolutionary working class. Rather, what Wright is up to is a systemic sorting of different ideas for possible futures: looking around at the world as it is, and seeing what interesting experiences, experiments, and partial precedents we can find that might help us to forge a realistic utopia.

Aristotle's Politics and Wright's Emancipatory Social Science—A Comparison

The spirit of this enterprise carries considerable analogy to the kind of political science pioneered by Aristotle in *The Politics*.[87] In that book, Aristotle engages in open-ended consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of different kinds of political arrangements, as well as consideration of the stability and instability of different sorts of constitutions. Aristotle uses the word "constitution" to refer to the specific mechanisms of political governance ("distribution of offices"), but he analyzes these mechanisms in conjunction with the system of property and social practices that define particular social orders. Like Wright, Aristotle is taken by the idea that functional, desirable constitutions are usually hybrids, and, like Wright's, Aristotle's judgments about the disadvantages of different regimes as well as the nature of the "best" regime are informed by explicit normative criteria.

The differences between Aristotle's political science and Wright's effort to discover emancipatory possibilities for twenty-first century societies are equally instructive, however. First, Aristotle's view of the political community is shaped by his ontology of human nature, which includes features widely rejected today (such as the assumption of patriarchal control of the household).[88] Like Aristotle, Wright is committed to the idea of human flourishing, but his utopian thoughts do not hinge on the idea of realizing a putatively natural order.

Second, Aristotle's *Politics* involves the study of city-states. Wright in contrast is considering a political-economic system, capitalism, within which the state is embedded. Wright's view thus reflects the classic sociological understanding of the state as a subset of capitalism, rather than as a wholly autonomous entity that has the supreme power in shaping the life of the community. To be sure, the state is still an important part of thinking about contemporary utopias, and Wright devotes considerable energy to the questions of both how to create more democratic states and how state power might be constructively used in shaping a new system. Further, Aristotle himself considers questions of property and its distribution, and makes clear that the question of class and social power is critical in describing how polities operate. The idea that political power is closely tied to social class is central to Aristotle's thinking about politics,[89] but he did not have to grapple with the idea that the state could be dominated by the internal logic of a system of accumulation and economic growth.

---

[87] Aristotle, *The Politics*.

[88] Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 5–6.

[89] This is not to suggest that Aristotle's conception of class groupings maps neatly onto the familiar analysis of class relations within capitalism provided by Marx.

Third, whereas for Aristotle regime stability is the elusive goal, for Wright regime stability is in a sense the problem to be overcome. Aristotle can assume that coups, revolutions, and other modes of regime change are as common as grass; while it is important to study why they happen and how they can be prevented, the internal mechanics of such change requires no special explanation. Similarly, the method of how a new constitution comes into being is straightforward: at the revolutionary moment there is a lawgiver (or lawgivers) who designs the constitutional architecture. Wright, in contrast, needs to show that change is possible within a system that usually appears fundamentally stable, and/or that the apparent stability of the system is either illusionary or temporary. But this observation also illustrates the deep similarity between what Aristotle and Wright are up to. For both thinkers, the effort to engage in systemic classification of different kinds of regimes is informed by a sense that the future is open-ended, and not necessarily determined by the limits of existing institutions.

Beyond Dichotomies: The Socialist Compass

While Wright is very clear that a realistic utopia that realizes radical democratic goals must be a hybrid system, his account does not rest upon a dichotomous specification of what constitutes a "socialist" as opposed to a "capitalist" regime. There is social power, statist power, and economic power in any hybrid system, and the character of the system overall depends on the relative balance of power between them at any given moment. Political-economic systems are thus seen to lie on a three-dimensional continuum, with "socialism," "statism," and "capitalism" serving as ideal types rather than as literal descriptions of any actual regime. Wright then goes on to provide seven different models of how the economy, state, and civil society might be arranged so as to promote democratic control over the economy: statist socialism, social democratic economic regulation, associational democracy, "social capitalism," cooperative market economy, social economy, and participatory socialism.[90] Importantly, Wright does not see these models as mutually exclusive, at least not at this stage of development.

This view can be contrasted with conceptions of "socialism" which associate the concept with some specific set of ownership arrangements. For social power to predominate in the economy, effective control of the bulk of financial and productive capital must be socialized. Wright explicitly agrees on this point,[91] but I take theorists of full-blown participatory socialism or "economic democracy" such as David Schweickart and Gar Alperovitz to be suggesting (or assuming) that there are decisive tipping points between one kind of system and another, and that the image of a hybrid is potentially misleading.[92] In terms of the seven models provided by Wright, Schweickart and Alperovitz would likely deny that social democratic regulation that does not alter control of capital is an emancipatory mode of politics. A system in which capitalist interests control the bulk of productive capital will tend to reproduce itself and place strong limits on how

[90] Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, pp. 131–144.
[91] Ibid., 121.
[92] See Gar Alperovitz, *America Beyond Capitalism*, 2nd ed. (Boston, MA: Democracy Collaborative, 2011); and David Schweickart, *After Capitalism*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011).

much social-*izing* of capital and society is possible; creating a stable social-*ist* economy and society would require ownership and control patterns over capital that decisively tipped in favor of social interests. Crossing that tipping point into decisively different patterns would of course involve what Wright terms "ruptural" change. Wright might reply that this critique of regulatory strategies taken alone is accurate, but that such strategies might have a useful role to play in conjunction with the other strategies, many of which do target control of capital.

In practice, the differences between Wright's pluralistic account of what useful social-ist politics consists of and Alperovitz's own vision of a "Pluralist Commonwealth" and the pragmatic politics needed to advance it are, in my view, small. But there is one notable difference: whether there is in fact value in offering (like Alperovitz or Schweickart) a fully worked out conception of what an alternative political-economic system would look like—a very clear answer to the question "if you don't like capitalism, what is it you want?"—rather than simply a somewhat open-ended list of emancipatory strategies that assumes that these strategies might evolve in different ways in different places as a result of specific local conditions and the contingency of politics. The issue here is whether Wright's "Socialist Compass" is sufficient to inspire individuals and guide social movements seeking to build a more social-ist economy, or whether a more specific "Socialist Architecture" of the kind provided by Alperovitz and Schweickart is required (especially if ruptural change is ever to be achieved).

Real Utopias and American Politics

In considering the relevance of Wright's work for American politics today, it will be helpful to introduce one more Aristotelian distinction: the distinction between critiquing a state on the basis of its departure from the best sort of regime, and critiquing a state on the basis of its departure from its own stated or intended values. This distinction is quite relevant in discussing Wright's work, because Wright has framed the project of emancipatory social science in terms of ideals, and quite demanding ones at that: radical democratic egalitarian conceptions of political and social justice. Wright is prepared to jettison existing features of the American political constitution, for instance, if this is necessary to achieve social transformation. An alternative approach, however, might begin with the assumption that here in the United States there are deep commitments to a certain kind of political constitution (for instance, federalist rather than unitary government) and a certain kind of political regime, namely one which permits and encourages the institution of private property. One might also add further assumptions about features of political and social culture (that is, "Americans admire the rich because they wish to join them") that might be thought to be relatively permanent. Such an analysis then asks, given this history, this starting point, and the continued strength of these institutions and this set of ideas, what ought to be done to better realize this system's stated values and goals?

Wright's analysis suggests that the most fundamental characteristic of American society is not its constitutional tradition or particular political culture, but rather the operation of a political-economic system—capitalism—that he regards as unjust and severely limiting of democracy. Hence, it seems fairly clear that Wright is—must be—committed to what Aristotle would term an external critique of the American regime, as opposed to an internal critique that America is not living up to its own

founding ideals. But to make that observation is also to illustrate what an uphill task "emancipation," so described, faces in the United States: it seems that it would involve not only forging new institutions based on different principles than capitalism, but also treating the American tradition of constitutional law and the characteristic political cultures of the United States more as enemies than allies. When we consider some recent decisions of the United States Supreme Court that have lent support to advocates of political oligarchy, perhaps that is the only honest position that can be taken by someone with Wright's normative commitments. But surely if there is any route to emancipation it must, at least in its initial stages, draw on ideas or ideals widely (not necessarily universally) held in the political culture, and/or on *new* ideas (or new formulations of ideas) that have a reasonable hope of attracting the support of a considerable portion of the population.

Wright provides a generalized account of how to envision a structural alternative to capitalism. He provides almost no discussion of the specifically *American* obstacles to developing such an alternative. I have in mind here not just the weakness of labor (which Wright notes), but questions of race, of our distinctively federalist system, of our sprawling land use patterns and the politics this form of development characteristically produces, of the extreme ideological hostility to not just "socialism" but the state itself, of the relentless pro-corporate legal philosophy now governing the country via the Supreme Court, of the cult of the Founding Fathers and the treatment of the Constitution as a work of quasi-divine eternal wisdom, and of the simplistic "everyday libertarian" ideology that has a strong pull on the political thinking of many Americans.[93] In short, the kinds of issues that preoccupy students of American political science and that are typically highlighted in our work do not take center stage in Wright's account. To be fair, Wright discusses many particularities of American society in his excellent critique *American Society: How it Really Works*, co-authored with Joel Rogers, so we can be certain Wright is not ignorant of these questions. Yet, these peculiar features of the American landscape play almost no role in the discussion offered in *Real Utopias*. It seems hard to believe that Wright thinks that radical social change, if it happens, will happen identically in different kinds of capitalist societies. The more likely explanation is that he thinks he has identified generalizable *problematics* that democratic egalitarians in recognizably capitalist societies will have to come to terms with, and also suggests a number of ideas about empowerment in the state and economy that have general applicability for the direction of future efforts. The work of figuring out how this problematic might be addressed in any particular society is thus necessarily the work of another book, another set of analyses.

This is a reasonable explanation for why *Real Utopias* does not dwell on the particular circumstances of the US or any other capitalist society. Yet it needs to be said that we need that follow-up book—I think of it perhaps as Erik Olin Wright meeting the latter-day Robert Dahl—as urgently as we need the overarching framework Wright has put on the table.[94] Indeed, some learned people have

[93] See Liam Murphy and Thomas Nagel, *The Myth of Ownership: Taxes and Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[94] Gar Alperovitz, "Neither Revolution Nor Reform: A New Strategy for the Left," *Dissent* (Fall 2011), provides one such analysis, focused on banking issues. See also Robert Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

already come to the conclusion that the United States is now a land "beyond justice," a country where democratic and egalitarian aspirations have simply lost out to more potent ideologies and stronger social forces. I am very hesitant to accept that conclusion, in part out of deep respect for those who have struggled in the past in this country for social and economic justice and created an indigenous liberation tradition, and in part because there is no hope of the global community addressing its shared problems (especially the climate change problem) without a sea change in American politics and policy. Yet, at first, second, and third glances, there seems to be much to the view that the US has now been so captured by corporate interests, and its populace so anesthetized to corporate rule and uninterested in radical politics, that persons interested in building a model of a democratic, egalitarian society should give up the ghost and focus their efforts elsewhere.[95] What signs or portents can be pointed to that might help us believe that even in the US, and maybe especially in the US, constructive steps towards radical systemic change can be taken, and that social agents and social movements might emerge determined to take—or forge—those steps?

Towards an Emancipatory, Problem-solving Political Science

In the final sections of this article, I consider possible answers to that question from two vantage points: that of progressive political scientists interested in taking up the framework of emancipatory social science, and that of on-the-ground radical activists, as exemplified by those in the OWS movement.

Wright's account of social change makes clear that he believes symbiotic strategies—strategies aimed at solving widely shared problems while also enhancing the position and power of non-elites (or the "working class")—have a crucial role to play in utopian politics, even though they do not directly displace elites or alter the basic terms of the system. This insight might be fruitfully married to the deepened, almost panicked, concern voiced in recent years by many political theorists and political scientists about both the weakened condition of American democracy and its seeming inability to meaningfully address major problems.

The James Madison Award Lecture at the 2011 APSA Meetings in Seattle, given by democratic theorist Jane Mansbridge, is an excellent statement of this view. Mansbridge's talk, "On the Importance of Getting Things Done," begins by observing that American politics has entered a period of "drift," in which it is unable to address "problems vaster than any that James Madison conceived," in particular global climate change.[96] This incapacity is directly related, Mansbridge argues, to both the growing concentration of wealth and income over the past four decades and the greater ease with which such money and capital is converted into political influence, in a mutually reinforcing cycle. This critique is familiar,

[95] This view is increasingly common among progressive political theorists. See for instance the highly pessimistic assessment of Sheldon Wolin in his *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[96] Jane Mansbridge, "On the Importance of Getting Things Done," James Madison Lecture, given at the Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, Seattle, 2011. Published in *PS: Political Science and Politics* 45 (January 2012), pp. 1–8. Quote from p. 1.

but the interesting move Mansbridge makes is insisting that a democratic theory of *resistance* to these trends, while quite prevalent within academic political theory, is inadequate to meet them. Addressing both the practical problems before us and the underlying structural deficiencies of current democratic practice necessarily will require a positive theory of *democratic action*—that is, an account of how things might actually get done in a democratically legitimate manner. Such an account cannot shy away from the reality that *coercion*—the use of state power—is a necessary ingredient of democratic action (particularly when the aim is to rein in or transform corporate power).

Mansbridge's account, read in light of Wright's work, suggests the path an emancipatory *political* science might take as a research program. Mansbridge's emphasis on problem-solving and getting things done invites not just a critique of the political status quo, but also creative and emancipatory thinking about what "real utopian" solutions to these problems would entail. The real payoff from such thinking is in showing that "utopian" approaches—that is, approaches that incorporate a redistribution of power and wealth as a central component—are actually more realistic approaches to solving a given problem than proposed solutions that leave the current structures of capitalism in place.

A paradigmatic example is that of climate change. At a broad level, coping with climate change and achieving large-scale reductions in carbon emissions are difficult if not impossible to square with an economy predicated on continual growth; but movement towards a "steady-state" economy would obviously require a significant departure from capitalism, and it would (paradoxically) require that citizens be offered more rather than less economic security in order to undercut pressures towards growth. (When a significant number of citizens are economically insecure, that makes the argument that growth is needed in order to generate the resources needed to satisfy the needs of the insecure politically attractive.) So, movement towards something like a guaranteed income for individuals and households is probably a precondition of building support for a less growth-oriented economy. Likewise, stabilizing the economic bases of cities is critically linked both to making central cities more attractive and stemming carbon-intensive sprawl and to building political support at the urban and regional levels for strong sustainability policies. Stabilizing cities economically, in turn, implies a shift away from a reliance on corporate forms of investment to more place-based, and, likely, more democratically organized, forms of capital that will be rooted in particular places for the long haul.

This form of argumentation—both showing that redistributions of wealth and power are needed to solve widely acknowledged problems, *and* providing examples and ideas on how to carry out such solutions in practice—offers the potential of a fusion between Mansbridge's emphasis on getting things done and Wright's real utopianism. What is critical here—to avoid eliding real utopianism into mere policy analysis—is to distinguish clearly among three types of inquiry: problem-solving for its own sake (conventional policy analysis); problem-solving in ways guided by the lens of some version of democratic egalitarianism (for example, policy analysis that explicitly prioritizes the needs of the least well off); and problem-solving in ways that redistribute power, create new, or reform existing, institutional arrangements in a more egalitarian direction, and incorporate radical democratic alternatives as a central part of the solution. We might call this type of fusion a

"Symbiotic Plus" strategy, in that it follows much of the same logic of Wright's symbiotic strategy but more directly incorporates the type of radical democratic alternatives associated with the interstitial strategy. Underlying this idea is the view that progressive political scientists, rather than holing up in a corner to discuss utopian theories quietly among themselves, ought to boldly engage with and challenge mainstream policy analysts who simply look for better solutions within the status quo. This means taking seriously the imperative of finding effective solutions to real-world problems while also unashamedly advancing real utopian strategies as an integral part of such solutions.

Real Utopias and the Utopian Moment

Between the original iteration of this symposium as an APSA panel in September 2011 and its final version in December, something unexpected happened: the emergence in American cities, starting with New York, of an ongoing protest movement offering a new frame for understanding the politics and economics of our time: the division between the financial and political elites said to be controlling the political-economic system in their own interest and that of the "99%" of ordinary persons disempowered and (often) disadvantaged by this system. In short order, the movement took on global proportions and focused media and political attention on both economic and political inequality, and showed that a large proportion of the American public is sympathetic to populist, even radical, critiques of the existing order.

The movement also has been a fascinating experiment in combining direct, face-to-face democracy with modern communication tools to reach a global audience. In his contribution to this symposium, Craig Borowiak rightly notes the role of creativity, invention, and spontaneity in both the Occupy movement and in social change more generally. Nonetheless, by the end of 2011 it was increasingly clear that to make the transition from (in Mansbridge's terms) momentary resistance to enduring movement, some sort of coherent strategy would need to be developed. One way to evaluate the significance of Wright's *Real Utopias* is by asking whether the basic framework of change it offers could be usable and useful to actual activists on the ground seeking to develop strategies for pursuing long-term, fundamental change.

The answer to that question, in my view, is overwhelmingly "yes"—and not just because it offers a trenchant critique of capitalism as well as a wealth of important information about practical alternatives. Its greatest value is in offering an account and explanation of how anarchist, social democratic, and revolutionary minded people might be friends, and come to see themselves as part of a common political effort. The Occupy movement has included all three orientations, sometimes in uneasy tension with one another. In discussions with and engagement in both my local movement (Occupy Richmond) and the national movement, I have generally seen an extraordinary degree of tolerance and open-mindedness. But I have also seen occasional signs of political purism—for instance, the insistence of some radicals that the movement be described as "anti-capitalist" as opposed to "populist" or "anti-plutocratic," that the first group of people to start occupying Wall Street were the true prophets whose views and practices should carry extra weight, and that those left liberals who tried to engage the Occupiers and use the moment to put pressure

on Barack Obama were illegitimately trying to capture or water down the movement.

Wright's book strongly argues against putting any particular political strategy or orientation on a pedestal, and against making the mistake of creating false dichotomies between different modalities of political action. Pursuing interstitial strategies—directly creating alternatives—is essential work, work compatible with an anarchist orientation. Symbiotic strategies—aimed at implementing practical reforms and redistributing power in the process—also are a necessary part of any evolution towards a social-ist alternative. Finally, there is also a role for analyses showing the need, desirability, and feasibility of replacing capitalism with fundamentally different arrangements—that is, the rupturalist or revolutionary strategy—even if such strategies seem quixotic in the short run. In my view, having some clear picture of the revolutionary alternative in mind—not just a compass, but a clearer destination point—is critical in evaluating what *kinds* of interstitial and symbiotic strategies should be pursued at a given moment. (A challenging question is whether it is possible for movement participants to have meaningful discussions about long-term destination points in a non-doctrinaire fashion.)

In short, among its many other contributions, *Real Utopias* offers a blueprint for a twenty-first century left that is internally tolerant, not overrun by sectarian factionalism, and capable of recognizing the value and importance of pursuing multiple political strategies on very different tracks, all at the same time. At the same time, consonant with Mansbridge's emphasis on the need for a theory of democratic action, Wright's work takes us far beyond a politics of resistance and a mere celebration of what Sheldon Wolin famously termed "fugitive democracy."[97] Instead, *Real Utopias* offers a compelling framework for a politics of the long haul in the United States. In the places where that framework is necessarily incomplete, political scientists should join in the task of filling it in.

Reply to Comments on Envisioning Real Utopias

Erik Olin Wright
University of Wisconsin, USA

The contributors to this symposium—Craig Borowiak, Mark Kaswan, J.S. Maloy, Gar Alperovitz and Steve Dubb, and Thad Williamson—have raised a range of interesting and thoughtful issues in their generous discussion of my book, *Envisioning Real Utopias*.[98] In my comments here I will focus on three clusters of issues they discuss: (1) Gaps in my discussion of real utopian institutional proposals; (2) Limits in my account of transformation and strategy; (3) Problems in the ideological resonance of my critique of capitalism and my vision of alternatives for motivating people to struggle for social change.

[97] Sheldon Wolin, "Fugitive Democracy," *Constellations* 1 (1994), pp. 11–25.
[98] Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*.