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Written in summer 2004

Title: Brief Comments on a Transformative Approach

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High-energy religion exists at the margins. Low-energy religion remains the rule. This generalized religious demobilization, obscured by the more notorious religious conflicts highlighted in the contending political theologies, is both cause and consequence of the suppression of problems of race and gender. (Unger, 2001; 602)

We argue that it is crucial to understand the present, with its constraints and possibilities, in conjunction with imagining the possible. This is to be realistic (context grounded) without becoming defeatist (overwhelmed); recognizing that our environment help define who we are without exhausting the possibilities of who we might be or become. We include here some general comments of our idea for promoting a transformation of society to make possible that all of us, as members of society, can *live the life we have reason to value* (ibid.).

We think that it is important and pertinent to present broad suggestions with some qualifications because our actions must be grounded and responsive within/to our immediate surroundings. Thus, we cannot predict or foresee every possible combination of the numerous factors that affect and influence our lives. Nevertheless, the qualifications we include and promote are perceived as universal, based on our humanity. These qualifications are: striving for inclusion and justice, importance of deliberation, and that institutional arrangements define without exhausting our actions, beliefs, and interests. We further recommend that an intersectional analysis of relevant cleavages should be kept in mind and made explicit when deliberating and constructing our strategies for action.

We propose and underscore the importance of paying attention to existing institutional arrangements in place. This is to be able to identify *institutional incoherencies*. These become relevant to draft and propose alternative institutional mechanisms. These alternatives should be inclusive with two important characteristics: *de-centered* and *flexible* power-wise (Unger and West, 1998). We depart from the premise of the relevance of deliberation and communication, which adequately designed institutional arrangements could facilitate, although this should not be interpreted as top-down designing. These arguments do not depart from a *Habermasian* perspective of the elimination of conflict through a proposed *ideal communicative action*. Institutional

arrangements that facilitate deliberation and communication are means for permitting contrary and conflicting perspectives to encounter, meet, and collide from which future syntheses can emerge (e.g., partnerships, interconnectedness, constant deliberation, etc). This is why the characteristics of *de-centered* and *flexible* are so important, which increase the probability of just and adequate outcomes. The former paying attention to inclusiveness and the avoidance of concentration of privileges and resources, while the latter purveying a monitoring ethos of checking and gauging for incongruence between ends and means. Monitoring is something troubling and uncomfortable because we would like to have something finally set to take it for granted, while at the same time we value dynamism that goes against this static possibility. This is a contradiction that we need to gauge, confront, and realize that it will not just go away.

Eradication of Hierarchies: Wealth as a Lens

The main topic of this writing is wealth. We have presented a conceptualization of wealth, commented on why wealth is important, commented on what creates or helps to create wealth, and identified the empirical reality of wealth inequalities. The main dilemma, according to us, is that these wealth inequalities are not just random differences. Therefore, beyond being just wealth inequalities they are wealth biases where you can find categorical dividing lines between different groups of people falling on different “sides” of wealth ownership/attainment. Thus, we conclude that based on what wealth means and its importance, we argue that these disparities need to be addressed and that is why we have dedicated so much effort and space detailing some of the varying mechanisms that have produced these disparate outcomes. More than mere academic narcissism, we argue and think that it is important to document those disparate producing mechanisms to understand them and being able to challenge them. This challenge is not for identifying scapegoats or for entering into a blame game. This challenge is to create an opportunity for increase understanding and awareness of our interdependence, our humanity. The challenge, as life itself, is an open ended process with no certain outcome. Thus, to remedy these hierarchies we need to be prepared to think long-term and to engage the issue in a constant and stubborn manner. We need to be as stubborn, or even more, as the hierarchies we are attempting to eradicate. Nevertheless, we think we should be stubborn in a flexible way or put in another way: being flexibly stubborn. This means that we need to challenge, confront, but also that we need to sit down and negotiate, which implies striking deals and implementing them. After this cycle, we need to engage into monitoring practices to realize where we are and define our next course of action. We think that we should always have present the idea and goal of eradicating hierarchies that can be perceived or are systematic and unjust.

Unger (2001) underscores five main strategies guiding our search and attainment of liberation or in Sen’s words achieving to *live the life we have reason to value* (ibid, 1999). He argues that we must have *capable governments and the conditions for rebellious strategies of national development*. Secondly, we have to *endow and equip individuals; democratized the market economy; have a high-energy democracy*, and lastly, promote the *self-organization of civil society*. By all these, Unger has in mind a comprehensive perception of humanity so he is not privileging any specific cleavage. He advocates for the eradication of all unjust hierarchies. Thence, in our advocacy work we

should also be comprehensive in reach and substance. Our strategies, and their substance, therefore need to adjust to the social, political, and economic realities that we confront without ever losing sight of the possible because doing so would truncate our imagination, our humanity. This is why following and borrowing from Unger's strategies for a *transformative agenda* we can make them more in-tune with our realities by racializing, gendering, or intensifying that specific cleavage or intersection among them that merits our immediate attention because of the empirical hierarchical realities we confront.

From the point of view of global wealth disparities, the basic theme throughout this work has been related to the issue of inclusion: formal and substantive inclusion. Thus, following de Soto (2000) work and ideas, it is important and relevant to formalize the property and resources that the "poor" have to increase the probability for them to amass wealth. This is related to the issue of broadening the existing institutional arrangements' reach. In a similar vein, Stiglitz (2002) advocates for a broadening of the interests that are represented within the existing international institutions (e.g., the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO) and not only have banking and financial interests represented. We agree with the promotion of these ideas and efforts as steps in the right direction, but they should not be interpreted as the end of our efforts. This is why and where Unger (2001) and Unger and West (1998) suggestions become relevant:

Revolutionary reform in politics has, as its counterpart and ally, revolutionary reform in thought. In thought, as in politics, we can narrow the gap between the extraordinary acts by which we change our institutional or discursive setting and the ordinary ones by which we presuppose and reproduce this setting. We can reorient our practices so that we can pass more readily from our context-preserving to our context-revising activities. (Unger, 2001; xxi)

We should always see the future as a moving target, not because of ungratefulness and greed of wanting more and more, but because of our humanity. Perceiving the future as close ended, not only truncates our humanity, but also kills it, since something close ended has an end, finishes, dies. It is obvious that each of us, as individuals, eventually will die, but as a collective we do not necessarily have the same destiny. This is not to say that it is impossible for humanity to die, to end. This needs to be an option, an alternative for an open ended future to exist as an alternative. Therefore, we are not advocating here for something perceived as a foreseen conclusion, but for something that we must work, communicate, and strive for.

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