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The Egalitarian constitution: modern identity in three moral values

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Propositions relating to the dissertation *The Egalitarian Constitution: Modern identity in three moral values* by Jonathan Price:

1. The concepts of equality, autonomy, and consent are sufficient to explain the experience of 'being modern'. Said differently, they sufficiently answer the question: 'What is it like to be modern?' as a cultural identity for persons.
2. 'Persons' are understood to be both natural and corporate. Thus, individual human beings and states, companies, non-profits or other such groupings, each of which acts for unified ends in the world. This matches our legal, social, and moral understandings of persons.
3. Equality, autonomy, and consent, when rightly understood, comprise both the values and the evaluative framework that is self-consciously 'modern'. Those values in their modern form are inflected as universal equality, personal autonomy, and consensualism concerning moral obligations. The evaluative framework manifests itself in society and personality as: modern virtues, dogmas, taboos, habits, and customs.
4. Modern values imply one another in practice. For instance, personal autonomy is unrealizable outside of conditions broadly based in consensual moral obligations, which must be those of universal equality. As such, modern values form a political-social-moral order, or a 'constitution', which I have called the 'egalitarian constitution'.
5. Within the egalitarian constitution, there is an 'egalitarian mind', the moral-psychological component of 'being modern', and within that mind, a centre of moral knowledge, a 'conscience'. The modern conscience bills itself as a superior alternative to the consciences of culture, history, clan, religion, tradition, etc. This 'alter-conscience' is hyper-sensitive to the moral value of equality.
6. The metaphysical centre of modern values, the personally autonomous self, has not been shown to hold philosophically. The autonomous self has, rather, only been assumed to hold. This is in no small part owing to its practical and material success in North Atlantic lands.
7. Researchers in fields that are committed to personal autonomy as either first principle or evaluative tool or goal would do well to insist that philosophers make robust defenses of it, which could then be appealed to while defending the bias of their fields of enquiry.
8. Contemporary scholarly investigations in law, politics, and ethics are focussed on equality at the expense of lines of enquiry that could make practical equality more realizable.
9. Equality cannot provide its own ends, and it cannot be an end in itself, as leading contemporary theorists wish. The determination of goods that are worth pursuing must be made in advance of pursuing equality. Otherwise, the danger is that 'equality' will function like a hammer always in search of nails, thus destroying much by its forceful misapplication.
10. In place of a strong metaphysics of the autonomous person, a more modest philosophy of persons could better serve the same constitutional end of founding a philosophically

defensible and sustainable moral-social-political order. Such a philosophy would integrate persons into that order through their relations, rather than through their substances.

11. Rumsfeldian epistemology, as announced on 12 December 2002 in a news brief by the then American secretary of defense, includes 'known knowns', 'known unknowns', and 'unknown unknowns'. This list could usefully be expanded to include precluded knowledge, 'known unknowables', and possible knowledge that is still only learned opinion, 'known knowable'.
12. Following the disinterested lead of HSH Prince Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein in his book, *The State in the Third Millennium* (I. B. Tauris, 2009), citizens from small lands tend to be happier, healthier, and saner than those from large lands.
13. Any modern political community with a population either larger than that of Luxembourg or smaller than that of Liechtenstein will tend toward tyranny.