The third interview with Dutt concerns practical philosophy. Here Gadamer discusses once again the concepts of social reason, *phronesis*, *ethos*, and *praxis*, outlining in brief the place of such notions in a hermeneutical conception of ethics. It is followed by two conversations concerning the Greeks and phenomenology. These interviews bring out Gadamer's introduction early on in his career to these two fundamentally important strands in his thought, although again aside from the conversational and at times autobiographical genre there is not a great deal here with which readers of Gadamer will not already be familiar.

The interviews comprising this valuable collection do demonstrate a renowned conversationalist in his element. As interviews, they are not always characterizable as genuine hermeneutic dialogues, yet nor do they merely feature the Master Thinker holding court. *Gadamer in Conversation* belongs primarily to the genre of *Philosophical Apprenticeships* and "Reflections on a Philosophical Journey," and will be of primary interest to readers of these earlier texts.

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*Political Philosophy (Fundamentals of Philosophy)*  
DUDLEY KNOWLES  

Dudley Knowles's interesting book exemplifies many of the virtues of twentieth-century British philosophical scholarship: his prose is clear and concise, his argumentation is acute, and his capacity for spotting the core of any subject is outstanding. Moreover, Knowles is a true champion of common sense: his *Political Philosophy* is a veritable manifesto of "the Reasonable Man," one of the most distinctive creations of the British tradition. Indeed, his approach explains and endeavors to settle many of the most crucial issues in the philosophy of politics. Knowles regularly presents two extreme options concerning a given problem and then outlines the *via media* to be followed for its resolution.

In this manner, political liberty (Chapter 3) becomes an issue of combining classical "negative freedoms" with modern "positive freedoms." Personal freedom (Chapters 3 and 4) turns into the mediation between rigorous Kantian autonomy and communitarian respect for inherited values. Democracy (Chapters 3 and 7) translates into the harmonization of liberalism and republicanism. Political rights (Chapter 4), which are at first scrupulously divided into "critical" and "positive," "privileges" and "claims," "powers" and "immunities," "in rem" and "in personam," "positive" and "negative," "special" and "general," "individual" and "of groups," are re-united successively under the umbrella of parliamentary decision making. General utility (Chapter 5) develops out of the mediation between shared needs and personal interest. As for political obligation...
(Chapter 6), it represents the mitigation of "natural," ego-centered anarchism by means of the altruistic, communitarian constituents of the Western ethos.

While pervading Knowles's entire text, this all-embracing spirit of medietas is not declared as a theoretical commitment of the author. On the contrary, this preference for equilibrium appears to be an unconsciously endorsed frame of interpretation and evaluation. Utilitarianism is the only theoretical stance to which any tribute is openly paid by Knowles. In his view, no other doctrine has equal "strength and [equal] detail with which [it] has been articulated" (15). Utilitarianism remains "unrivalled in its sophistication," as no other theory "has been applied [so] resolutely in the domain of practical politics" (15–6).

A consequence of Knowles's commitment to utilitarianism is that democracy becomes the only political model that his reflections address in any serious way. From a historical point of view, the rise of the utilitarian doctrine has accompanied the rise of bourgeois, liberal democracy itself, at least in the Western world. From a theoretical point of view, only democracy seems capable of accommodating the diverging views arising from individual interests and individual interpretations of one's own utility or happiness—at least, this is what Knowles suggests (61–4). Democracy remains the only political conception that Knowles analyzes in his volume while theocracy, monarchy, despotism, fascism, the politics of the "common good," tribalism, military dictatorship, and anarchism are hardly touched upon at all.

The general lack of historical references—another distinguishing trait of much twentieth-century British philosophy—leads Knowles to neglect too many important political authors and ideas. The reader is thus deprived of the insights of pre- and nonliberal thinkers such as Aquinas, Machiavelli, DeMaistre, Bakunin, and Schmitt. Of course, these authors have little to do with utilitarianism and contemporary democracy, but their relevance for political philosophy should not be ignored, especially by a text marketed as a comprehensive study of fundamental political problems.

Furthermore, the utilitarian frame endorsed by Knowles leads him to a deeply conservative picture of political thinking and political deliberation. If, in order to do what is right, we must be able to predict with reasonable certainty the outcome of an action, then no revolutionary plan is likely to be taken into account by the utilitarian, for too many variables would be involved in such a plan; this renders moral computation implausible, if not impossible. Knowles is aware of this conservative implication of utilitarianism, but offers no solution. On the contrary, no trace of experimental or radical political thinking is examined in detail by Knowles, despite the fact that much of the history of political philosophy has been ripe with utopianism, the creation and interpretation of collective myths, the desire for change for change's sake, and messianic ideologies of all kinds.

Indeed, at the time of its inception utilitarianism itself was intended to be a revolutionary political model. Universal education, the annihilation of poverty, egalitarian participation in legislation, and the reformation of judicial power were among the main goals of Bentham's groundbreaking project, goals that
were non-computable in terms of expected utility. Who knew whether or how such structural reforms would have brought about tangible benefits and for whom? Faith and hope were at the core of the utilitarian project, not the rational prediction of future events; Knowles seems unaware of this aspect of the doctrine he endorses.

Naturally, as we know today, liberal democracy succeeded, and so thoroughly did it succeed that liberal democracy has become a political given, one that most of Knowles’s readers will accept without much critical examination—as does Knowles himself. Knowles’s text, however, does leave the reader with a clear, even enjoyable, picture of what we have around us hinc et nunc, but also with no picture whatsoever of what we ought to have.

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The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion
RICHARD KEARNEY

This book is about God, not theology. Setting aside the traditional image of God as “esse,” Richard Kearney sketches a hermeneutical retrieval of the Exodic name, revealing a God who is “pure passage” and “pure gift” (36). This book definitely gives its readers something to think about and sets out on an exhilarating new path for thought. Kearney provides textual support for a countertraditional view of God, one whose history is equally venerable as the traditional and is as shrouded in mystery at its “sources.”

The glimpses Kearney gives us of “the God who may be” are fascinating. This is a transfiguring, desiring, and possibilizing God. It is also a possible God, who comes and goes, resonating with Kearney’s earlier work on the imagination (see especially The Wake of Imagination). His interpretation of God’s “play” indicates in what respect we may be said to be God’s “images”: the human imagination, as described in his Poetics of Imagining (London: Harper Collins, 1991), is also a “paradoxical phenomenon, now here, now gone. Something, as the poet said, ‘more distant than stars and nearer than the eye.’” Like God’s creation of the world ex nihilo, the human imagination “resolves to create its own meaning, out of nothing,” being “the capacity to convert the given confines of the here and now into an open horizon of possibilities” (Poetics of Imagining, 5, 6, 2).

Kearney’s thesis rests upon linking ancient understandings of the inaugural name of God in Exodus 3:14 with its more contemporary hermeneutic possibilities. Hence, he replaces the essentialist “I am Who I am” with the eschatological “I am Who will be.” This God resists reduction to the status of an idol and repudiates those who would seek to use God’s power by the knowledge of