

The Evolution of Ronald Dworkin's Legal Philosophy: From Interpretivism to Integrity

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SUBJECT

Legal philosophy

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Received: July 20, 2025

Accepted: August 14, 2025

Online version: August 31, 2025

Keywords: Ronald Dworkin; Legal
Positivism Interpretivism; Law as Integrity;
Unity of Value

Abstract

This research aims to comprehensively analyse the evolution of Ronald Dworkin's legal philosophy, often not integrated in the literature, from his criticism of positivism, his theory of Law as Integrity, to the concept of Unity of Value. This research is directed to trace chronologically the development of Dworkin's thought, examine the role of the concept of Unity of Value as a philosophical foundation, and show how each stage forms a consistent intellectual narrative. Using normative legal research methods with conceptual and analytical approaches, this study found that Dworkin's thought developed coherently: interpretivism served as a counter to positivism, which was then refined into Law as Integrity as the highest standard. Furthermore, Unity of Value became the ontological foundation that justified the entire Dworkin project, ensuring that the moral values sought in law were harmonious and not contradictory. In conclusion, each stage of Dworkin's thought is part of a single philosophical architecture that rejects the separation of law and morality, affirming law as a principled and integrated moral-political practice.

1. Introduction

How did Ronald Dworkin's transformation of thought from interpretivism to the theory of *Law as Integrity* form a new foundation for modern legal philosophy, and how does the concept of *unity of value* complement that construction? This question is at the heart of this research, departing from the realisation that although Dworkin's thought has been one of the important milestones in legal theory of the 20th and early 21st centuries, the internal evolutionary narrative of his ideas has not been systematically analysed. Most studies discuss *interpretivism*, *integrity*, and *unity of value* separately, so the logical and conceptual continuities are not fully defined.

Legal philosophy is a branch that constantly grapples with fundamental questions about the nature of law, its sources of authority, and its relationship to morality and justice. In this landscape, Ronald Dworkin (1931–2013) emerged as a thinker who criticised the mainstream, especially legal positivism, and established an alternative

framework that demanded an understanding of law as a principled interpretive practice. As formulated by H.L.A. Hart, legal positivism places law as a system of rules that can be identified through specific social criteria, separate from moral considerations (Dworkin, 2013a). Dworkin opposed this assumption, asserting that law is inseparable from its inherent moral principles.

Dworkin's critique of positivism has been evident since his monumental work, *Taking Rights Seriously* (1977). Here, he argues that law consists not only of explicit rules, but also moral principles that must be considered in the legal decision-making process (Dworkin, 1971). He focuses his criticism on the weaknesses of positivism in explaining how judges decide *complex case* situations where the rule of law does not provide clear answers. For Dworkin, judges in such cases do not have "full discretion" as Hart assumes, but rather are bound by moral principles that provide coherence and integrity to the legal system (Flores, 2022).

This is where the idea of interpretivism *was born*, which views law as a process of *constructive interpretation*, a continuous effort to understand and shape legal practice to be in harmony with the best moral and political standards. In this view, law is not simply a search for pre-existing truths, but a creative project to make the legal system morally "the best that can be made."

The next stage of Dworkin's evolution of thought peaked in *Law's Empire* (1988), when he introduced the theory of *Law as Integrity*. This theory contains the claim that law must be understood and applied consistently with moral principles that give meaning to the entire practice of law, both in the dimensions of fit (conformity with existing legal precedents and practices) and justification (the best moral justification) (Dworkin, 1988). Thus, integrity demands that legal decisions are not only internally consistent but also morally and politically justified in the eyes of the public.

Emphatically, Dworkin rejects the absolute separation between law and morality, considering law to be an inseparable moral-political practice (Bustamante, 2024). He even stated that in every legal case, there is always "*one right answer thesis*," which is the most appropriate answer that can be justified based on the principles and integrity of the legal system (Munir, 2022). This answer does not mean that it is explicitly available, but rather that it must be generated through an interpretation coherent with society's overall legal history and moral principles.

Although Dworkin's thought has considerably influenced legal philosophy debates, two main gaps drive the urgency of this research. First, there is still a lack of studies that trace chronologically and thematically how *interpretivism* developed into *Law as Integrity* as an intellectual narrative that forms each other. Most literature discusses these two concepts separately or only reviews the final stages without exploring their developmental linkages. Second, although the concept of *unity of value* in *Justice for Hedgehogs* (2010) is often mentioned, its integration with integrity theory is rarely discussed. In fact, this concept provides a philosophical basis that states that moral values such as justice, freedom, and equality are coherent and mutually reinforcing (MacInnis, 2020).

The important question is: is the *unity of value* the logical culmination of Dworkin's intellectual journey from *interpretivism* to *integrity*, or is it just a conceptual addition that reinforces the existing foundations? Answering this question is important, as it can clarify the whole framework of Dworkin's thought and its implications for modern legal theory.

The existing literature has explored individual aspects of Dworkin's thought. Burton (1987) discusses his critique of positivism; Ross (1991) examines *Law's Empire* with a focus on the relationship between law, integrity, and interpretation; Munir (2022) explains *constructive interpretation* and *one correct answer thesis*; Masanja (2021) defends the theory of *Law as Integrity*; Nomeh (2024a, 2024b) discusses the relationship between law and justice and constructivism in Dworkin's jurisprudence. There are also criticisms, such as Guest (2009), who provides methodological guidance for criticising Dworkin, or Macedo Junior (2024), who reviews Waluchow's criticism from the perspective of inclusive legal positivism. Meanwhile, Reeves (2023) and Flores (2022) provide encyclopedic reviews of Dworkin's constructive interpretation.

However, such studies tend to focus on a specific point or theme without framing the development of the ideas as a complete conceptual evolution. This is where the original contribution of this research lies: to construct a comprehensive narrative that traces *how Dworkin's early interpretivism* led to the theory of *integrity* and was ultimately enriched by *the unity of value*. This approach places the entire stage of his thought as part of a single philosophical architecture that integrates individual rights, institutional coherence, and the unity of moral values.

Theoretically, this study is significant because it shows how Dworkin's thought can be understood as a process of developing increasingly mature and structured legal theories, which blur the traditional boundaries between law and morality. Practically, the relevance of this research is fundamental in the context of contemporary debates ranging from constitutional courts to human rights issues, where consistency of principles and moral coherence are public demands.

Thus, this study is directed to: a) It traces chronologically the development of Dworkin's thought from the initial critique of positivism to the theory of *Law as Integrity*; b) Examining the role of *unity of value* as a philosophical foundation that strengthens *interpretivism* and *integrity*, and; c) Shows how each stage of development forms a consistent and coherent intellectual narrative.

This focus is expected to make a new contribution to the study of legal philosophy, while addressing the need for an analysis that combines the three main pillars of Dworkin's thought in a single, integrated framework.

2. Methods

In this study, we use normative legal research methods to examine the legal philosophy of Ronald Dworkin in depth. This approach was chosen because of its focus on doctrinal and conceptual studies, which are particularly relevant for analysing legal theories. This study adopts two main approaches. First, a conceptual approach that serves as a lens for understanding Dworkin's core concepts, such as 'law as integrity' and 'rights as trump'. This approach allows us not only to define, but also trace the origins and evolution of his thought from his initial critique of positivism to the formulation of a mature theory. Second, an analytical approach is applied to test and evaluate Dworkin's arguments. We will deconstruct each argument, identify its premises, and measure its logical force by reviewing the criticisms made by other philosophers.

Our primary source of data is literature, which we select strictly. As primary data, we refer directly to Dworkin's monumental works such as *Taking Rights Seriously* and *Law's Empire*. To complement and enrich the analysis, we also used secondary data from books, journal articles, and essays from leading scholars who reviewed Dworkin's

thought. These sources are selected with clear inclusion criteria, namely relevance and credibility, to ensure a solid foundation for analysis.

All collected data is then processed through qualitative analysis. The stages begin with a detailed description of each concept, continue with an in-depth interpretation to capture its contextual meaning, and end with a synthesis to build a comprehensive understanding of how Dworkin's thought developed. Through this process, we describe and place Dworkin's theory in the broader discourse of legal philosophy. With an analytical and objective attitude, this study aims to fully understand Dworkin's legal philosophy, evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and highlight its relevance in contemporary legal practice.

3. Results and discussion

The Evolution of Dworkin's Thought: From Critique of Positivism to Law as Integrity

Ronald Dworkin's idea of interpretivism was the fundamental starting point that marked his critique of legal positivism and the primary basis for developing the theory of "Law as Integrity". Initially, Dworkin's interpretivism emerged as a direct response to the model of rules proposed by the leading positivist, H.L.A. Hart (Burton, 1987). In his monumental work, *Taking Rights Seriously* (2013a), Dworkin underlined that the legal system does not simply consist of mechanically applied rules, but also includes moral principles that inherently guide judges in handling "difficult cases" (Munir, 2022).

This is Dworkin's first step in affirming that law is an interpretive practice. According to him, legal reasoning cannot be separated from moral and political judgment to find the best answer in a case. Dworkin rejected the idea that judges have "strong discretion" to make new laws when the rule of law does not provide a clear answer. Instead, he argues that judges must identify and apply principles already embedded in the legal system, even if those principles are not explicitly set out in legislation or precedent. These principles often have moral weight and serve as a standard for evaluating and justifying legal decisions.

The transition from early interpretivism to "Law as Integrity" was not a sudden leap, but a process of refinement and expansion of its basic ideas. Suppose interpretivism provides a basic methodology, i.e.. In that case, the law should be understood as an attempt to place the practice of law in the best moral light. The theory of integrity, which is comprehensively outlined in his work *Law's Empire* (Dworkin, 1988), provides a more comprehensive framework and higher standards for this interpretation. Integrity demands that the law be understood as a coherent narrative that consistently seeks to embody the principles of justice over time. Thus, interpretivism becomes a method, while integrity becomes the standard or goal of interpretation (Flores, 2022). According to Ross (1991), any interpretation of the law must be consistent with past legal practice in the sense that it is consistent with previous rules and rulings and also present the practice as morally and politically justified.

Key Stages of the Evolution of Dworkin's Thought: A Dynamic Philosophical Architecture

The evolution of Ronald Dworkin's thought can be mapped through several primary interrelated stages, showing how he progressively built his entire legal theory rooted in morality and consistency.

1. Phase of Critique of Positivism and Introduction to Principles (Late 1960s – 1970s)

The early stages in the evolution of Dworkin's thought were marked by a systematic frontal assault on legal positivism, the dominant paradigm represented by H.L.A. Hart. Dworkin rejected the idea that law is simply a set of rules identified by "rules of recognition" (Burton, 1987). In an essay collected in his monumental work, *Taking Rights Seriously* (Dworkin, 2013a), Dworkin fundamentally questions the capacity of positivism to explain legal phenomena as a whole. His criticism is rooted in the fact that, in "difficult cases," where the rule of law does not provide clear or even contradictory answers, judges do not always have "strong wisdom" to make new laws.

The essence of his criticism is the discovery and introduction of the principle concept. Dworkin argues that in complex cases, judges should refer to standard principles that do not derive from explicit legislative or judicial decisions, but from the morality and justice inherent in the practice of law (Dworkin, 1971). These principles have weight and relevance in legal reasoning, guiding judges to find the most appropriate decision. This was the early foundation of Dworkin's interpretivism, in which law is not just written in a law or precedent, but also what must be morally interpreted to achieve justice. Munir (2022) explains that in this phase, Dworkin began to affirm that law has an intrinsic moral dimension that cannot be separated from its application.

Ronald Dworkin did not build his theory in a vacuum. He systematically placed his ideas in critical dialogue with other schools of legal thought, especially positivism and radical scepticism, such as legal realism and Critical Legal Theory (CLS). This debate shows why Dworkin rejected these views and why he needed to build on his complex theory of "law as integrity".

Dworkin launched the most famous attack on legal positivism, specifically the theory of H.L.A. Hart. According to Brian Bix (2005), positivism adheres to the thesis of the separation between law and morality, as well as the social source thesis, in which social facts, not moral values, determine the validity of law. Dworkin's criticism arises from his observation of "difficult cases" in which the rule of law does not provide clear answers. Dworkin rejected Hart's view that judges had "strong discretion" to create new laws in this situation. Instead, he observed that judges often refer to the principles of moral standards and justice embedded in the legal system, even though they do not derive from the "rules of recognition" (Burton, 1987). This debate led to a response from inclusive positivism that tried to accommodate Dworkin's criticism. Inclusive positivists argue that a legal system's "rules of recognition" can include moral criteria as a condition for legal validity (Bix, 2005). However, positivists insist that the primary goal of positivism remains descriptive and morally neutral (Marmor, 2006). Dworkin rejected this view, believing that the relationship between law and morality was not a sociological possibility, but a conceptual inevitability. Dworkin was of the view that law cannot be understood without its moral dimension, and that any theory that separates the two, whether Hart's positivism, Kelsen's Basic Norms (Grundnorm) (Kelsen, 1967), or inclusive positivism, ultimately fails to explain actual judicial practice.

In summary, Dworkin rejected positivism because it could not explain how moral principles function in legal reasoning. Positivism sees law as an entity that can exist without moral reference, while Dworkin sees law as a manifestation of political morality. His rejection is not just to Hart's view, but to the idea that legal identification can be completely separate from moral judgment.

Dworkin also positioned himself as opposed to the schools of sceptics who doubted the ability of law to function as a coherent system. American legal realism

(Leiter, 2005; Fisher & Reed, 1995) argues that judges' decisions are determined more by non-legal factors than by existing rules. Brian Leiter (2010) explains that realism is a scepticism of how often the rules determine a case's outcome. Furthermore, Critical Legal Theory (CLS), represented by figures such as Roberto Unger (1983) and Mark Tushnet (1986), took this scepticism to a more extreme level. They claim that law is indeterminate, that is, the rule of law is full of contradictions and only serves as an ideological tool to legitimise the power of the dominant class (Hunt, 1986). Dworkin emphatically rejected this view. Although he acknowledges that the rule of law does not always provide a clear answer, he rejects the radical scepticism that asserts there is no correct answer. Dworkin believed in a "correct answer thesis", which can be found through constructive interpretation that aims to place the law in its "best moral light". This thesis is the core of the theory of "Law as Integrity", which he expounds in his book *Law's Empire* (Dworkin, 1988). For Dworkin, realists and critical theorists were too quick to succumb to uncertainty and ignore rational capacity in legal reasoning. His theory of integrity is an attempt to show that law, while imperfect, can serve as a coherent moral narrative, and that the judge's job is to embody that coherence, not to expose it as a political lie.

In closing, Dworkin argues that sceptical views such as realism and CLS are too cynical. He acknowledges that law may not always be perfect, but he rejects the idea that law is completely uncertain or merely an instrument of power. For Dworkin, there is a moral responsibility for judges to find the best answers consistent with the principles of justice, and radical scepticism ignores the potential of law to achieve that goal.

2. The Phase of Interpretivism and Rights as 'Trumps' (1980s)

In this second stage, Dworkin developed the idea of "law as interpretation" more explicitly and systematically. He emphasised that jurisprudence is not an objective description of legal facts, but an interpretive activity. Flores (2022) elaborates that Dworkin argues that law should be understood as a practice that seeks "right answers" under challenging cases through a constructive process of interpretation. Constructive interpretation involves a process in which an interpreter seeks to place the object of interpretation (in this case, the practice of law) in the "best light," as an attempt to realise a particular goal or principle. Nomeh (2024a) further discusses this aspect of constructivism in Dworkin's jurisprudence, where legal meaning is constructed through interpretation, not just invention.

Along with developing interpretivism, Dworkin also strongly strengthened the position of rights as 'trumps'. He argues that individual rights have absolute priority and should not be set aside for collective policy goals or greater social utility (Dworkin, 2013a). These rights, which are rooted in the principles of morality and justice, serve as constraints on majority power and policy decisions. The concept of a "principle forum" has also emerged as a realm in which these rights are specifically defended and debated, i.e., the courts (Dworkin, 2013b). It emphasises the role of the courts in upholding moral principles, which is in line with the idea that law is the moral realm (Nomeh, 2024b). Thus, judges not only apply the rules, but also protect fundamental rights that are morally binding.

Dworkin emphatically distinguishes between principles and policies. According to him, principles are the demands of justice or morality, while policies are collective or social goals. In Dworkin's view, judges should always make decisions based on principles, not policy. This is because individual rights, which are the manifestation of principle, must be protected from policy considerations that may sacrifice those rights for the good of the majority. Munir (2022) explained that this distinction is fundamental

because it separates the judicial and legislative realms. The legislature makes policy, while the courts uphold principles. This strongly affirms the court's role as a protector of minority rights.

Developing this idea of "rights as trumps" is crucial in democracy. Dworkin worried that in a majority system, individual rights would be vulnerable to being sacrificed for goals that were considered socially beneficial, even if unfair to specific individuals. He argued that these rights, which he called 'trumps', should "outperform" policy considerations. This means that when a person has a right, consideration of social utility should not be a reason to override that right (Dworkin, 2013a). This puts individual rights in a sacred position in the legal architecture, ensuring they cannot be taken for granted.

Dworkin provided a strong theoretical foundation for constitutional jurisprudence through his emphasis on interpretivism and rights as trumps. He points out that the task of constitutional judges, for example, is not simply to interpret the text literally, but to read and apply the underlying moral principles. This interpretation must "construct" the constitution's meaning so that individual rights are protected to the maximum extent (Dworkin, 2013b). This process, which Dworkin calls "reading the Constitution morally," is at the heart of how law can be a progressive and just force. Overall, this phase affirms that law is not just about rules, but also about underlying principles, and that individual rights have moral virtues that courts must uphold as a "forum of principles." This is a crucial foundation later refined in the theory of "Law as Integrity."

3. Legal Phase as Integrity (Late 1980s – 1990s)

The culmination of Dworkin's thought evolution was manifested in the publication of his magnum opus, *Law's Empire* (Dworkin, 1988), in which he formulated the theory of "Law as Integrity." Integrity is the main virtue of the law, demanding coherence of principles in all aspects of the law. This means that the practice of law must show consistency in the principles enforced over time, as if the law were composed by "one voice" speaking to a single moral principle. Ross (1991) analyses how Dworkin uses integrity to demand consistency in law and how constructive interpretation allows this consistency to be achieved.

To illustrate this, Dworkin introduces the figure of the Herculean Judge, an ideal judge with unlimited ability and time to establish the most coherent interpretation of the entire legal practice of a community. Herculean judges will interpret the law in such a way that it reflects a single and coherent moral and political narrative of society (Ross, 1991). This interpretation must meet two dimensions: fit (match the legal data of the past) and justification (provide the best moral justification). Masanja (2021) defends this theory by highlighting the strength of Dworkin's framework in understanding law as a consistent moral project. This stage effectively synthesises Dworkin's early critique of positivism with his interpretive vision, resulting in a comprehensive framework for understanding the nature and practice of law.

This theory of integrity is a direct response to the weaknesses he finds in the views of positivism and legal realism. Dworkin argues that judges should find existing laws and construct them through consistent interpretation. Integrity rejects the idea that the law is a fragmented set of rules, where judges can make arbitrary political decisions when the rules are unclear. Instead, each decision should be seen as part of a larger moral narrative, in which judges are responsible for continuing the legal "story" most fairly and coherently. Thus, Dworkin transformed the role of the judge from a mere applicator

of rules to a writer who had to ensure that the new chapter of the law book was in line with the previous chapters, both narratively and morally. Nomeh (2024b) specifically highlights how this role places the court as a forum of principles, where the morality of the law is explicitly enforced.

More than just consistency, integrity also demands justice. Dworkin emphasised that legal interpretation must offer the “best moral justification.” That is, a verdict is not enough to conform to past precedents; The verdict must also make the legal system seen in the best moral light. It effectively combines law and morality, placing integrity as a bridge that connects law practice with its ethical and political goals. The project affirms that legal legitimacy does not derive from social facts (such as ratification by the legislature), but from the ability of law to consistently embody the principles of justice and equality for all citizens. Bustamante (2024) confirms this view by explaining that Dworkin saw “legal monism” as an integral part of the broader moral domain.

At its core, integrity theory is an ambitious attempt to reconcile consistency and fairness. Through this concept, Dworkin provides a strong framework for modern jurisprudence, in which law is seen as a sustainable collective moral project. It challenges us to look beyond the text of laws and judgments, and instead, to reflect on the profound moral principles that underpin the entire practice of law. Reeves (2023) reinforces this by arguing that Dworkin's views transcend the boundaries of national jurisdiction, confirming the relevance of these values at the global level. Therefore, the “Law as Integrity” theory is not just a legal theory, but a profound political philosophy on how society should govern itself in the most just and consistent way.

As the theory of integrity matured, Dworkin increasingly realised that the demand for principled coherence in law must be rooted in a more fundamental understanding of the nature of values. The big question arises: Can integrity be achieved in a fundamentally pluralistic world where values are often perceived as contradictory? Faced with this challenge, Dworkin turned his attention to a deeper metaphysical foundation, which ultimately led to the evolution of his thought to the next phase.

Thus, the theory of integrity became the bridge that connected Dworkin's early vision of law with his final philosophical synthesis. Although integrity offers methods and standards for legal interpretation, it requires a stronger foundation for overcoming radical scepticism that challenges notions of moral coherence. This foundation, which he would develop later, was his belief in the “unity of values”. This allowed Dworkin to go further, applying integrity to national law and global justice. This paves the way to understanding the Unity of Values and Global Justice phase.

4. The Phase of Unity of Values and Global Justice (2000s – 2010s)

In the final stages of his thought, Dworkin focused on law narrowly and extended his views to the realm of morality and politics more broadly. In his work *Sovereign Virtue* (2002), he developed the resource equality theory as a distributive justice model, showing how moral principles can be applied to achieve equitable distribution.

However, the culmination is *Justice for Hedgehogs* (Dworkin, 2010), where he explicitly puts forward the “unity of values” thesis. This idea states that moral, ethical, and political truths are ultimately intertwined and form a coherent network of understandings of how to live well and right (Dworkin, 2011; MacInnis, 2020). Dworkin rejected a view of value pluralism that equates these values with separate entities competing. Instead, he argues that such values can be integrated in a coherent network of understandings (Dworkin, 2011; MacInnis, 2020). This unity of values provides the deepest philosophical justification for its entire integrity project, ensuring that the search

for the “best moral narrative” in law is sensible because the underlying values are inherently harmonious. This concept is also highly relevant to Dworkin’s “legal monism”, where law is integral to the broader moral domain (Bustamante, 2024). It also paves the way for discussions about global justice and universal human rights, affirming the relevance of these values beyond the boundaries of national jurisdiction (Reeves, 2023).

In *Justice for Hedgehogs*, Dworkin profoundly explores the notion that the normative domains of morality, ethics, and politics form a coherent whole. The metaphor of “hedgehog” describes this belief, opposing the view of the “fox” who believes in value pluralism, where various values are ultimately contradictory and irreconcilable. Dworkin argues that, if we think of life as a coherent project, the values guiding the project must also be interconnected (Dworkin, 2011). MacInnis (2020) corroborates this argument by explaining that Dworkin’s value unity thesis attempts to counter scepticism that underestimates our ability to find the correct answers in moral problems. Dworkin asserts that there is no dichotomy between what is ethically “right” (how individuals should live) and what is morally “right” (how individuals should treat others), because they are both part of the same truth.

The relationship between the unity of values and Dworkin’s theory of integrity is symbiotic. Integrity demands coherence in law, but this coherence is only possible if there is an underlying belief that the moral principles sought by the law itself can be harmonised. In other words, the unity of values provides an ontological foundation, the basis of existence for the integrity project. Without the belief that values such as freedom, equality, and justice can be brought together, judges’ attempts to construct the “best moral narrative” will be considered fiction that lacks a strong philosophical basis (Bustamante, 2024). With the unity of values thesis, Dworkin provided a method for interpreting laws and affirmed the philosophical reasons why the method made sense.

Expanding this view also has significant implications for justice beyond national boundaries. Dworkin argued that fundamental moral principles do not stop at state borders. If human dignity and equality are part of a single web of truth, they apply universally. Reeves (2023) highlights how this view became the basis for Dworkin to discuss universal human rights and global justice, where he opposed a positivist view that limits the law to specific jurisdictions. For Dworkin, the state has a moral responsibility to adhere to the principles of global justice, even if these principles are not explicitly set out in international treaties, because they are part of a broader moral truth.

Overall, these stages show how Dworkin progressively developed a coherent and ambitious philosophy of law, which rejected the separation of law and morality and affirmed that law was the embodiment of fundamental moral principles. Through this evolution, Dworkin consistently built the argument that legal integrity is not just a theoretical ideal, but an essential practical requirement for maintaining the legitimacy and authority of the law in a democratic society. Therefore, the “unity of values” is not merely an appendage but a philosophical culmination that provides the deepest justification for the entire Dworkin project, from the integrity of domestic law to the vision of global justice.

Table 1. Phases of the Development of the Evolution of Dworkin's Thought

Phases & Time	Key Focus	Key Concepts	Core Idea
Criticism of Positivism (1960s-1970s)	Rejecting the separation of law and morality	Legal principles, hard cases	Law contains moral principles, not merely written rules.
Interpretivism & Rights as 'Trumps' (1980s)	Law as a process of moral interpretation	Constructive interpretation, rights as trumps	Individual rights outweigh majority policies; courts act as guardians of moral principles.
Law as Integrity (Late 1980s-1990s)	Moral consistency in all legal decisions	Law as Integrity, Herculean Judge	Every decision is part of a single moral narrative; law as a collective moral project.
Unity of Value & Global Justice (2000s-2010s)	Expanding law to ethics, politics, and global justice	Unity of Value, universal human rights	Moral values are interconnected and universally applicable; supports global justice.

Critical Analysis: Criticism of Dworkin's Theory

1. Criticism of Dworkin's theory

Although Dworkin's theory was very influential and comprehensive, it did not escape sharp criticism, especially from the positivist camp and other philosophers. This discussion of criticism is essential to understanding Dworkin's position in the landscape of legal philosophy.

One of the most fundamental criticisms of Dworkin was his idea of "one right answer" in complex cases. Critics like Hart doubt whether Judge Hercules can achieve a fully coherent and objective interpretation. They argue that complex legal systems often contain fundamentally conflicting values and interpretations in practice. For example, judges must weigh conflicting principles in crucial constitutional cases, such as freedom of speech versus public safety. In this situation, finding one answer that is normatively "best" is considered too idealistic and may be unrealistic. Munir (2022) explains that the diversity of values in a democratic society makes it impossible to search for a coherent moral narrative.

Another criticism came from legal positivists, supported by Hart, who insisted that the separation between law and morality was essential. They argue that legal identification should be based on social facts, not moral considerations. This separation is important to maintain legal certainty and clarity. Positivists worry that Dworkin's theory could blur the line between law and the personal morality of judges, potentially opening the door to subjectivity and undermining the legitimacy of the law. If judges could incorporate their moral values, the law would become unpredictable.

Many critics consider integrity an almost impossible ideal in a practical legal system. In the real world, the legislative and policy-making processes are often the result of political compromise and conflicts of interest, rather than the search for principled coherence. Over time, precedents and laws can show profound inconsistencies. Thus, demanding judges to find the "best moral narrative" of fundamentally chaotic legal practice is considered an unrealistic demand.

2. Case Study: From Roe to Dobbs as an Empirical Illustration

To illustrate the practical challenges of Dworkin's theory, we can look at the controversial case of abortion rights in the United States. *Roe v. Wade* (1973) can be seen as the Supreme Court's attempt to apply Dworkin's integrity. This ruling seeks to embed abortion rights into the constitutional right to privacy, creating a coherent narrative between individual autonomy and the law. However, as Dworkin himself criticised,

conflicts of these fundamental values, such as the right to privacy versus the state's interest in protecting life, cannot be resolved easily. As a result, the Roe decision was divisive and sparked a fierce debate that continued. The *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) emphasised the importance of consistency and integrity. This ruling does not invalidate Roe but maintains its essence based on the principle of *stare decisis*. This reflects a commitment to a sustained legal narrative, in which the court recognises that "Americans have organised their lives around the expectation of control over their reproductive health," a highly *Dworkin-esque* argument.

On the other hand, the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organisation* (2022) decision is the perfect antithesis to integrity theory. This ruling rejects the moral narrative Roe and Casey constructed over nearly half a century. Justice Samuel Alito argued that abortion rights are not "rooted in the Nation's history and tradition," effectively breaking the supposedly binding chain of integrity. Viewed through Dworkin's lens, *Dobbs* is a failure of integrity, demonstrating the dangers of rejecting established principles and fueling widespread legal uncertainty.

3. *Concept Linkage: Unity of Values as the Foundation of Interpretivism and Integrity*

The concept of the unity of values is a philosophical foundation that not only complements but also provides profound justification for Dworkin's entire theoretical architecture. Without a unity of values, Dworkin's central idea that law can provide one "right answer" through interpretation and can achieve integrity would lose its foundation.

Dworkin argues that legal interpretation aims to find the "best answer" or "right answer." However, this claim will collapse if the underlying moral and political values are inherently contradictory. The unity of values provides an ontological foundation that ensures that the moral values explored by judges are not fundamentally contradictory. This makes the project of constructive interpretation a sensible effort, not an attempt to impose coherence on the reality of fragmented values (Dworkin, 2011). Dworkin rejected the "hedgehog" view, which considers values as separate entities that often compete. Instead, he is a "hedgehog" because he believes one great principle holds all these values together (Dworkin, 2010).

The unity of values directly strengthens the demands of legal integrity. Integrity requires principled consistency in legal practice. This consistency is easier to justify if it is assumed that the underlying principles (which are the manifestations of values) do not fundamentally conflict (Dworkin, 1985). If fundamental values are a unit, then the legal system's commitment to act consistently based on the principles derived from those values is not an unrealistic burden, but rather a reflection of a deep moral structure (MacInnis, 2020). It provides a "philosophical guarantee" that the project of legal integrity, i.e., making the law the most profitable moral narrative, is a meaningful and achievable endeavour.

4. *Theoretical Synthesis: Integration of Three Concepts*

For Dworkin, law is not a phenomenon separate from morality or politics. Instead, it is a "branch of political morality" (Dworkin, 1988). Therefore, these three concepts of interpretivism, integrity, and unity of values are fundamentally intertwined within the framework of his overarching philosophy. Interpretivism is a method or practice used to understand law. He argues that law is about interpreting existing practice to find the best basic principles. Integrity is a political virtue that demands that the outcome of this interpretation must be coherent and consistent in principle throughout the legal

system. Finally, the unity of values is the underlying metaphysical foundation, allowing for interpretivism and integrity.

Without unity of values, the attempt to seek the “right answer” through constructive interpretation and achieve principled coherence through integrity would be a Sisyphean task, since the underlying values would always be incongruous without resolution. For example, when a judge decides a case about free speech, he or she must interpret these principles in relation to other values such as public safety or equality.

According to Dworkin, this interpretation should be made taking into account the integrity of the legal system as a whole, ensuring that the decision is consistent with how the principle of free speech has been understood and applied in the past, as well as how it should be understood in order to make legal practice the best moral story. Moreover, on a deeper level, the success of this interpretation and integrity is assumed by a unity of values, i.e. the belief that freedom and other values such as security or order can ultimately be harmonised within a coherent moral framework.

Thus, the unity of Dworkin's values is not merely an addition, but the essence of his bold argument that law can and should indeed be a coherent moral project, capable of providing “right answers” because the underlying values do not destroy each other, but rather complement each other in the pursuit of sustainable justice (Nomeh, 2024a; Bustamante, 2024). The unity of values, therefore, became the foundation that strengthened Dworkin's entire frame of mind, giving philosophical legitimacy to his most daring claims. Without this fundamental belief, integrity would only be an unfounded idealism. With the unity of values, Dworkin was able to offer a theory that explained how law works and why it should be a tool for realising a coherent morality in society. The ultimate synthesis brings together all phases of his thought into one powerful and ambitious argument.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research, Ronald Dworkin's thought has evolved into a consistent and coherent intellectual narrative, moving from a critique of positivism to an integrated construction of legal theory. Dworkin's early stages were marked by a systematic attack on H.L.A. Hart's legal positivism. He rejected the idea of a total separation between law and morality, introducing interpretivism as a method for understanding law. According to Dworkin, law should be viewed as a constructive interpretive practice in which judges do not have complete discretion but are bound by moral principles inherent in the legal system. This stage became the foundation for the evolution of his thought, which was later refined into the theory of Law as Integrity, which was the culmination of his interpretive vision. Integrity demands that the law be understood as a coherent narrative that consistently embodies the principles of justice, combining fit dimensions with precedent and moral justification. Thus, integrity serves as the highest standard that legal interpretation must achieve.

The role of the concept of unity of value becomes a crucial philosophical foundation that strengthens and justifies the entire Dworkin framework. Without the belief that moral values, such as justice, freedom, and equality, are inherently coherent and not in conflict with each other, the project of integrity will become unrealistic. Dworkin rejected the view of value pluralism, arguing instead that such values could be integrated into a single network of understanding. This unity of values provides a strong ontological basis for Dworkin's claim that there is “one right answer” in complex cases, since he believed that the moral principles that guide legal decisions are fundamentally

harmonious. Therefore, this concept is not merely an addition but a logical culmination that provides philosophical legitimacy for legal efforts to seek coherence and justice.

Overall, each stage in the development of Dworkin's thought, from interpretivism and integrity to unity of values, forms a single, interconnected philosophical architecture. Interpretivism is the method of interpreting law, integrity is the standard that must be achieved by such interpretation, and unity of values is the philosophical foundation that makes both possible. This transformation shows how Dworkin progressively constructed his theory as a comprehensive response to legal scepticism, asserting that law is a moral-political practice inseparable from the values of justice. Thus, Dworkin criticises positivism and offers an ambitious and structured alternative, which is relevant in debates about the role of the courts and human rights.

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