Consonances Between Liberalism and Pragmatism

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to identify certain consonances between contemporary liberalism and classical pragmatism. I first analyze four of the most trenchant criticisms of classical liberalism presented by pragmatist figures such as James, Peirce, Dewey, Addams, and Hocking: that liberalism *overemphasizes negative liberty*, that it is *overly individualistic*, that its *pluralism* is suspect, that it is *overly abstract*. I then argue that these deficits of liberalism in its historical incarnations are being addressed by contemporary liberals. Contemporary liberals, I show, have taken on board a surprising number of classical pragmatist insights and have responded to a surprising number of classical pragmatist criticisms. I thus argue that both contemporary pragmatism and contemporary liberalism have much to gain by joining forces.

Keywords: liberalism, pragmatism, negative liberty, individualism, pluralism, abstraction

In 1930, John Dewey wrote *Individualism Old and New*.[1] When he wrote this book, political and economic events such as World War I and the beginnings of the Great Depression had combined to dash many people's hopes that classical liberalism could deliver the utopian ideals it had once promised. Dewey responded to these events by arguing that the classical liberal tradition, with its emphasis on individual freedom, required "reconstruction" if it was to ensure a truly progressive and properly liberal culture. Reconstruction, in all of Dewey's work, had a very particular meaning: reconstruction meant "to construct again"—to reform and rework old concepts so they could accommodate and negotiate new

experiences.[2] Dewey thus did not mean his pragmatic reconstruction of liberal individualism to be antithetical to liberalism as a whole; his target, instead, was the antiquated philosophical tradition he believed liberalism had become. What he intended was not a wholesale rejection of liberalism, but a reformulation of its central ideals and concepts. Even his title, *Individualism Old and New*, reflected the simultaneously conservative and progressive aims of his understanding of reconstruction.

My worry is that many contemporary pragmatists—those pragmatists who study the writings of Dewey and his peers—have forgotten this meaning of reconstruction and have thus neglected the promise that Dewey saw in the liberal tradition. Instead of *Individualism Old and New*, I would like to initiate a discussion about *liberalism old and new*. I would like to suggest that liberalism in its new forms—those developed in the last forty years, in the wake of the resurgent interest in political philosophy initiated by John Rawls—has much in common with classical pragmatic thinking. This runs against the grain of much of the contemporary literature in American philosophy. Contemporary pragmatists, in the wake of Dewey, often seem perfectly happy to talk quite favourably about "democracy," but they generally eschew all talk of "liberalism." I have come to believe that this tendency is rooted in either a misunderstanding of the liberal tradition or an inability or unwillingness on the part of contemporary pragmatist thinkers to move past liberalism's historical manifestations. Where many of my pragmatist colleagues see incompatibilities between liberalism and pragmatism, I see deep consonances.

This paper is an attempt to highlight some of these consonances. Contemporary liberals, I will show, have taken on board a surprising number of classical pragmatist insights, and have responded to a surprising number of classical pragmatist criticisms. My claim is not that every contemporary liberal, in every instance, is perfectly consistent in applying pragmatism's lessons. Rather, it is that contemporary liberals are still grappling with the same ideas and issues that we can see classical pragmatists identifying and grappling with themselves. I believe that there is to be found here, in effect, an extended conversation aimed at making sense of democracy's potential. My aim is to demonstrate that contemporary liberalism can, and has, learned many of the lessons given to us by classical pragmatism. My hope is that doing so will establish that the debate between pragmatism and liberalism that began nearly a century ago is neither intractable nor irrelevant today. This dialogue between pragmatism and liberalism matters, I contend, because it speaks to the broadest political problems of our present globalized world—a world where many believe that democracy offers the only viable way of living together but where cultural and religious differences threaten to make democracy unlikely or impossible. Addressing the most pressing concerns of our contemporary political lives—global justice; the treatment

of women, people of color, and indigenous populations; poverty, hunger, and drastically unequal distributions of resources—requires theoretical frameworks that will enable practical efforts. I believe that a collaboration between liberalism and pragmatism can make a key contribution here.

This paper has three interrelated aims. First, I aim to show that virtually all of the most trenchant contemporary criticisms of liberalism were anticipated in some form by thinkers in the canon of classical pragmatism. Very briefly, these criticisms are (1) that liberalism overemphasizes negative liberty, (2) that it is overly individualistic, (3) that its pluralism is suspect, and (4) that it is overly abstract. Second, I aim to show that contemporary liberals are in the process of responding to each of these criticisms. These first two aims lead to a third, namely, to demonstrate that contemporary liberals can find philosophically kindred spirits in the classical pragmatists and in those contemporary scholars who want to resuscitate the work of these historical figures. My hope is that doing this might ameliorate some of the antagonism many contemporary pragmatists feel toward contemporary liberalism.

What Is Liberalism?

But first, what, exactly, is liberalism? Liberals, most obviously, agree that *liberty* is the most important political value. They agree that the best possible state is one that secures the greatest amount of liberty for each individual that is compatible with like liberty for all. They agree that this politically important liberty should give individuals freedoms such as freedom from the unwanted interferences of others, freedom to live the life of one's choosing, and freedom to choose one's own conception of the good. They agree that the rights and interests of the individual, not those of the larger social group, are both the justification of and the limiting condition on the power and authority of the state.

But, as we will see, contemporary liberals disagree about almost as many things as they agree on. They disagree about how to best mediate the conflicts that arise between the interests of the individual and the interests of the group. They disagree about how to best understand what these interests even are. They disagree about whether individuals are always the best judge of what their interests are (or even whether they should always at least be treated as if they are). They disagree about how groups should determine what their collective interests are. They disagree about the ontological status of both individuals and social groups. They disagree about how to rank the importance of various kinds of freedom, and about how to mediate the conflicting demands of freedom and equality. They disagree about how much and what kind of market regulation economic justice requires—with libertarians defending complete *laissez-faire* non-interference and egalitarians defending sometimes significant regulation in the name of fairness. These

disagreements can be both practical and theoretical, and they are seemingly endless. This diversity of liberal perspectives exists because contemporary liberals are in the process of responding to a wide variety of criticisms—many of which, I will show, can be found in the work of classical pragmatists.

Negative Liberty

The first classical pragmatist criticism of liberalism I would like to take up is its criticism of liberalism's overemphasis on negative liberty. John Dewey's version of this criticism proceeds via his arguments against classical liberalism's individualism and abstraction. Dewey argued that

> an individual is nothing fixed, given ready-made. It is something achieved, and achieved not in isolation but with the aid and support of conditions, cultural and physical: —including in 'cultural,' economic, legal and political institutions as well as science and art.[3]

But liberalism, he contended, conceives of the individual as "something given, something already there," prior to society; this amounts to a pernicious form of abstraction that pretends that the individual is an entity that is "final and self-sufficient."[4] Liberalism's abstraction of the individual from his or her social context is problematic, Dewey argued, because when we think of the individual as existing prior to social institutions this makes it more likely that we will start to think that securing freedom for the individual requires nothing more than removing external impediments on his or her actions. But the mere absence of external constraints is not a sufficient condition for freedom in any morally meaningful sense. Dewey argued that liberalism's negative view of freedom—where freedom is nothing more than the absence of intentional constraints on an individual's ability to pursue his or her ends—is socially, ethically, and politically impoverished. What is really valuable about freedom for an individual, he thought, is not merely the negative absence of interference but the positive "power to be an individualized self."[5] What is really valuable about freedom for society at large is not merely that individuals are negatively

> emancipate[d] . . . from restrictions imposed upon them by the inherited type of social organization, [but that society at large be able to positively articulate and enact] a new social organization. . . . The release of force does not of itself give direction to the force that is set free. . . . The beliefs and methods of . . . liberalism were ineffective when faced with the problems of social organization and integration.[6]

Another philosopher—one not usually associated with classical pragmatism—leveled a similar criticism against this same aspect of liberalism, writing in the same year that Dewey published his *Liberalism*

and Social Action. William Ernest Hocking argued that because liberals conceive of the individual as prior to, and separable from, his or her social context, they conceive of what is important for the individual solely in terms of his or her individual rights, and this causes liberal citizens to neglect the important connection between rights and duties.[7] Liberalism's failure to appreciate that the individual is made, not fixed, is what is responsible for its overemphasis on negative freedom, Hocking thought. Because liberals conceive of the individual as prior to, and separable from, his or her social context, they are primed to conceive of what is important for the individual solely in terms of his or her individual rights. This causes liberal citizens to neglect the connection between rights and duties. Individuals have rights, liberalism insists, but somewhere along the line liberals have forgotten that with these rights come corresponding duties to others.

> Liberalism has infected the Western mind with the disease of Rights-without-Duties. . . . Liberalism [should not have] forgotten that being 'born free and equal' meant simply an immunity from exploitation which carried with it an imperative to refrain from exploiting others. For every right-receivable, there are innumerable duties-payable: that right of 'equality' which defends me from the arrogance of a thousand pretending superiors defends a hundred thousand against my own arrogance.[8]

Hocking located the problem with this picture of rights without duties in its failure to secure the basis for articulating and enacting a common social cause. "Liberalism . . . has shown itself incapable of bringing about or maintaining social wholeness."[9] "[L]iberalism trains people to receive, and only hopes that they will give."[10] I believe that pragmatist thinkers such as Dewey and Hocking were right to emphasize the paucity of merely negative freedom as a moral or political ideal. And they were right to criticize the various historical incarnations of liberalism for pretending otherwise.

This distinction between positive and negative liberty did not originate with the pragmatists, however: the thought that there are both positive and negative conceptions of liberty goes back at least as far as Kant. While both defenders and critics of liberalism have been grappling with the implications of this distinction for centuries, it was in the 1950s and '60s, beginning with Isaiah Berlin's "Two Concepts of Liberty," that social and political philosophers started examining the concepts in earnest.[11] Berlin's argument is that the concepts of positive and negative liberty are best thought of as incompatible ways of understanding what the political ideal of liberty really amounts to. Defenders of negative liberty (such as Berlin himself) argue that defending liberty amounts to defending the right of individuals to be free of state intervention; defenders of positive liberty argue that defending liberty

amounts to defending the right of individuals to self-realize, self-actualize, or self-determine, the achievement of which will often require more state intervention than defenders of negative liberty will usually be comfortable with. Defenders of negative liberty are motivated by the conviction that the state must remain neutral with respect to any particular conception of the good; this motivation stems from a recognition that state attempts to support or entrench a particular conception of the good have, historically, tended to go very badly, leading to civil strife or unjust forms of authoritarianism. Defenders of positive liberty are motivated by the conviction that true liberty requires the social, material, and psychological resources to actually be able to make meaningful decisions about one's life; they believe that assuring the fair distribution of these resources will often require state interventions such as programs that redistribute wealth or programs that ensure access to education and other mechanisms that assure the possibility of social mobility.

According to the standard way of carving things up, defenders of liberalism will be proponents of the negative conception of liberty, while critics of liberalism will be proponents of the positive conception of liberty. This picture was probably true of liberalism and its critics in their historical incarnations. But things have changed. Many contemporary defenders of liberalism now recognize that negative liberty is, by itself, usually insufficient for meaningful autonomy. Most liberal thinkers now recognize that people need *freedom to*, not merely *freedom from*, if they are to count as meaningfully free, and most attempt to incorporate this positive understanding of liberty into their liberal frameworks in some way. Contemporary liberals now recognize the tension between classical liberalism's negative understanding of liberty as the absence of constraints and a more robust, positive, understanding of liberty as self-determination. Few, if any, claim to have fully dissolved this tension. But almost everyone recognizes it, and yet they do not see it as reason to reject liberalism outright. In fact, a large amount of the scholarship of contemporary liberalism can be interpreted as the attempt to grapple with the implications of this tension. The brief discussion that follows is merely the tip of the philosophical iceberg.

Rawls, for example, wrestles with the limits of positive liberty in his distinction between civic humanism, which he believed to be illiberal, and civic republicanism, which he believed is not. The difference between the two, very roughly, has to do with how the importance of civic participation is understood—whether it is seen as one important good among many, or as a necessary good required of all citizens. Rawls argued that the important lesson to be learned from republicanism is that an educated and politically active citizenry is necessary in order to protect against despotism.

> [W]ithout a widespread participation in democratic politics by a vig-
> orous and informed citizen body, and certainly with a general retreat
> into private life, even the most well-designed political institutions
> will fall into that hands of those who seek to dominate and impose
> their will through the state apparatus either for the sake of power and
> military glory, or for reasons of class and economic interest, not to
> mention expansionist religious fervor and nationalistic fanaticisms.[12]

But this understanding of civic republicanism is compatible with liberalism, Rawls argued, because it does not entail the imposition of an overly robust conception of the good. What is incompatible with liberalism is what he called "civic humanism," which differs from republicanism by insisting that "[p]articipation is not encouraged as necessary for the protection of the basic liberties of democratic citizenship, and as in itself one form of good among others, however important for many persons. Rather, taking part in democratic politics is seen as the privileged locus of the good life."[13] Civic humanism, Rawls argued, illegitimately imposes a particular comprehensive doctrine onto all citizens, and is therefore illiberal.

Attentiveness to the tensions between positive and negative liberty is also apparent in discussions by a great number of contemporary liberal philosophers who take up the issue of what autonomy ultimately amounts to—with some arguing that the concept is most profitably conceived of as something as minimal as the bare capacity to set and pursue ends, and others arguing that the concept cannot be meaningfully understood without incorporating a robust account of the social and material conditions necessary to exercise this capacity. In light of this debate, some liberals focus on questions such as whether autonomy is best thought of as the capacity to self-govern, the actual condition of self-government, the feature of persons that should prevent paternalistic interventions, the independence from external manipulation, a set of rights that express one's sovereignty over oneself, or some combination of all these factors.[14] Others ask whether autonomy is a relatively thin ideal that requires merely that agents have freedom of choice, or whether it is a thicker ideal that requires that the choices that agents are free to make must be in some sense worthwhile or valuable; those who defend the latter conception of autonomy hold that a state has both a negative duty to respect its citizens' autonomy and a positive duty to foster the social conditions that make this autonomy possible.[15] Other liberals concern themselves with the question of whether a person needs to be able to alter the factors that guide her life in order to count as autonomous.[16] And many more are concerned with articulating precisely what social and material conditions need to be in place in order for an autonomous person to be able to engage in the reflective endorsement that is necessary for autonomy.[17]

In this same vein, there is an extensive body of literature that focuses on understanding how oppressive social conditions complicate and problematize conventional understandings of the concept of autonomy. Some defend autonomy as a concept that allows us to understand and critique oppressive social conditions.[18] Others take up what is known as the problem of adaptive preferences, which moves from the recognition that people's preferences can be influenced by oppressive background social conditions to consider questions such as when we might be justified in criticizing or ignoring the preferences people actually have in favour of other norms or principles when we are deciding certain fundamental issues of social choice.[19]

Individualism

As we just saw, both Dewey and Hocking criticized liberalism for being overly individualistic. Liberalism's conception of the individual as fixed, not made, perniciously misrepresents both the individual and her relation to the world, they argued. William James, too, defended a non-atomistic conception of the self:

> *In its widest possible sense*, however, *a man's Self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his*, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account.[20]

These pragmatists argued that the social relations an individual claims—and those relations that claim an individual—are not merely *additive*, but are, rather, *constitutive* of selfhood. There is no core or hidden self upon which social relations are layered to constitute an individual's identity. Instead, we are born into particular social relations, and claim a variety of relations for our own, and these relations define *who we are* as individuals.

In this pragmatist criticism of liberal individualism, we see many of the same arguments that are being made by contemporary communitarian critics of liberalism.[21] This criticism of individualism has also been picked up by those who articulate and defend *relational* conceptions of autonomy and selfhood.[22] For whatever reason, these relational ideals have received most explicit articulation and attention by feminist philosophers. Many of these feminists have advocated a shift away from the individualism they see underlying traditional liberal conceptions of autonomy and the self toward a more relational conception that recognizes that the interests of the individual are inseparable from the interests of others.[23] These philosophers criticize the liberal conception of the person for under-emphasizing how factors such as one's gender, race, ethnicity, or religion actually constitute

one's identity; failing to recognize this, these critics argue, puts liberals at risk of wrongly assuming that people can separate themselves from all their cultural commitments.[24]

But this, too, is a lesson that has been taken on board by a great number of contemporary liberals. Some liberals argue, for example, that liberalism is not committed to requiring that an individual be able to define herself in a way that is entirely separate from her relations, connections, and commitments; all that liberalism requires, they argue, is that no single one of these factors is beyond review.[25] Other contemporary liberals defend classical liberalism's attachment to a relatively individualistic conception of identity and autonomy by arguing that liberalism's core ideal of self-government remains a laudable moral aim, particularly given that one of the greatest injustices many people continue to face is a restriction of the quality and quantity of choices that are open to them. These liberals argue that we can accommodate many of the points made by those who are critical of the liberal tradition— that people's decisions are influenced by values that are largely determined by interpersonal relations; that these interpersonal relations are not just inevitable, but also valuable; that the interests of the individual are not cleanly separable from the interests of others—without giving up on the liberal idea that it is important that, ultimately, people be free to make their own choices and promote their self-interest.[26]

Other liberals take a slightly different tack in defending liberalism's individualism, arguing that the liberal strategy of focusing on people primarily as individuals with interests of their own is superior to non-liberal strategies that focus on people, and their interests, primarily in terms of the interests of the larger social groups—groups such as communities, religions, and families—of which people are members.[27] Liberalism can (and, indeed, must) recognize that membership in these groups plays a constitutive role in people's lives. But liberalism also focuses on the commonalities, the "core of rational and moral personhood," that people share across groups.[28] And thus these liberals argue that the locus of value is always the individual person, not the larger social group in which individuals find themselves. When liberals (and others) have gone wrong on this front, it has been because they have not been individualistic enough: they have pretended that the interests of the group were more important than the interests of the individual people who make up that group. This defence of individualism is, I contend, one rooted in the sorts of concerns raised by classical pragmatists.

Pluralism and Objectivity

James' criticism of the atomic understanding of the individual employed by classical liberals should not be confused with a criticism of the importance of individual experience. James would have been the first to admit

that particularity and uniqueness were real and driving forces in our lives. While individuality might emerge in a given set of social relations, he insisted that this emergence is always a genuinely new appropriation and reconstruction of these relations. This is why James, for example, endorses a humanism that is pluralistic, for in his words, "ethically, the pluralistic form of [humanism] takes for me a stronger hold on reality than any other philosophy I know of."[29] His insistence on the singularity of individual cases, a singularity that is reflected in personal subjective experience, led James to adopt a robust *pluralism* when it came to ethical, epistemic, and ontological matters. When applied to epistemology, this pluralism generated pragmatism's experimentalism. General theories were always to be tested against the particular and unique events that define the sphere of human experience.

Another consonance between contemporary liberalism and classical pragmatism thus has to do with liberalism's commitment to pluralism and pragmatism's commitment to experimentalism. As we saw above, many liberals are pluralists, arguing that a respect for people's autonomy requires the state to remain neutral between different conceptions of the good life. Liberal pluralists recognize that different liberal experiments can be successful—that there are many correct but competing and incompatible ways to live meaningful lives—and they argue that it is not the role of the state to endorse any particular one of these ways of living. This insight is deeply consonant with pragmatists' experimentalism.[30] But, strangely, contemporary pragmatists seem not to realize that many, perhaps even *most*, liberals defend a pluralism that looks an awful lot like their experimentalism.

In examining these similarities I think it is instructive to consider certain criticisms that were made by Hocking, a sometimes-friend and sometimes-foe of both liberalism and pragmatism. Hocking argued that classical liberalism's commitment to neutrality with respect to conceptions of the good commits it to a form of relativism that leaves it politically and morally impotent. Anderson says, of Hocking's anti-relativist criticism of liberalism, that Hocking thought liberalism needs a "working sense of limits and constraints, of what is actually possible."[31] Unless liberalism is committed to defending certain objective standards, Hocking thought, judging the success of its experiments will be "impossible, or, at least, arbitrary."[32]

What is interesting, given our purposes here, is that Hocking's criticism of liberalism was very similar to his criticisms of the pragmatists of his time. That Hocking was able to level the same charge against both pragmatism and liberalism reveals a deep similarity between these two traditions. The history of pragmatism and the history of liberalism have actually been characterized by many of the same versions of this debate, namely, the question of objectivity in the fields of ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. Hocking joined Royce and other

idealists of the day in accusing James and other pragmatists of making the same kind of relativist mistakes of which Hocking accused liberalism. This accusation had merit: James did write, after all, that "our account of truth is an account of truths in the plural . . . truth for us is simply the collective name for verification-processes."[33] James, Peirce, and Dewey all held that pragmatic experimentalism requires being committed to multiple, and provisional, conceptions of the good. This left their epistemic positions open to the charge of relativism, a charge that certain contemporary pragmatists continue to face in the current philosophical climate. This is evident, for example, in Anderson's claim that Hocking's "liberal spirit" stands in marked contrast to the neo-pragmatic "liberal ironism" of Richard Rorty. Hocking would almost certainly cringe at Rorty's claim that "human solidarity" (Rorty's preferred phrase for referring to objectively shared standards of the good) is nothing more than a matter of "sharing a common selfish hope that one's world—the little things around which one has woven into its final vocabulary—will not be destroyed."[34] Rorty's conception of solidarity reflects both a nominalism (a term that Peirce and Royce both derided) and an instrumentalism that are completely at odds with Hocking's idealistic commitments.

Dewey, a sometimes-friend and sometimes-foe of Hocking, attempted to defend pragmatic instrumentalism from idealist criticisms like Hocking's. In a section often referred to as "The Construction of the Good," Dewey defended an experimentalist bearing, claiming that the seemingly solid foundation of both moral and social and political philosophy was "undermined by the conclusions of modern science" in the 19th and 20th centuries.[35] In light of the experimentalism of modern science, Dewey sought to "integrate" moral values and the concrete and particular experiences of individuals in the social sphere. He even went so far as to claim that

> the problem of restoring integration . . . between man's beliefs about the world in which he lives and his beliefs about the values and purposes that should direct his conduct is the deepest problem of the modern life.[36]

This remains one of the deepest problems of contemporary pragmatism, and of moral theory on the whole. Dewey's response to Hocking was that pragmatism's project should be to pursue as much stability in its moral values as possible without sacrificing its fidelity to the unique circumstances of a variety of people. This project required a type of moral pluralism that Hocking's idealism, inherited from Royce, could not allow.

Contemporary pragmatists have continued to undertake Dewey's project of navigating the tensions between articulating and defending

moral values that are stable enough to be meaningful, while remaining open to widest possible variety of human experiences. But contemporary liberals, too, have adopted this project in a variety of ways. Just as contemporary pragmatists continue to attempt to negotiate these tensions, contemporary liberals strive to find a middle ground between the communitarian complaint that liberalism is too universalistic[37] and the civic republican complaint that it is too relativistic.[38]

Discussions surrounding the tensions between pluralism and objectivity have, for example, been taken up profitably by contemporary liberals engage in the debate over whether liberalism is best thought of as a "comprehensive" or a "political" doctrine. This discussion, like so many others, began with Rawls, who, in his later work, defended a liberalism that is "political" rather than "comprehensive"—that is, a liberalism that remains neutral with respect to questions of value, ethics, epistemology, and the metaphysics of the person and society.[39] Insofar as modern societies exhibit a "reasonable pluralism" with respect to these questions, Rawls argues that the liberal's role is to avoid adding yet another comprehensive doctrine to the mix, and instead to provide an overarching political framework that is neutral between a society's competing comprehensive doctrines. In the wake of Rawls' influence, most contemporary liberals now situate their theories on a continuum between the minimal and the substantive, with those who are closer to the minimal side tending to argue that liberals should focus on specifying the procedures by which people's preferences will be aggregated in a society and on minimizing the constraints on people's actions,[40] and those who are closer to the substantive side tending to argue that liberals must embrace comprehensive theories of value and endorse some conceptions of the good over others.[41]

A related way that contemporary liberals talk about this same problem can be found in the debate between perfectionism and proceduralism. Some contemporary liberals challenge the idea that liberalism must be committed to normative neutrality when formulating and applying political principles. These liberals defend *perfectionist* accounts that claim that there are certain objective values that an individual or a society *should* accept or endorse, even if the individual or population does not endorse them.[42] (Some liberals who defend perfectionist accounts do so because they are concerned to rule out the possibility of attributing autonomy to people in oppressive and overly restrictive life situations.[43] Others do so because they argue that improving the quality of life and social standing of members of oppressed groups requires being able to evaluate the choices that these people actually make, and only a concrete set of perfectionist principles permits this kind of evaluation.[44]) Other liberals defend *proceduralist* accounts that deny that there are objective values that individuals or societies should endorse, instead claiming that liberals' focus should be on ensuring that certain

material and political conditions are in place so that people are free to engage in the reflective endorsement necessary for autonomous decision-making.[45]

Various contemporary pragmatists have added their voices to these discussions, including Robert Talisse and Colin Koopman. Talisse endorses Rawls' contention that there is a problem with classical liberalism because the fact of reasonable pluralism of comprehensive doctrines—the fact that intelligent, sincere, and well-intentioned people can disagree reasonably over moral ideals—means that a liberal society cannot avoid unjustly imposing upon at least some of its citizens a comprehensive doctrine that they could reasonably reject.[46] He argues that these Rawlsian considerations give pragmatists reason to reject a Deweyan conception of democracy, which endorses a comprehensive doctrine that can be reasonably rejected, in favour of a Peircean one, which endorses a comprehensive doctrine that cannot be reasonably rejected because it both hinges on and defends irreducibly social epistemic norms that themselves actually constitute reasonableness.[47] Talisse argues that this perfectionist Peircean conception of democracy can thus ultimately solve Rawls' problem, because it provides a comprehensive doctrine that is consistent with reasonable pluralism. Koopman, maintaining a more Deweyan line, holds that Rawls' view is deficient to the extent that it assumes "a well-ordered society," when a closer look at current political practices could hardly be described in these terms.[48] This is, to be sure, a tenable criticism of Rawls, and one that is clearly supported by pragmatic tenets. It also fits nicely with the many other criticisms of Rawls' ideal theory that have been voiced by many liberal theorists in the wake of his *Theory of Justice*.

Perhaps the most interesting and fruitful example of contemporary liberals grappling with Dewey's concern to navigate between actual people's experiences and the norms and values that govern them is found in the work of Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, who defend a view they call the *capabilities approach*.[49] The capabilities approach has us ask people the following question:

> What activities characteristically performed by human beings are so central that they seem definitive of a life that is truly human? In other words, what are the functions without which . . . we would regard a life as not, or not fully, human?[50]

The list of capabilities that results from this inquiry is both empirical and open-ended, because it summarizes the "empirical findings of a broad and ongoing cross-cultural inquiry."[51] It is also deliberately general, because it attempts "to put forward something that people from many different traditions . . . can agree on, as the necessary basis for pursuing their good life."[52] The goal of this list is more than mere

survival; its goal is human *flourishing*. A life that lacks any one of these capabilities will be judged to "fall short of a good human life."[53] So, when we are assessing the quality of life in a country and trying to figure out which public policies to implement, the most important question this approach has us ask is whether these policies help people achieve these capacities.

I want to suggest that the liberal capabilities approach reflects pluralist commitments that contemporary pragmatists could readily endorse. The capabilities approach is both explicitly pluralist and explicitly experientialist: it constructs its account of what is essential to a flourishing human life by appealing explicitly to the norms and values that are embodied in actual human practices, by using real people's own judgements about what they find valuable. The approach leaves room for pluralism by having its list of capabilities be open-ended and nonexhaustive, and by allowing the capabilities to be specified in many different ways.

The capabilities approach squares nicely with the view, expressed by various pragmatists, that failing to afford people the ability to explore the possibilities that they themselves have chosen is a moral wrong. John Kaag describes how James endorses a version of this view by supporting the creation of particular political practices that are geared toward fostering individuals' various capabilities. Given James' emphasis on the near-sanctity of human potential, Kaag argues that we should interpret him as suggesting that we have "a moral obligation to foster communities and societies that provide the vistas and pathways by which individuals can explore their own experiential frontiers."[54] Judith Green defends a similar point when she argues that Dewey's understanding of participatory democracy stems from the realization that widespread involvement in political processes is the only way to ensure that certain fundamental capabilities are not neglected.[55]

Even more explicit comparisons between the liberal capabilities approach and classical pragmatist thought have been made recently by Brian Butler and Eric Weber. Butler argues that Sen's capabilities approach is best thought of as a response to Rawls' understanding of justice as a matter of fairly distributing primary goods, and that Sen's response is deeply consonant with Dewey's insistence that political theorists should attend to the direct indicators of human flourishing—what Dewey would call "growth"—rather than to more abstract metrics that are supposed to measure social and political equality.[56] Butler claims that "most of Sen's critique [of Rawls] argues for claims that pragmatism has been making for years."[57] Weber echoes a similar sentiment when he engages Rawls' conception of justice from a Deweyan perspective, characterizing the difference between Rawls and Dewey primarily in terms of the "rigidity" of their concepts of personhood and justice.[58] He maintains that Rawls, unlike Dewey, is in pursuit of *one* conception of justice,

and this single-mindedness carries the risk of underestimating or ne-glecting the plurality of interests and ends of human flourishing. Weber prefers the goal of Nussbaum's capabilities approach, insofar as it is "an outcome-oriented approach that supplies a partial account of basic so-cial justice," to Rawls' overly rigid conception of justice.[59] Weber also sides favourably with Nussbaum's criticism of the overly rigid concep-tion of the person that is endorsed by Rawls and other proponents of social contract theory—one that understands people fundamentally as "equal members of a contract who can participate fully as citizens," who are indifferent to the interests of others, and who are motivated only by the pursuit of their own interests.[60] This conception of the person, Nuss-baum argues, leaves out many potential candidates for personhood, in-cluding persons with mental disabilities, foreigners, and nonhuman animals. The contrasting flexibility implied by the capabilities approach's conception of the person, Weber thinks, is far more amenable to prag-matism's open-minded and open-ended ethos.

Abstraction

We have already seen how Dewey criticized liberalism's use of abstrac-tion in its conception of the individual. He argued, in effect, that when liberalism abstracts the individual from his or her social context it is likely to emphasize the importance of negative liberty over more ro-bust, positive, conceptions of liberty that recognize that meaningful human agency requires more than mere absence of external constraint. This is a serious concern, and, as we have seen, it has been taken up by many contemporary liberals. Adding the insights of other pragmatists to this concern, however, yields an even more trenchant criticism of liberalism's methods of abstraction.

At the turn of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, when James began to rethink the meaning of pragmatism, he defined prag-matism in contrast to the presiding tendencies of modern philosophy. One of these tendencies, reflected in rationalist thinkers such as Kant, was to abstract away from the concrete and lived experiences of indi-viduals and their communities. In his 1907 Lowell lectures that would become his *Pragmatism*, James claimed that rationalists replaced experi-ence with abstract conception, and that the result of this was to permit philosophers to ascend to the ivory tower and to ignore the immediate realities of "the public and it problems." James said, of this rationalist conception,

> Far be it from me to deny the majesty of this conception, or its capac-ity to yield religious comfort to a most respectable class of minds. But from the human point of view, no one can pretend that it doesn't suffer from the faults of remoteness and abstractness. It is eminently a product of what I have ventured to call the rationalistic temper. It

disdains empiricism's needs. It substitutes a pallid outline for the real world's richness. It is dapper; it is noble in the bad sense, in the sense in which to be noble is to be inapt for humble service. In this real world of sweat and dirt, it seems to me that when a view of things is 'noble,' that ought to count as a presumption against its truth, and as a philosophic disqualification.[61]

While James often envisioned pragmatism as being a bridge between rationalism and empiricism, on this occasion he definitely sided with the empiricists. Truths and beliefs, he argued, are to be judged in reference to the lived experience of individuals and the societies in which they live.

James' criticism of abstraction is closely related to one that Peirce voiced in his seminal essays from the 1860s and 1870s. Peirce was not as reticent as James to see the philosophical benefits of abstraction. He was, however, very much aware of how the purportedly indubitable truths of abstraction could mask the beliefs and norms of a dominant social hierarchy. In "The Fixation of Belief," Peirce—who thought of beliefs as, in effect, abstractions from lived experience—criticized many of the ways that beliefs can be fixed. One of his criticisms is particularly relevant to the discussion at hand. Here Peirce described how society sanctions certain beliefs and not others according to what he called "the method of authority":

> Let an institution be created which shall have for its object to keep correct doctrines before the attention of the people, to reiterate them perpetually, and to teach them to the young; having at the same time power to prevent contrary doctrines from being taught, advocated, or expressed. Let all possible causes of a change of mind be removed from men's apprehensions. Let them be kept ignorant, lest they should learn of some reason to think otherwise than they do. Let their passions be enlisted, so that they may regard private and unusual opinions with hatred and horror. Then, let all men who reject the established belief by terrified into silence.[62]

While the method of authority is the most commonly used method to fix beliefs and abstract principles, Peirce argued that this method is fundamentally morally flawed. The moral problem with the method of authority is that it depends crucially on policing the dissenting voices that could provide alternative principles or norms that account for the experiences of marginalized individuals in society. This point is almost wholly neglected in Peirce scholarship. It is crucial, therefore, to remember Peirce's words:

> The method of authority will always govern the mass of mankind; and those who wield the various forms of organized force in the state

will never be convinced that dangerous reasoning ought not to be suppressed in some way. If liberty of speech is to be untrammeled from the grosser forms of constraint, then uniformity of opinion will be secured by a moral terrorism to which the respectability of society will give its thorough approval. Following the method of authority is the path of peace. Certain non-conformities are permitted; certain others (considered unsafe) are forbidden. These are different in different countries and in different ages; but, wherever you are, let it be known that you seriously hold a tabooed belief, and you may be perfectly sure of being treated with a cruelty less brutal but more refined than hunting you like a wolf.[63]

Combining the insights of James and Peirce, then, gives us the following criticism of liberalism's abstraction: the problem with liberal abstraction is that it makes us likely to overlook important differences between individuals in favour of a purportedly abstract and generalized self that is in fact a particular self in a position of power. The tyranny of the majority will silence dissenting voices, and those without the social power to make their voices heard will be at best ignored and at worst persecuted.

This very argument has been put forward by one of liberalism's most influential contemporary critics: Catharine MacKinnon.[64] MacKinnon points out that any method of abstraction necessarily involves bracketing certain features in favour of focusing on others. But, she argues, deciding which features to bracket, and which to focus on, are not decisions that can be entirely impartial or neutral. And, because those with the most power are usually the ones making these decisions, she argues that these decisions will tend to both reflect and serve the interests of those with this power. Liberalism's supposedly abstract and impartial ideals can thus actually be particular and biased, and they can function to entrench an unjust status quo. This radical criticism thus contends that liberalism is incapable of achieving social justice in contexts of oppression.

But not all theorists interested in social justice have viewed this criticism as reason to reject liberalism outright. Nussbaum is one such theorist: she argues, from a feminist perspective, that not only is liberalism capable of accommodating these concerns, but also that the liberal method of abstraction that is scrutinized by MacKinnon is actually the most promising strategy for achieving feminist goals.[65] Nussbaum defends liberalism's abstraction by arguing that the extent to which its supposedly abstract and impartial ideals have actually reflected men's particular interests and perspectives is not a problem that is inherent to liberalism itself. Rather, when this has occurred, it has been because the liberal theorists in question have failed to properly apply liberalism's own ideals. When male-biased liberal theorists are guilty of taking men's experiences as the norm, and of ignoring women's interests,

Nussbaum argues that they are guilty not of *too much* abstraction but rather of *not enough*. They are guilty of unjust forms of particularity and favouritism. But none of this is fundamental to liberalism, which, Nussbaum reminds us, is committed to the view that all of us possess "equal dignity and worth," the primary source of which is our "power of moral choice . . . that consists in the ability to plan a life in accordance with one's own evaluations of ends."[66] Women are every bit as capable of this as men are, and so they are every bit as morally valuable. Thus, insofar as women and men are of equal dignity and worth, enshrining the interests of men at the expense of the interests of women is at odds with the deepest tenets of liberalism. Nussbaum is not pretending that a depressing number of theorists in the liberal tradition have not gotten this wrong. She is arguing that the solution is not to reject liberalism's ideals, but to actually apply them properly. Insofar as Nussbaum does eschew particularity in her defence of abstraction, this is nothing like a demand that we ignore people's concrete experiences or social contexts. As we saw above, this is apparent when we look at how Nussbaum justifies the liberal capabilities approach for which she is famous: she constructs her account of what is essential to a flourishing human life by appealing explicitly to the norms and values that are embodied in human practices, by using people's own judgements about what they find valuable. Now, it is not clear to me that this move is ultimately successful,[67] but at the very least Nussbaum cannot be accused of ignoring people's own voices. This is also apparent in the interviews with people, the accounts of people's experiences, and the concrete descriptions of people's lives that run throughout Nussbaum's liberal corpus. (And, to be clear, while Nussbaum is concerned with the prospects of all people, her focus is primarily on those from the most oppressed socioeconomic demographics.)

At this point, there is a final figure from the classical pragmatist canon that needs to be included in this analysis of liberalism and pragmatism. Many of the issues taken up by the preceding discussion about abstraction—namely, the problems involved in articulating and applying general moral ideals without ever losing sight of the unique circumstances of particular individuals—were raised repeatedly by Jane Addams at the turn of the century. Judy Whipps has recently argued that Addams' project of rethinking democratic practices hinged on her grappling with the deficiencies of classical liberalism.[68] Addams criticized classical liberalism and, more specifically, the rights discourse that defined the founding of the United States, for privileging a masculinist and elitist standpoint: for the founding fathers, to be the bearer of rights was to be an educated, male, white citizen. As contemporary pragmatists such as Whipps and Maurice Hamington note, Addams' critique of liberalism anticipated a whole host of contemporary feminist and postcolonial positions.[69] Hamington even goes so far as to

claim that Addams' philosophy is best read as "more *radical* feminism than *liberal* feminism."[70]

If Hamington is right, then I would be mistaken to insist that a radical feminist account such as MacKinnon's is not the only legitimate feminist successor of Addams' feminist views. But I contend that Hamington's characterization of liberal feminism—as a view that "seeks to acquire equal opportunity and empower women within existing structures"[71]—is seriously problematic. There is simply no reason to think that liberal feminism is committed to this kind of conservatism. In fact, the only individual I am aware of who would both affirm this definition of liberal feminism and identify as one under it is Christina Hoff Sommers.[72] While I do not think there is much point in fighting over the question of who gets to count as a legitimate feminist, let it suffice to say that Hoff Sommers is almost universally regarded by feminist scholars as drastically misrepresenting the history and ideas of the feminist movement for regressive social and political purposes.[73] Hamington, in accepting and endorsing Hoff Sommers' mischaracterization of liberal feminism, perpetuates an inaccurate and unrepresentative understanding of what liberalism is committed to. His error here is *precisely* the sort of misunderstanding of liberalism that I am at pains to correct in this paper.

In any case, I want to suggest that Addams' work resonates closely with both radical and liberal traditions in various ways. Here, I want to emphasize the consonances between her writing and the efforts of philosophers such as Nussbaum to update and amend classical liberalism. I want us to realize that Addams' central point here—that the application of abstract "rights talk" has often tended to marginalize, neglect, or wholly overlook the experiences of women and ethnic minorities—is also one that someone such as Nussbaum, an avowed liberal, agrees with wholeheartedly.

The historical mistakes that liberals have made regarding this point have led many postcolonial and feminist theorists to conclude, with Chantal Mouffe, that the "insistence on a substantive notion of the common good and shared moral values is incompatible with the pluralism" that must underpin democratic politics.[74] But it is important to note that Addams herself did not support this type of relativism. Instead, in Whipps' words, "Addams *does* imagine a common good and shared values, yet the creation of the good for Addams must come from inclusive dialogue with diverse voices."[75] This is precisely the view that motivates Nussbaum's approach and it is, I contend, a view that is shared by many other contemporary liberal theorists.[76] In *Twenty Years at Hull House* there is a repeated demand to secure what Addams called "the proper outlet for the active faculties" for all individuals, not just the ones in control of the political or social sphere. This resonates very closely with contemporary liberals' discussion of the capabilities approach, but

also with the willingness of contemporary liberals to pursue common goods that are *genuinely* common, rather than goods that pretend to be common when they are in fact exclusive. In a passage from "The Settlement as a Factor in the Labor Movement," Addams defends the appeal of a common good as a motive in social reform. A century ago there was an irresistible impulse, an upward movement, among the mass of

> people to have their share in political life—hitherto the life of the privileged. The universal franchise was demanded, not only as a holy right, but as a means of entrance into the sunshine of liberty and equality. There is a similar demand at the close of this century on the part of working people, but this time it is for a share in the results of industry.[77]

Addams' position here is very similar to Nussbaum's. Both maintain that the problem with abstraction in the moral and political realm is that it has tended to favour particular people and groups. Both also maintain that the solution to this problem is *more*, rather than *less*, abstraction; the abstract ideals of "liberty and equality" must be pursued at every level of the socio-economic order.

This debate, a debate about whether liberalism's methods of abstraction affect its tenability as a theory capable of achieving social justice, is hardly one that is settled. But it stands as another instance where a problem that was raised by classical pragmatists now being taken up by contemporary liberals.

Conclusion
My goal here was to show merely a few of the many ways that contemporary liberals are incorporating the insights of classical pragmatists.[78] My hope was that highlighting the many consonances between liberalism and pragmatism would ameliorate some of the antagonism toward liberalism exhibited by many pragmatists, and would give liberals reason to take pragmatism more seriously. I believe I have shown, at the very least, that the issues that occupy the attention of those who are keen to revive the classical pragmatist tradition are alive and well in the attentions of contemporary liberals. This should, I hope, give contemporary pragmatists and contemporary liberals incentive to approach each other with more generosity, more open-mindedness, and more curiosity.

What else could come of my proposed détente between liberals and pragmatists? First, I think liberals would do well to pay a great deal more attention to classical pragmatism. Contemporary liberalism is a theory, and a set of ideals, that continues to evolve from liberalism's classical roots. A better understanding of classical pragmatism's criticisms of classical liberalism would provide contemporary liberals with a

more solid understanding of the history of this evolution. It could also provide the possibility of uncovering new pragmatic insights that have not yet been fully integrated into liberal thought. By highlighting the consonances between classical pragmatism and contemporary liberalism, I hope to have made the case that further scholarship in this vein is warranted.

Second, I think contemporary pragmatists would do well to pay more attention to contemporary liberalism. If we are to take seriously the commonly expressed concern that American philosophy risks total marginalization within the contemporary discipline of philosophy, I believe pragmatists would do well to search for points of commonality shared with the more dominant streams of contemporary philosophical thought, rather than emphasizing only the grounds for disagreement. Of course, philosophical disagreement is certainly worthwhile, especially in cases where differences are substantial and meaningful. But there are also many areas of meaningful overlap between the concerns of contemporary pragmatists and the concerns of contemporary liberals. Pragmatists might have had an argument with classical liberalism, but a turf war with contemporary liberals seems counterproductive if not simply destructive. Both pragmatism and liberalism have much to gain by joining forces.

One thing that should have been made abundantly clear by the preceding discussion is the amount of diversity that exists within contemporary liberalism. This diversity of liberal perspectives is, I think, responsible for a number of misconceptions or confusions about what liberalism must ultimately amount to. These misconceptions have made liberalism extremely unpopular in some academic disciplines—particularly those disciplines who focus on the pernicious historical role liberal ideals have played in causing and justifying imperialism and colonialism, and those disciplines who aim to solve the problems involved in defining and negotiating the diverse multicultural ways of life that characterize our contemporary world. In a time when economic and political hegemonies threaten local traditions and populations, liberalism is now frequently viewed as the outdated intellectual handmaid of homogenization, colonization, and marginalization. And many—dare I say *most*—contemporary pragmatists seem happy to accept this characterization of liberalism. Accepting this characterization, however, requires ignoring the ways in which liberalism has changed since the classical pragmatists leveled their criticisms.

What I hope to have shown here are merely a few of the many ways that contemporary liberals can respond, have responded, and are in the process of responding to their critics. These criticisms, I contend, are what is pushing liberalism forward. What is interesting, given our purposes here, is that in moving forward contemporary liberalism is drawing much closer to classical pragmatism. While classical pragmatism

found much to criticize in classical liberalism, I contend that contemporary liberalism is no longer susceptible to these criticisms and in fact now corresponds very closely with the thinking of Dewey, James, Peirce, Royce, Addams, and other pragmatists.

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NOTES

1. John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New* (New York: Minton Balch & Co., 1930).

2. In *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, Dewey explains what reconstruction is, and why it is philosophically important, in the following way: "The ancient tradition was strong enough to project itself unconsciously into ways of thinking and to hamper and compromise expression of the really modern forces and aims. Essential philosophic reconstruction represents an attempt to state these causes and results in a way freed from incompatible inherited factors. It will regard intelligence not as the original shaper and final cause of things, but as the purposeful energetic re-shaper of those phases of nature and life that obstruct social well-being. It esteems the individual not as an exaggeratedly self-sufficient Ego which by some magic creates the world, but as the agent who is responsible through initiative, inventiveness and intelligently directed labor for re-creating the world, transforming it into an instrument and possession of intelligence." John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: Henry Hold & Co., 1920), 51.

3. John Dewey, "The Future of Liberalism," *The Later Works*, vol. 11, ed. JoAnn Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981–1990), 291.

4. John Dewey, "Context and Thought," *The Later Works*, vol. 5, ed. JoAnn Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981–1990), 7.

5. John Dewey, "The Public and Its Problems," *The Later Works*, vol. 2, ed. JoAnn Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981–1990), 329.

6. John Dewey, "Liberalism and Social Action," *The Later Works*, vol. 11, ed. JoAnn Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981–1990), 23.

7. William Ernest Hocking, "The Future of Liberalism," *A William Ernest Hocking Reader,* eds. John Lachs and D. Micah Hester (Atlanta: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004). A brief word of explanation for including Hocking in this discussion is probably in order. This is because a comparison between Dewey and Hocking might strike some readers as controversial: Hocking generally took his cues from Josiah Royce's "absolute" pragmatism, and this often set him at odds with pragmatist thinkers such as Dewey and James. That said, I think Hocking's work represents an important intersection of the social and political thought of Royce and certain pragmatists who criticized Royce and his students. It is important to remember that Hocking was educated by both Royce *and* James, and, we will see, his criticisms of liberalism exhibit signs of both of their influences. As Douglas Anderson has noted, Hocking's two-sided education is reflected in the "pragmatic-idealism" of his *The Meaning of God in Human Experience.* (See

Douglas Anderson, "W.E. Hocking and the Liberal Spirit," *A William Ernest Hocking Reader,* eds. John Lachs and D. Micah Hester (Atlanta: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 306.) Hocking's criticism of liberalism was "pragmatic," in the Deweyan or Jamesian sense, insofar as he believed that individuality was developed in an ongoing social process that did not map onto the classical liberal notion of personhood. Hocking, however, was also "idealistic," in the Roycean sense, insofar as he worried about the relativism that might stem from liberal conceptions of the individual. As we will see, Hocking leveled criticisms against both liberalism *and* Deweyan/Jamesian pragmatism.

8. William Ernest Hocking, "The Future of Liberalism," *A William Ernest Hocking Reader,* eds. John Lachs and D. Micah Hester (Atlanta: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 153.

9. William Ernest Hocking, "The Future of Liberalism," *A William Ernest Hocking Reader,* eds. John Lachs and D. Micah Hester (Atlanta: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 152.

10. William Ernest Hocking, *The Lasting Elements of Individualism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), 6.

11. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," *Four Essays on Liberty* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 118–72.

12. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 205.

13. Ibid., 206.

14. See, e.g., Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), and "The Concept of Autonomy," *The Inner Citadel: Essays on Individual Autonomy*, ed. John Christman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 54–62; and Joel Feinberg, "Autonomy," *The Inner Citadel: Essays on Individual Autonomy*, ed. John Christman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 27–53.

15. See, e.g., Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

16. See, e.g., Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); and Alfred R. Mele, *Autonomous Agents: From Self-Control to Autonomy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

17. See, e.g., Alfred R. Mele, *Autonomous Agents: From Self-Control to Autonomy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Diana T. Meyers, *Self, Society, and Personal Choice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), and "Feminism and Women's Autonomy: The Challenge of Female Genital Cutting," *Metaphilosophy* 31 (2000): 469–491.

18. See, e.g., Drucilla Cornell, *At the Heart of Freedom* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Andrew Kernohan, *Liberalism, Equality, and Cultural Oppression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Marilyn Friedman, "Autonomy and Social Relationships: Rethinking the Feminist Critique," *Feminists Rethink the Self*, ed. Diana T. Meyers (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 40–61; Diana T. Meyers, "Personal Autonomy and the Paradox of Feminine Socialization," *Journal of Philosophy* 84 (1987): 619–28; and Susan Wolf, *Freedom and Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

19. See, e.g., Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Amartya

Sen, "Gender Inequality and Theories of Justice," *Women, Culture, and Development*, ed. Jonathan Glover and Martha Nussbaum (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 259–274; and "Rights and Capabilities," *Resources, Values, and Development* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell and MIT Press, 1984), 307–324; and Anita Superson, "Deformed Desires and Informed Desire Tests," *Hypatia* 20 (2005): 109–112.

20. William James, *Principles of Psychology* vol. 1 (New York: Holt and Co., 1918), 291. (*Italics in original.*)

21. See, e.g., Charles Taylor, Philosophical Papers, vol. I: Human Agency and Language; vol. II: Philosophical Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); and Michael Sandel, Liberalism and the Limits of Justice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

22. See, e.g., John Christman, "Relational Autonomy, Liberal Individualism, and the Social Constitution of Selves", *Philosophical Studies* 117 (2004):143–164; Jennifer Nedelsky, "Reconceiving Autonomy: Sources, Thoughts and Possibilities", *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 1 (1989): 7–36; Marina Oshana "Personal Autonomy and Society", *Journal of Social Philosophy* 29 (1998): 81–102

23. See, e.g., Naomi Scheman, "Individualism and the objects of psychology," *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science,* eds. Harding and Hintikka (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1983); Susan Sherwin, "A Relational Approach to Autonomy in Health Care," *The Politics of Women's Health: Exploring Agency and Autonomy,* ed. Sherwin and the Feminist Health Care Ethics Research Network (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, eds., *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Andrea Westlund, "Rethinking Relational Autonomy," *Hypatia* 24 (2009): 26–49.

24. See, e.g., Diana Meyers, "Intersectional Identity and the Authentic Self: Opposites Attract," *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self,* eds. MacKenzie and Stoljar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 151–180; Uma Narayan, "Minds of their own: Choices, autonomy, cultural practices, and other women," *A Mind of One's Own: Feminist Essays on Reason and Objectivity, second edition,* eds. Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt (Boulder: Westview Press, 2002).

25. See, e.g., Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

26. See, e.g., John Christman, "Feminism and Autonomy," *Nagging Questions: Feminist Ethics in Everyday Life,* ed. Bushnell (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), 17–39; Marilyn Friedman, "Autonomy and Social Relationships: Rethinking the Feminist Critique," *Feminist Rethink the Self*, ed. Diana Meyers (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 40–61; and Carol Hay, "Whether to Ignore Them and Spin: Moral Obligations to Resist Sexual Harassment," *Hypatia* 20 (2005): 94–108.

27. See, e.g., Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

28. Ibid., 70.

29. William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1996 [1912]), 194.

30. Though see, contra this claim, the arguments made by Robert Talisse and Scott Aiken. See Robert Talisse and Scott Aiken, "Why Pragmatists Cannot be Pluralists," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 41 (2005): 101–118, and "Still Searching for a Pragmatist Pluralism," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 41 (2005): 145–160.

31. Douglas Anderson, "W.E. Hocking and the Liberal Spirit," *A William Ernest Hocking Reader,* eds. John Lachs and D. Micah Hester (Atlanta: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 311.

32. Ibid., 311.

33. William James, cited in David C. Lamberth, *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 217.

34. Douglas Anderson, "W.E. Hocking and the Liberal Spirit," *A William Ernest Hocking Reader,* eds. John Lachs and D. Micah Hester (Atlanta: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 311.

35. John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Minton Balch & Co., 1957), 257.

36. Ibid., 257.

37. See, e.g., Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Alasdair MacIntyre, *Against the Self-Images of the Age* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978) and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988); Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers, vol. I: Human Agency and Language; vol. II: Philosophical Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); and Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

38. See, e.g., Philip Pettit, "Freedom as Antipower," *Ethics* 106 (1996): 576–604, and *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), and *A Theory of Freedom: From the Psychology to the Politics of Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), and "Agency-Freedom and Option-Freedom," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 15 (2003): 387–403, and "Freedom and Probability: A Comment on Goodin and Jackson," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (2008) 36: 206–220; and Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), and "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self," *Political Theory* 12 (1984): 81–96, and *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

39. See John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) and *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

40. Mill's utilitarian liberalism falls near the minimal end of the continuum. Contemporary liberals who embrace relatively minimal theories include, e.g., Ann Cudd, David Gauthier, and Robert Nozick. See Ann Cudd, "The Paradox of Liberal Feminism: Preference, Rationality, and Oppression," in Amy Baehr, ed. *Varieties of Feminist Liberalism* (Roman & Littlefield, 2004): 37–62; David Gauthier, *Morals By Agreement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); and Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, (USA: Basic Books, 1974).

41. Kant's deontological liberalism falls near the substantive end of the continuum. Contemporary liberals who embrace relatively substantive theories include, e.g., Jean Hampton, Martha Nussbaum, Joseph Raz, and Robert Talisse. See Jean Hampton, "Should Political Philosophy by Done without Metaphysics?" *Ethics* 99 (1989): 791–814; Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Joseph Raz, "Facing Diversity: The Case of Epistemic Abstinence," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 19 (1990): 3-46; and Robert Talisse, "Rawls on Pluralism and Stability," *Critical Review* 15 (2003): 173–194, "Can Democracy be a Way of Life: Deweyan Democracy and the Problem of Pluralism," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 39 (2003): 1–21, and "Toward a Social Epistemic Comprehensive Liberalism," *Episteme: A Journal of Social Epistemology* 5 (2008): 106–128.

42. See, e.g., Thomas Hurka, *Perfectionism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); George Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); L. W. Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness and Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Steven Wall, *Liberalism, Perfectionism and Restraint* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

43. See, e.g., Paul Benson, "Freedom and Value" *Journal of Philosophy* 84 (1987): 465-86; and Bernard Berofsky, *Liberation from Self* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

44. See, e.g., Kimberly Yuracko, *Perfectionism and Contemporary Feminist Values* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); and Linda Hirshman, *Get to Work: A Manifesto for Women of the World* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2006).

45. See, e.g., John Christman, "Liberalism and Individual Positive Freedom" *Ethics* 101(1991): 343-359; Ronald Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); David Gauthier, *Morals By Agreement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); and John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) and *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

46. Robert Talisse, Democracy after Liberalism: Pragmatism and Deliberative Politics (New York: Routledge, 2005), and A Pragmatist Philosophy of Democracy (New York: Routledge, 2007).

47. Jean Hampton makes a very similar argument, although one that does not rely explicitly on pragmatist ideas. See Jean Hampton, "The Common Faith of Liberalism," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 75 (1994): 186–216.

48. Colin Koopman, Pragmatism as Transition: Historicity and Hope in James, Dewey and Rorty (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 160.

49. See, e.g., Amartya Sen, "Rights and Capabilities," *Resources, Values, and Development* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell and MIT Press, 1984), 307–324, and *The Standard of Living* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), and *Inequality Reexamined* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), and *Commodities and Capabilities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, eds., *The Quality of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press,1993); and Martha Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover, eds., *Women, Culture, and Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Martha

Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), and *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), and *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, and Species Membership* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007), and *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2011); and John Alexander, *Capabilities and Social Justice: The Political Philosophy of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2008).

50. Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 39

51. Ibid., 40

52. Ibid., 40

53. Ibid., 42

54. John Kaag, "Pragmatism and the Lessons of Experience," *Daedalus: the Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 138 (2009): 67

55. Judith Green, *Pragmatism and Social Hope: Deepening Democracy in Global Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 238.

56. Brian Butler, "Sen's The Theory of Justice: Back to the (Pragmatic) Future," *Contemporary Pragmatism* 7 (2010): 219–229.

57. Ibid., 228.

58. Eric Thomas Weber, *Rawls, Dewey and Constructivism: On the Epistemology of Justice* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 63–64.

59. Martha Nussbaum, Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2006), 274. As quoted in Eric Thomas Weber, Rawls, Dewey and Constructivism: On the Epistemology of Justice (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 149, note 52.

60. Eric Thomas Weber, *Rawls, Dewey and Constructivism: On the Epistemology of Justice* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 86.

61. William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1907), 71–72.

62. Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief," *The American Pragmatists: Selected Writings* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1970), 91.

63. Ibid., 97.

64. Catharine MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), and *Toward a Feminist Theory of State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

65. Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

66. Ibid., 57.

67. I have in mind here Louise Antony's charge that it must, ultimately, be Nussbaum's antecedent normative commitments that do the justificatory work in the capabilities approach. See Louise Antony, "Natures and Norms," *Ethics* 111 (2000): 5–36.

68. Judy Whipps, "Examining Addams's Democratic Theory Through a Postcolonial Feminist Lens," *Feminist Interpretations of Jane Addams,* Hamington, ed. (State College: Penn State University Press, 2010).

69. Maurice Hamington, *The Social Philosophy of Jane Addams* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

70. Ibid., 10.

71. Ibid., 10.

72. Christina Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism?: How Women Have Betrayed Women* (New York: Touchstone, 1994).

73. See, e.g., Marilyn Friedman, "They Lived Happily Ever After: Sommers on Women and Marriage," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 21, (1990) 75–90, and "More on Liberalism, Gender Hierarchy, and Scarlett O'Hara," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 21 (1990): 57–58.

74. Cited in Judy Whipps, "Examining Addams's Democratic Theory Through a Postcolonial Feminist Lens," *Feminist Interpretations of Jane Addams,* Hamington, ed. (State College: Penn State University Press, 2010), 283.

75. Judy Whipps, "Examining Addams's Democratic Theory Through a Postcolonial Feminist Lens," *Feminist Interpretations of Jane Addams*, Hamington, ed. (State College: Penn State University Press, 2010), 283.

76. See, e.g., William Galston, *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Amy Gutman, "The Challenge of Multiculturalism in Political Ethics," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 22 (1993): 171–206, and "Civic Education and Social Diversity," *Ethics* 105 (1995): 557–579; John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993)

77. Jane Addams, "The Settlement as a Factor in the Labor Movement," *Late Nineteenth Century Liberalism* (New York: Bob-Merrill Company, 1962), 179–180.

78. Of course, it is possible that contemporary liberals came to many or most of the ideas I have discussed here independently of any direct influence from the classical pragmatists. Perhaps these ideas were simply in the air, or suffused into our culture or ways of life, in ways such that the classical pragmatists deserve no special credit for the cultivation of these contemporary discussions. (Thanks to an anonymous referee for this suggestion.) This is, of course, a possibility, and given that I am explicitly not attempting to trace the lineages of these ideas, I have no way of refuting such an objection definitively. However, while it might be that I am misguided for faulting contemporary liberals for forgetting or ignoring the classical pragmatist tradition, it is still the case that contemporary pragmatists have reason to attend to the progress that contemporary liberalism has made—progress that places many of the tenets of liberalism squarely in line with many of the tenets of pragmatism.