

Beyond Classical Liberalism

This book brings together diverse sets of viewpoints on liberalism in an era of growing skepticism and distrust regarding liberal institutions.

The chapters in the book:

- Relate concerns for liberal institutions with classical themes in perfectionist politics, such as the priority of the common good in decision-making or the role of comprehensive doctrines.
- Analyze how perfectionist intuitions about the political life affect our concepts of public reason or public justification.
- Outline various moral duties we have toward other persons that underlie the liberal institutions or notions of rights functioning across the contemporary political landscape.
- Explore various aspects of pluralism from within influential religious or philosophical traditions, applying insights from those traditions to issues in contemporary politics.

The comprehensive book will be of great interest to scholars, students, and researchers of politics, especially those in political philosophy and political theory.

James Dominic Rooney, OP, is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Hong Kong Baptist University. He works primarily in metaphysics, medieval philosophy, philosophy of religion, and Chinese philosophy, with research interests in natural law theory, social ontology, the ethical and political implications of pluralism, and how norms of practical reason affect public reason theories of justification. He has published in *Faith and Philosophy*, *dialectica*, *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, *Journal of Church and State*, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, and other venues. His most recent book is *Material Objects in Confucian and Aristotelian Metaphysics: The Inevitability of Hylomorphism* (2022).

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Beyond Classical Liberalism

Freedom and the Good

Edited by James Dominic Rooney
and Patrick Zoll

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Introduction to *Beyond Classical Liberalism: Freedom and the Good*

James Dominic Rooney and Patrick Zoll

General introduction

On January 6, 2021, the US Capitol building was stormed by rioters protesting the attempt of Congress to certify the election of Joseph Biden to the presidency. The event brought with it public outcry, as it was taken by many to be an assault on basic principles of democratic governance, and many called on the government to punish the protestors to the full extent of the law. However, the event also brought criticism from some quarters, who held that the condemnations of violence in the United States following the Capitol Hill riots and the earlier riots after the death of George Floyd were hypocritical in light of the way that Americans had previously praised pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong. Even more seriously, this was claimed to illustrate the failure of democracy as a viable mode of government.

Skepticism about the value of liberal institutions goes deep and has promoted rediscoveries of and fascination with various illiberal communitarian alternatives. Patrick Deneen has argued, in the widely discussed *Why Liberalism Failed*, that the political establishment in America and Europe have failed to provide what the ideology of liberal institutions has long sought: equality, respect, and progress.¹ Instead, liberal institutions have deteriorated into what Deneen and others have argued is the enforcement of a novel, uniquely liberal, orthodoxy of approved and forbidden political opinions. Despite having claimed to be neutral on matters of what John Rawls claimed were comprehensive religious, moral, or metaphysical doctrines, these authors argue that liberalism has revealed itself to be yet another comprehensive doctrine that aims to exert its dominance over all its rivals. These criticisms are not restricted to the ethereal world of intellectuals, but have taken corporeal form in new geopolitical configurations which aim to supplant the liberal national or international order as a superior way of life for human beings.

This book takes a different stand, defending the moral or political legitimacy and relevance of liberal institutions that ensure equal rights to political participation by all citizens, freedom of speech and conscience, and requirements that state coercion be publicly justified. The authors in this book are

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not all committed defenders of liberalism in its recent form, and some might not describe themselves as liberals at all. The authors collected together here intentionally represent a broad collection of philosophical, moral, and religious traditions—with much room for disagreement on the justifications offered for their defenses of liberal governance. Nevertheless, these authors are united in working out political alternatives that navigate beyond the more well-known liberal consensus positions as well as the illiberal communitarian directions in recent political theory.

In sum, the aim of this book is to bring together chapters which depict ways to go beyond a certain *kind* of liberalism. The kind of liberalism which is judged to be unsatisfactory is a liberalism that is closely associated with the work of John Rawls and his *Political Liberalism*.² Broadly speaking, liberalism involves commitment to values such as freedom or liberty, equality, and respect, emphasis on the protection of individual rights, and advocacy for democratic institutions such as the rule of law, elections, or the separation of powers. Given these characteristics, liberalism in political philosophy is from its very beginnings in the seventeenth century closely connected to the idea of limited government.

The term ‘classical liberalism’ ordinarily refers to the views of John Stuart Mill or John Locke. This older liberal tradition did not break completely with the perfectionist tradition in political philosophy. According to this tradition, an important purpose of the state is to enable and promote the flourishing of its citizens. Founding figures of the liberal tradition such as Mill did not regard their liberalism as being in a principled conflict with perfectionism.³ Matters started changing beginning with an epistemic turn within political philosophy initiated in 1971 by the publication of Rawls’s seminal *A Theory of Justice*. Rawls tied the normative question of the scope and legitimacy of the use of coercive state power to the epistemological question of whether it can be publicly justified, that is, justified with considerations which are accessible as reasons to all reasonable members of the public.⁴ An important consequence of this epistemic turn was that it resulted in a kind of liberalism which is inherently anti-perfectionistic in nature. From the 1970s onward, it appeared that a commitment to liberalism could not be divorced from a commitment to neutrality concerning the good.⁵ Limited government too seemed now to imply that the state should refrain from promoting or taking a stand on what a flourishing human life should be.

Due to the dominance and lasting influence of the Rawlsian model of liberalism over the last five decades, the liberal current has been largely diverted away from perfectionism. As such anti-perfectionist views have become for many on both sides inextricable from commitment to liberal values or institutions themselves, the package of views has assumed “classical” status within contemporary political philosophy (just as Rawls’ books constitute a “classical” work in liberal theory), and hence are rightly described as a kind of “classical liberalism” relative to political philosophy today. Those allied

to this way of tying anti-perfectionism with liberal political theory, alongside Rawls, argued that conceptions of the good can play no role in the public justification of coercive state action due to a non-eliminable reasonable pluralism about conceptions of the good.⁶ Given this reasonable pluralism, considerations which rely on premises about the good life can play no role in public justification because such considerations are not accessible as reasons to all reasonable members of the public. The use of such premises would result in unsolvable reasonable disagreements and state action which were justified with such arguments could not count as legitimate because members of the public could object that the interference with their liberty which goes along with the relevant state action is not publicly justified to them. Their moral status as free and equal citizens would be violated and they would not be treated with the respect owed to them because their liberty was restricted with considerations which are not accessible as reasons for them.

Right from the start, the anti-perfectionist character of that liberalism was the target of a series of objections from critics such as Michael Sandel, Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, or Michael Walzer which have been lumped together under the label ‘communitarians.’⁷ These authors were united by their conviction that a liberalism without perfectionism is seriously flawed, unsatisfactory, and that a completely anti-perfectionist liberalism cannot even be formulated in a coherent way. In a nutshell, perfectionist critics claimed that Rawlsian-esque liberalism is just another kind of perfectionism. Characteristic of it is simply its distinctive liberal conception of the good life with its emphasis on negative freedom, autonomy, and individual rights, its dismissal of virtues, neglect of character formation, lacking awareness of the importance of communities, and so on. It was argued that contemporary anti-perfectionist liberals disguise this fact with appeal to values such as respect or tolerance and attempt to impose their controversial liberal conception of the good life without the possibility to challenge it, in the name of “neutrality.”

However, what has not been sufficiently recognized in the unfolding and still ongoing debate about liberalism’s relation to the good is that two forms of perfectionist critique of classical liberalism must be distinguished. Illiberal perfectionists such as MacIntyre and, more recently, Patrick Deneen and Adrian Vermeule agree with Rawlsian liberals that liberalism cannot be reconciled with perfectionism for principled reasons.⁸ They only draw the opposite inference: if liberalism cannot accommodate perfectionism, it is not perfectionism but liberalism which must be abandoned.

Alternative streams of thought are represented in our book which challenge this purported need to choose between perfectionism and liberal values/institutions. And not every perfectionist critique of anti-perfectionist liberalism and its doctrine of neutrality concerning the good is illiberal in nature. For instance, over the last decades, authors such as Joseph Raz, George Sher, Alexandra Couto, Christoph Henning, Kevin Vallier, and some represented in this book (Steven Wall and Patrick Zoll) have challenged the premise that

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liberalism is irreconcilable with perfectionism and argued for different versions of a liberal perfectionism or perfectionist liberalism.⁹ According to perfectionist liberals, it is possible to go “beyond” more recent deviations in liberalism without jeopardizing liberal values such as liberty, equality, and respect, or abandoning liberal ideas and institutions such as the protection of individual rights, the rule of law, democratic elections, or the separation of powers. These perfectionist liberals also do not replicate the views of classical liberals such as Mill, but are instead pioneering new paths for those still committed by the liberal tradition to take. Nevertheless, some of the authors go beyond liberalism in ways that leave even classical liberal theory behind. Those represented in this book include more than perfectionist liberals, and instead represent other traditions, such as republicanism (Pettit and Muñoz), or classical Greek political thought (Lewis), or Confucianism (Mang and Sim), or natural law theories (Crowe), or those who do not approach the issues through these political theoretical lenses at all (Haybron).

We will not attempt to classify the theoretical schools to which each author belongs, since many overlap among these categories, and merely highlight that the chapters collected in this book intend to contribute to this ongoing project to go “beyond” liberalism without thereby abandoning commitment to liberal values or institutions. They are motivated by the conviction that a defense of such values/institutions will be able to meet the many internal and external anti-liberal challenges which threaten the very persistence of liberal and democratic states around the world only if it draws on the resources provided by perfectionist traditions. Freedom requires the good for its effective defense.

Summary of structure and chapters

This book consists of four parts. Part I contains chapters which relate concerns for liberal values or institutions with classical themes in perfectionist politics. These themes concern freedom, neutrality, the common good, and the tension between individual and community, with corresponding parallel tensions between nation-state and wider international community.

Philip Pettit contrasts classical liberalism’s conception of freedom as non-interference with the republican conception of freedom as the absence of domination. The republican conception of freedom points to a more substantive ideal than that of a *laissez-faire* society: freedom requires a state which protects and empowers its citizens under the law to a level that secures a republican version of social justice. However, a challenge for the political implementation of a republican ideal of freedom is that it may enable public domination by those in office. To guard against this, Pettit advances a distinctively republican conception of democracy whose goal it is to generate a range of constitutional demands by which the discretion of those in power is reduced and by which they are forced to operate on terms laid down by their people.

Two chapters of this part go beyond certain established boundaries of the debate between contemporary liberals affected by the Rawlsian turn and their perfectionist critics.

Steven Wall questions the assumption that the divide between classical liberalism and perfectionism is as sharp or deep as it is widely believed to be. It is usually taken for granted in the debate that classical liberals accept state neutrality—and consequently embrace the view that it is illegitimate for the state to take sides between rival conceptions of the good life—and that perfectionists reject state neutrality—and consequently hold that it is permissible, and may be a requirement, for the state to support or promote some conceptions of the good life over others. Wall challenges this belief by presenting a perfectionist case for state neutrality with respect to competing conceptions of the good within certain spheres of social life. In his view, state neutrality is not a global property of state action, but a property that applies to some spheres of state action and not others. However, the character and specification of the relevant neutrality requirements operative in these different spheres of social life rest on substantive, and no doubt controversial, judgments concerning the goods of human life.

Mark D. Retter transcends the usual boundaries of the debate by expanding it to issues that go beyond the nation-state. According to Retter, with its methodological individualism and the privileged, authoritative status attributed to state sovereignty, the liberal tradition cannot provide an adequate justification for the international rule of law and international institutions. Classical liberalism's methodological individualism frustrates an adequate articulation of the legitimacy and limits of political authority. Retter argues that the presumption that such authority is exercised through an artificial reason of state renders international relations a function of state prerogative. In the international realm, liberalism has a difficult time proposing a compelling justification for individual states to accede to any substantive rules-based order, since the international order is increasingly and vociferously rejected as the imposition of hegemonic or parochial conceptions of the good/just upon sovereign nation-states, sometimes against what they take to be in their best interest—as was exemplified in Russia's justification for its invasion of Ukraine. The result is an unstable dialectic between a liberal internationalism, advancing an individualistic form of human rights at the expense of solidarity through the nation-state, and a collectivist and state-based nationalism, asserting the privileges of sovereignty for those wielding state power. Retter seeks to reclaim and extend intellectual resources from the perfectionist philosophical tradition drawing on the work of Alasdair MacIntyre. His practice-based account of politics aims to explain the legitimacy of political and legal authority by reference to human sociability and the common good, before extending that explanation into the transnational domain.

Stephen Hall moves beyond liberalism in regard to conceptualizing the structure and justification of legal institutions. He engages with the so-called 'will theory' of contractual obligation which originated in the Victorian era

in the nineteenth-century United Kingdom and which remains influential today. According to this theory, the explanation of contractual obligation is that it is the product entirely of the human will. Hall maintains that the will theory has its merits but fails to fully explain contractual obligation. Because humans are social beings, we cannot achieve our highest good of full human flourishing without cooperative action. It is this necessity of cooperative action in support of reasonable goals that is the true source of all obligation. Promise-making is a practice that can secure such action. Once reliance has been placed on a promise, the promisor is obliged to honor it. Contract law strengthens the trust that certain promises will be honored where trust might otherwise be weak, thereby serving the common good. Therefore, Hall concludes, contractual obligation should be understood as being the product of will *directed by practical reason* toward the attainment of reasonable goals, in circumstances where the common good is served by legal enforcement.

The contributions in Part II aim at contemporary issues arising for public reason or public justification, including whether liberal societies are fair in their treatment of the unreasonable citizen, whether and how perfectionists can legitimately appeal to theories of public reason, and the way in which perfectionist intuitions about political life affect our concepts of public justification.

Thomas M. Besch opens the part by raising concerns about the dominant public reason liberal view of public justification: whether liberals violate their own principles in excluding unreasonable citizens from public justification. Besch argues that, on the one hand, public reason liberalism—liberalism which ties legitimacy to public justification—with its commitment to equal respect requires that conceptions of justice be publicly justifiable to relevant people in a manner that allocates to each an equal say. On the other hand, liberal public justification also excludes because it accords no say, or a lesser say, to people it deems unreasonable. Thus, a decisive question is whether that kind of liberal public justification be aligned with the equal respect that allegedly grounds it, if the latter calls for discursive equality? Besch suggests that political liberalism's commitment to equal respect can cohere with the standing of the unreasonable in public justification if that standing is not impermissibly unequal in discursive purchase. He considers one candidate view of what is permissible: purchase inequality is permissible provided relevant people have standing of enough purchase to be able to avoid what is bad. Yet Besch proposes, in the end, that these considerations merely draw out further important questions about such inequalities. Public reason liberalism still has difficulties concerning the way in which public justification needs to be *authoritative* to those who are supposed to accept it, when those people are not merely idealized reasoners but the actual (sometimes unreasonable) members of the community.

A current debate between advocates of consensus and convergence accounts of public reason liberalism exemplifies concerns to widen the scope

of public justification, and the next two chapters attempt to contribute to this ongoing controversy within public reason liberalism and indirectly address some of the tensions which Besch identifies in the philosophical landscape.

Patrick Zoll argues that there is a compelling reason to prefer a convergence account of public reason's structure over a consensus account. Only the former permits to reconcile a public reason liberalism with political perfectionism. According to Zoll, the former should be reconcilable with the latter because an anti-perfectionist public reason liberalism imposes severe restrictions on the scope of what liberal states can legitimately do which in turn deprive them of important means to ward off illiberal threats to their well-functioning or even their existence. Thus, what speaks in favor of a convergence account of public reason's structure is that it allows constructing a perfectionist public reason liberalism which is far better suited to deal with anti-liberal and anti-democratic challenges than an anti-perfectionist public reason liberalism.

James Dominic Rooney shows that consensus accounts of public reason liberalism have serious difficulty justifying fair educational policies and preserving cultural goods. Consensus approaches can resolve some controversies about teaching values in the educational system, such as curriculum choice. But many acrimonious conflicts concern matters that such approaches have difficulty in resolving fairly, such as the preservation/promotion of cultural patrimony (languages, architecture, art, church buildings) or education policy that might significantly affect the development of children. Some have appealed to these difficulties as illustrating that liberal societies undermine those features within civil society that sustain public reasoning. Rooney concurs that consensus approaches cannot fairly resolve competing claims about these kinds of disputes. Yet, convergence accounts of public reason, which allow individuals to draw on their own comprehensive doctrines in limited ways, can remedy these weaknesses in the mainline public reason tradition and can justify a pluralist state advancing valuable community goods. He shows that John Henry Newman's advocacy of liberal arts education finds resonance in other cultures, notably among Confucians, illustrating that there can be convergence around the fact that educational policies or cultural goods are valuable, despite deep substantive disagreements about what makes such things valuable. The purported defects of liberal societies only result from an overly restrictive vision of public justification, one which can be jettisoned without undermining the ideal of public justification itself.

Franz Mang makes a contribution to a debate within perfectionism. Perfectionists are united by the conviction that the state may, or should, promote valuable conceptions of the good life and discourage conceptions that are bad or worthless. However, Mang draws attention to the fact that two types of perfectionist theory must be distinguished: comprehensive perfectionism and moderate perfectionism. Comprehensive perfectionism claims that perfectionism should be grounded in some comprehensive moral doctrine, while

moderate perfectionism claims that perfectionism does not have to be based upon any comprehensive moral doctrine. Moderate perfectionism also contends that in justifying the use of political power, citizens and state officials may appeal to judgments about the good life that are piecemeal, convincing, widely accepted, and not highly controversial. Mang provides some reasons for favoring moderate perfectionism and defends it against criticisms, clarifying the nature and limits of moderate perfectionism through a discussion of Joseph Chan's Confucian perfectionism.

Part III of this book collects chapters which aim to defend or outline various moral duties we might have toward other persons that underlie the liberal institutions or notions of 'rights': functioning across the contemporary political landscape, but doing so outside the dominant frameworks. The contributions thus address worries that perfectionism is necessarily paternalistic or anti-pluralistic, or that it undermines core liberal values such as tolerance or respect.

Paul Billingham deals with an important subset of perfectionist reasons, namely, religious reasons. Liberalism with its emphasis on public justification seems to demand that any arguments used within political deliberation should be open to critical scrutiny, that is, be advanced in a fallibilistic spirit. But can religious citizens comply with this requirement of fallibilism when offering religious political arguments? We might think not, given that such arguments often appeal to what religious citizens see as authoritative sources of absolute truth. Billingham argues in his contribution that, despite this fact, religious citizens can comply with the requirement of fallibilism even if they are unwilling to be fallibilistic about their core religious convictions, because the requirement should be understood as permitting this. In resolving this worry, Billingham argues that religious beliefs may be advanced in a way that makes them a constructive and fruitful contribution to deliberation. Indeed, he suggests that accommodating religious reasons can positively affect political discussions concerning what policies will promote justice and the common good within a community of freedom.

Natalie Stoljar deals with two basic values of the liberal tradition in political philosophy: equality and autonomy. Stoljar, as well as others, has argued that these values are relational in nature and consequently defended relational approaches to equality—relational egalitarianism—and autonomy. A characteristic of such relational accounts is the claim that certain forms of unjust social hierarchy (particularly oppression) are incompatible with equality and autonomy. Thus, it seems that they introduce substantive moral commitments into liberalism itself. According to Stoljar, an important objection to relational approaches is that, in importing substantive moral commitments, they are problematically perfectionist: they constitute disrespectful treatment of people holding conceptions of the good that are incompatible with the substantive morality implicit in relational approaches. With her contribution, Stoljar unpacks the challenge and argues that, even if relational theories are

committed to perfectionism, this is not morally problematic. The perfectionism implicit in relational approaches is compatible with a moral requirement of respect for persons.

Andrew R. Murphy challenges a portrayal of toleration—a value central to the liberal tradition—as a strictly negative liberty, that is, as the absence of constraint. In connection with this characterization, toleration has been attacked as unduly minimal, compared to more robust and affirmative terms like respect, recognition, and equality. Furthermore, it has been argued that emphasis on toleration fosters a depoliticizing discourse that ignores the presence of vast power differentials between social groups, as well as ignoring the place of socioeconomic inequalities. In response to this critique, Murphy offers a brief overview of the history of toleration in the liberal tradition. Toleration was at its inception a negative liberty concerned primarily with religious differences. However, toleration evolved to include positive elements such as liberties of speech, press, and assembly. Murphy concludes that, on the one hand, the tolerationist legacy is not as unsavory as its detractors maintain—it retains the possibility of addressing concerns about power differentials and positive liberties. On the other hand, toleration is not a panacea for the many types of difference that animate contemporary social and political tensions. Without overstating the prospects of toleration for progressive politics, Murphy points out that it lends itself to a particular type of issues, namely, those related to circling conscientious belief and practice.

Jonathan Crowe argues that natural law theory offers a straightforward and compelling way of deriving human rights from intrinsic goods. Crowe concedes that human rights are not a basic concept in the natural law outlook. Rights are subsidiary to the more fundamental notion of intrinsic human goods. Nevertheless, goods generate reasons for action, which in turn produce duties toward others. These duties then correlate to rights. Crowe's contribution elaborates and defends a specific version of the natural law argument for human rights which makes appeal to such intrinsic goods. He then explores some advantages of the natural law approach to human rights, showing how it defuses criticisms of rights discourse advanced from both within and outside the natural law tradition. According to Crowe, the priority of goods over duties, and duties over rights, in the natural law outlook offers an antidote to the individualistic and positional tendencies of rights claims in contemporary politics: instead, when given their appropriate place in political thought, rights claims need not obscure or override the primary role of the common good in shaping political obligations.

The contributions of Part IV aim to explore various aspects of pluralism from within influential religious or philosophical traditions, and to apply insights from those traditions to issues in contemporary politics. The chapters aim to go beyond the usual geographical and historical boundaries within which classical liberalism is often discussed and challenged by perfectionist intuitions.

Daniel Haybron moves us from perfectionism as such to matters of well-being in public policy. He takes up a notorious problem facing perfectionism and any well-being policy: the risk of paternalistically imposing some uniform conception of well-being on a diverse public characterized by deep cultural differences. Haybron maintains that a policy may in a sense promote substantive views of the good, but must take individuals' own values as the standard for assessing benefits and harms—whether or not an objective theory of well-being is correct. From that starting point he argues that to a great extent, the aims of well-being policy can be accomplished by focusing on a modest set of consensus hallmarks of well-being such as happiness, health, relationship, and rewarding work. According to Haybron, governments can promote well-being without endorsing a particular conception of welfare, and without purporting to sum up citizen's well-being in any comprehensive metric.

V. Bradley Lewis's contribution considers Aristotle's critical engagement with classical Greek democracy as a resource for thinking about the ways that non-liberal ideas may support and improve liberal democratic practice. V. Bradley Lewis proposes that self-government, active citizenship, and moderation are the kinds of Aristotelian ideas that may help, and that Aristotle's critical evaluation of democracy is more complex and less hostile than often thought. He looks carefully at the basic conceptual structure of Aristotle's political science by reference to his closely interrelated notions of the city, the regime, and citizenship. Lewis examines Aristotle's characterization of democracy and his most important criticisms of it as a political regime. Finally, he considers complexities of Aristotle's view that stem from other aspects of his own political theory and actual Greek political practice as described by modern students of Greek democracy. The Aristotelian tradition, he argues, remains relevant to our modern circumstances as providing the classical inspiration for the basic values that underlie contemporary liberal societies, such as self-government, democratic citizenship, and a need for principled limits on governmental authority.

Vincent Phillip Muñoz shifts our attention from antiquity and Europe to the establishment of the United States. He explores the relationship between freedom and the good within the political philosophical milieu at the American founding. He contends that the American Founding Fathers and the constitutionalism they bequeathed to us are neither indifferent toward the good nor neutral toward competing conceptions of the good. Rather, the founders conceived of political liberty, including protection for the inalienable natural right of religious liberty, as a demand of justice. They held, accordingly, that the security of natural rights "endowed by our Creator" is the foundation of the political common good properly understood.

May Sim proposes that Confucian ethics is relevant to contemporary debates on individual autonomy and liberalism. Some authors have argued that Confucianism can support these values with certain modifications, while

others hold that Confucianism already contains the necessary resources for liberal values and human rights. By analyzing these diverse perspectives, Sim aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the degree to which classical Confucianism supports liberal values. She compares the views of Confucius and Mencius on choice to those of Aristotle, aiming to shed light on the degree of freedom of choice that each endorses. Sim concludes that, due to Aristotle and these early Confucians having a common perspective, a virtue-oriented ethics, comparing them reveals that both contain relevant resources for understanding and supporting a system of political liberties which facilitate the pursuit of ultimate goods. Thus, Sim argues that Confucianism contains resources that support individual freedom and human rights without needing to be modified to fit contemporary values.

A concluding word

We do not aim to propose that all of these approaches represent a unified political perspective—indeed, some of our authors are perfectionists, whereas others have a more liberal politics—but that they form a broadly coherent defense of the way in which liberal values and institutions remain *good* for human beings or represent our moral obligations to one another. While different authors appeal to different traditions to make sense of these goods and obligations, there is a profound *convergence* even among these varied perspectives.¹⁰ What we hope to thereby prompt is a deeper engagement with the values at the core of our shared traditions. Undercutting the motivations for recent trends toward authoritarianism or populism lies in showing the way that liberal values or institutions are not a threat to the flourishing of a vibrant civil society but rather its ally. The weaknesses and flaws of the liberal tradition which we have inherited should not blind us to its many achievements and future possibilities to secure a life of valuable liberty for those who come after us. The chapters in this book support that proposition while simultaneously pointing beyond the limits of that tradition to the way in which we might develop those insights in light of other traditions, cultures, and more recent problems. What we have learned over the past centuries can help provide us with a better way of living within those modern liberal regimes that aim to provide robust self-governance which secures the common good.

Notes

- 1 Patrick J. Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).
- 2 Rawls most important works in this regard include John Rawls, “Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14, no. 3 (1985); John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

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- 3 Cf. David O. Brink, *Perfectionism and the Common Good: Themes in the Philosophy of T.H. Green* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003); David O. Brink, *Mill's Progressive Principles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Christoph Henning, *Freiheit, Gleichheit, Entfaltung: Die politische Philosophie des Perfektionismus* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2015).
- 4 However, Gerald Gaus criticized that Rawls and other proponents of classical liberalism erroneously believed that they could avoid contentious epistemological issues, and that they therefore failed to reflect on and to defend sufficiently the conceptions of justification or public justification presupposed by their liberalism, cf. Gerald F. Gaus, *Justificatory Liberalism: An Essay on Epistemology and Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- 5 See, for example, Bruce A. Ackerman, *Social Justice in the Liberal State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980); Brian Barry, *Justice as Impartiality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Ronald Dworkin, *A Matter of Principle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Charles E. Larmore, *Patterns of Moral Complexity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Steven Lecce, *Against Perfectionism: Defending Liberal Neutrality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Thomas Nagel, *Equality and Partiality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Jonathan Quong, *Liberalism without Perfection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). For support of the claim that liberalism's commitment to neutrality is a contingent feature of liberalism and a relatively new development within the liberal tradition, see also Brink, *Mill's Progressive Principles*, 255–259; Thomas Hurka, "Indirect Perfectionism: Kymlicka on Liberal Neutrality," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (1995): 36–37.
- 6 In what follows, the terms 'conceptions of the good' and 'conceptions of the good life' are used interchangeably.
- 7 See, for example, Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1982); Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 2003); Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983). For a good overview of the communitarian critique of liberalism, see Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996).
- 8 See, for example, Adrian Vermeule, *Common Good Constitutionalism: Recovering the Classical Legal Tradition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022).
- 9 See, for example, Alexandra Couto, *Liberal Perfectionism: The Reasons that Goodness Gives* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014); Henning, *Freiheit, Gleichheit, Entfaltung*; Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); George Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Kevin Vallier, *Liberal Politics and Public Faith: Beyond Separation* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Steven Wall, *Liberalism, Perfectionism and Restraint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Patrick Zoll, *Perfektionistischer Liberalismus: Warum Neutralität ein falsches Ideal in der Politikbegründung ist* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Alber Verlag, 2016). In what follows, the terms 'liberal perfectionism' and 'perfectionist liberalism' are used interchangeably.
- 10 Indeed, we had hoped to represent further traditions in the project, but it was bad fortune that sadly led to us being unable to include other perspectives that would have been desirable, such as Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, etc.