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## Beyond Solidarity, Pragmatism and Difference in a Globalized World (book review)

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GUNN, GILES. *Beyond Solidarity: Pragmatism and Difference in a Globalized World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. ix+222 pp. \$18.00 (paper).

In this at times elliptical volume, Giles Gunn continues his revival of pragmatism, begun in his 1992 book *Thinking across the American Grain: Ideology, Intellect, and the New Pragmatism* (Chicago, 1992). The point of departure for this new work derives from Gunn's assessment of Richard Rorty's conception of solidarity, especially as developed in *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (New York, 1989). Although he views Rorty's as the "most intellectually interesting, elegantly elaborated, and philosophically challenging version of pragmatism presently available" (p. xviii), he takes issue with the claim, oft repeated by Rorty, that "it is impossible to bridge the gap between the languages we use to express what we wish for ourselves and that we employ to express what we wish for others" (p. x). This gap prevents any robust conception of solidarity that might respond to the pressures of globalization that fracture as much as they unify. Gunn believes pragmatism can do better, and his project is to take full advantage of the resources within pragmatism for bridging this gap. This book probes deeply into those resources.

Gunn initially approaches this task by considering how the tradition of pragmatism has labored with the problem of recognizing and valuing "otherness" while maximally extending the sense of "we"—the feeling of human solidarity. He carefully situates his discussion of solidarity in relation to recent discourses about multiculturalism and "transcultural criticism" of the Americas. At root, much of the controversies about these matters turn on a single epistemological question: how can an observer of culture be open to the otherness of the study yet maintain a self-identity?

John Dewey suggested an answer to this question, arguing that knower and known are interdependent and mutually self-constituting, yet through a strict mental discipline, it is possible to be stripped of the cultural garments of knower and known. The nature of the intellectual disrobing, Gunn suggests, can be illustrated by reference to what Peter Homans calls "the ability to mourn" (*The Ability to Mourn: Disillusionment and the Social Origins of Psychoanalysis* [Chicago, 1989]). In mourning, Gunn explains, a space is created by an attempt to reintegrate one's identity in the wake of significant loss. In this space, the value of symbols, including symbols of cultural distinctiveness, must be reassessed and fitted together in the newly forged sense of self that emerges. It is in this space created by the process of mourning that the self and other—the knower and known—are viewed as mutually constitutive. The mourner stands naked of the cultural garments of knower and known, self and other.

As with a mourner swept away with rage evoked by the sense of loss, a culture can experience anger over a sense of loss, too. Gunn suggests that, caught up in grief, a culture may respond to the loss by disparaging otherness and group difference. In the midst of social strife, a scapegoat can bring inner-group solidarity through the "common repudiation of a victim symbolically held responsible for the aggression against it" (p. 35). This purgative results in cycles of ritual violence that are so typical of cultural difference throughout the world, despite some trends toward globalized solidarity. Gunn contends that this may require a rethinking of human identity "beyond solidarity" by looking to those who have created their sense of humanity "out of their need . . . to determine what constitutes their sense of fundamental kinship with others, despite their differences" (p. 47).

Gunn next shows that pragmatism has been a method of inquiry with a global

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orientation from its inception. Drawing on his analysis of William James's quest for an acceptable vocation and Henry James's *The American Scene* (New York, 1907), he suggests that for both reasons of historical accident and because of the nature of the inquiry that pragmatism seeks, it is and remains global in its perspectives. Then Gunn offers a series of rereadings: first, of Rorty's recent attempt to define pragmatism as Romantic polytheism; second, of the historiographical ideas that coalesced around the work of Stanley Fish, Walter Benn Michaels, Steven Mailloux, and Rorty; and third, of the notion of aesthetic as a cultural solvent applied to selected writings of Hannah Arendt, Martha Nussbaum, Mark Johnson, and Richard Poirier. Together, these rereadings are provided to show how pragmatism has recently been reworked so as to make it appropriate as a method for global analysis.

This book is suggestive and invites further conceptualization of its research program. For the suggestive readings of a fascinating range of texts, the reader will be in Gunn's debt, but it is not intended to be a thorough treatment of the vast ground that it covers. It is a teasingly intricate suggestion for a pragmatic orientation to the human sciences.

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SELIGMAN, ADAM B. *Modernity's Wager: Authority, the Self, and Transcendence.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000. xii+177 pp. \$27.95 (cloth).

This very timely book is about authority and its connection to the constitution of selfhood and to related notions of community and the sacred. Adam B. Seligman proposes a very bold thesis that the Enlightenment abandonment of religious authority has failed and that religious authority must be restored. He develops it with substantive and nuanced arguments relating to the epistemology of the social sciences, modern moral theory, and the history of theological ideas concerning the interiorization of the individual's experience of transcendence from Saint Paul to contemporary secularization. Seligman proposes that "modernity's wager" that an authoritative locus of sacrality could be constructed on the basis of an autonomous transcendental reason (e.g., Immanuel Kant) rather than on a transcendent Other has failed and that we need to return to a recognition of heteronomous sacral authority in order adequately to understand our true human being as selves constituted in communities. At issue is the legitimacy of the exercise of political power. Seligman believes that the modern idea of the self is that of "an autonomous, atomistic, and self-regulating moral agent endowed with rights. And that relations between selves are seen in terms of an exchange based on the mutual interests of the contracting parties" (p. 6). In this situation, politics is understood as the adjudication of differences of interests on the basis of negotiation. In contrast to the modern idea of the autonomous self, Seligman proposes the idea of a heteronomous self constituted by relations to a community in which certain values are honored as transcendent (sacred) and therefore beyond negotiation. Here politics is understood in Aristotelian fashion as the common pursuit of a shared life based on recognized virtues or goods. The rather startling upshot of this is Seligman's proposal that we abandon liberal political theory in favor of a return to forms of political life informed by religious traditions that have a transcendent locus of the sacred, such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. In order to avert their tendencies to authoritarianism, Seligman proposes that we develop forms of faith in which reason provides bases for skepticism as to the

