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John J. Kaag, *Idealism, Pragmatism, and Feminism: The Philosophy of Ella Lyman Cabot*. Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2011.

Traditionally, the history of American philosophy has been conceived of in terms of an intellectual lineage comprising monumental male figures (e.g., Emerson, Peirce, James, and Dewey). In recent decades, this picture has broadened in scope and nuance. Philosophers once regarded as ancillary have gained recognition as original and influential thinkers in their own right. The last two decades have been witness to the resurgence in scholarly attention to figures such as Josiah Royce and Jane Addams—figures who, if not situated prominently in the history of American philosophy as presently conceived, are significantly less marginalized than they were in decades past. The idealist strains in the thought of Royce and the feminism—and indeed, the womanhood—of Addams no longer stand as major impediments to earnest scholarly engagement of their works. As our picture of the history of American philosophy evolves, our vision broadens and what formerly lay hidden from sight emerges into the foreground. John J. Kaag’s book, *Idealism, Pragmatism, and Feminism: The Philosophy of Ella Lyman Cabot* is testament to this widening of scholarly vision. Embodying a confluence of the characteristics I have attributed to Royce and Addams—idealism and feminism—it is not surprising that Ella Lyman Cabot (1855-1934) is an unfamiliar name to scholars of American philosophy. Readers will find that Kaag has done scholars of American philosophy a great service with his historically grounded and philosophically acute presentation of Cabot’s life and thought.

This presentation begins with a chapter that is largely biographical, “The Life of American Philosophy: The Education of Ella Lyman Cabot.” A thematic metaphor is drawn from William James’s *Pragmatism*, in which James likens pragmatism to a corridor in a hotel, out of which innumerable chambers open. As Kaag informs us, in the “hotel” of American intellectual life, Cabot was always present, “making her way through hidden passages” (2011: 28). “Hidden passages” is undoubtedly intended as double entendre, for Cabot’s published works have long resided outside of the view of American philosophy scholars, while her unpublished writings have long remained unexplored. We learn that Cabot’s philosophical education was a confluence of the Transcendentalist idealism and utopianism identifiable in the thought of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller, and the budding pragmatism of the 1880’s and 1890’s as seen in the thought of Charles Peirce, William James, and Josiah Royce. Kaag points to Fuller’s *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* as particularly influential; Cabot read this work in her late teens and early twenties and “undoubtedly recognized the similarities between the lives of Fuller’s heroines and her own life” (2011: 6). Indeed, Cabot embodied both the older Victorian ideals of womanhood and the newer ideals of the female American intellectual. As Kaag puts it, Cabot “revises the standard account of Christian piety in order to fashion a genuinely feminist life project” (2011: 23).

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A fascinating aspect of Cabot's feminist life project is that of her marriage to the physician, social worker, and philosopher, Richard Clarke Cabot (1868-1939). At Ella's suggestion, she and Richard forged a prenuptial agreement prohibiting sexual intercourse and the bearing of children. This agreement would preserve Ella Lyman Cabot's occupational and intellectual opportunities; the two would practice self-restraint in the name of self-liberation (particularly, Ella's). Interpreting the unique arrangement as "the practical attempt to pursue transcendental ideals of freedom, creativity, and originality," Kaag views the "Paper on Marriage" as an expression of feminism in line with Royce's philosophy of loyalty. This interpretation is well warranted. As Kaag reveals in the preface to his book, Cabot was "the brightest star" of Royce's metaphysics seminar in 1899, repeatedly referred to as such by Royce in his notebook for the course (2011: vii). The two shared a close teacher-student relationship, with Cabot admiring much of Royce's thought, perhaps especially his philosophy of loyalty. Kaag's facility with Cabot's archived papers goes far in demonstrating just how interlaced the biographical and philosophical are for Cabot. At the same time, we learn more about people with whom we are already acquainted: Cabot's notebooks show us, for example, that the ideas that Royce would publish in *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (1908) were operative in his thought and teaching almost two decades earlier.

Kaag pairs Cabot with another overlooked woman from the American philosophical tradition in the second chapter, "Women and Forgotten Movements in American Philosophy: Ella Lyman Cabot and Mary Parker Follett on Growth and Creativity."¹ Follett (1868-1933) was a philosopher, social worker, and management consultant who is revered as a pioneer in the fields of business management and human resources. In 1924, Follett published *Creative Experience*, dedicating it to her friend and mentor, Ella Lyman Cabot. Kaag traces Cabot's ideas from her own writings (unpublished and published) to their extension in Follett's work. By juxtaposing the early thought of Cabot with the mature thought of Follett, Kaag intends to show "just how forward looking the young Ella Lyman Cabot was" (2011: 36). The lion's share of the attention in this chapter is paid to the thought of Cabot; the treatment of Follett is short and reads more like an addendum than a vital element of the discussion. Still, Kaag succeeds in demonstrating how ensconced these women were in the philosophical discussions of their day, directly engaging with—perhaps anticipating—the thought of their renowned male peers. While the title of the chapter suggests two areas of focus, growth and creativity, these subjects entail discussions of ethics and community. Of her published works discussed here, Cabot's *Everyday Ethics* (1906) is especially important. A later chapter is devoted to this text.

A similar approach is taken in the third chapter, "Ella Lyman Cabot's Chance: The Nature of Contingency in the American Philosophical Tradition."² Situating Cabot's views on determinism, chance, and free will in the context of the related views of Peirce, Royce, and Emerson, Kaag holds that "Cabot proposes an original stance that is most akin to Emerson's work in 'Fate' and 'Quotation and Originality'" (2011: 65). For Cabot, whereas contingency permeates experience, it is not something to be

1 Portions of this chapter first appeared in Kaag (2008a).

2 Portions of this chapter first appeared in Kaag (2008b).

mastered or overcome, but it is to be understood as the site of human creativity. Human opportunity and growth is realized in the confrontation with the unexpected. Aside from presenting Cabot's view on contingency and chance, this chapter serves as an informative overview of this topic as addressed in the works of a number of American philosophers. Although Kaag later alludes to James's "The Dilemma of Determinism" (2011: 121), he does not take up this text in this discussion. While this omission hinders the comprehensiveness of his discussion, it does not diminish its quality. Most praiseworthy, in my opinion, is how existentially weighted Kaag shows the question of contingency to be. In the case of Cabot, a woman navigating intellectual spheres of Cambridge in the late 1800s, we see clearly that she experienced firsthand (in a way that her male contemporaries may not have) "that circumstances brought about by chance and fate could be seen as obstacles and nuisances, but equally, as occasions for imaginative insight" (2011: 81).

Imaginative insight is a key component of Cabot's ethical theory as we learn in the fourth chapter, "Everyday Ethics: Morality and the Imagination."³ Cabot had the occasion to visit John Dewey's Chicago school in 1898, after having attended lectures at Radcliffe College taught by Royce. As Kaag shows, this pair of thinkers had a profound influence upon the shaping of Cabot's ethical philosophy. At the same time, Kaag argues that Cabot is more than an apostle of this duo; in *Everyday Ethics*, she anticipates moves that they would make in their later works. In particular, Kaag contends that Cabot offers a sustained study of the imagination as the foundation of virtuous conduct before Dewey (and James H. Tufts) do so in *Ethics* (1908) and applies her thinking to concrete ethical issues of everyday life before Royce does in *The Philosophy of Loyalty*. Although Kaag claims that his discussion "does not turn exclusively on the question that has come to dominate the field of intellectual history, the question of 'who came first?'" (2011: 88), he nonetheless entertains this question throughout the book with some frequency.

Whatever the directions of influence may be, *Everyday Ethics* is a fascinating text; as Kaag describes it, it is an "admix of treatise, manifesto, journalistic reflection, and teacher's manual" (2011: 88). Among the central ideas of the book is the view that the imagination is a moral faculty; it is a "necessary ally of moral life" (2011: 97). Relating Cabot's position to that of Kant—a comparison which Cabot herself draws—Kaag interprets Cabot as recognizing that "without imaginative insight, the ability to apprehend the purposes of others, the ethical imperative that Kant describes remains an empty formalism" (2011: 98). While Kaag's comments on *Everyday Ethics* certainly pique curiosity, most will feel their curiosity is far from whetted. Although Kaag takes up *Everyday Ethics* in some detail two chapters later, I would argue that in this chapter, Kaag's use of archival materials interferes with his intended focus. Not enough attention is paid to the text of *Everyday Ethics* for readers to come away with a robust sense of its multifaceted character. Still, this deficiency may be construed in a positive light; readers are thus provoked to seek out Cabot's work and investigate it further for themselves.

3 Portions of this chapter first appeared in Kaag (2010).

Soon after the publication of *Everyday Ethics*, Cabot visited Jane Addams at Hull House in Chicago. Kaag describes the experience as one that clashed with the conditions with which Cabot was accustomed; Cabot had not ventured far outside of her background of privilege and economical comfort, quite the opposite of the environment in which Addams chose to reside. This encounter sheds light on obstacles to the symmetric moral relationship envisioned by Cabot, with Addams' approach to moral relations "occasionally emphasizing an asymmetric relationship in which individual difference cannot be fully overcome by way of the imagination" (2011: 107). In short, the incongruity of social relations is an obstacle in the quest for sympathetic insight the likes of which Cabot endorses. Indeed, Cabot herself struggles with "the inability to envision the ends and purposes of the individuals who frequented Hull House" (2011: 107). It is worth noting again that such insight into Cabot's thought would not be possible if not for Kaag's incisive study of her archived journals, letters, notebooks, and other unpublished writings.

Paralleling the life and thought of Cabot to that of W. E. B. Du Bois in the fifth chapter, "'How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?': Women in American Thought", Kaag further fills in the picture of the ways in which Cabot fits in the American philosophical tradition. The double-consciousness described by Du Bois as characterizing the experience of African-Americans of the nineteenth century – that of looking at oneself both through one's own eyes and through the eyes of critical and oppressive others – is described as comparable to that experienced by women at the same time. Cabot, like other academically-oriented women of her day, was often confronted with the assumption that her skills would be better fitted to other walks in life. In correspondence, her own husband, Richard, discouraged her from philosophical pursuits: "If you want my opinion yes or no as to going on in philosophy I should say no" (2011: 114). Kaag reveals how Cabot grappled, in her journals, with the question of whether she had a "duty of self-expression". Ultimately, her answer—contrary to that suggested by Richard—was yes:

Self-knowledge, self-control and self-realization—these I seek. What dangers do I run toward myself and others in this course of conduct? It is the ever-recurring question. The criticisms that people make on us and on our actions in general give usually an inaccurate but still a valuable picture of ourselves as in the world. But the real criticism can come only from ourselves; it must be constant and searching, not blinded by partiality or self-deception. It must be based on pure love of truth and never imagine it has solved the whole problem. The watchword of life is awake thou that sleepest! (2011: 127)

Ironically, in her effort to "awake thou that sleepest", Cabot occasionally seems to prioritize sympathy over self-expression. Kaag notices the connection between this disposition and that of contemporary care ethicists such as Nel Noddings, Carol Gilligan, and Jean Hampton. While one critic has suggested that Kaag's notion of care ethics "fails to capture the depth of contemporary care theory"⁴, scholars should regard this point of contact as an opportunity for future investigation and interpretation of Cabot's philosophy. It is evident that Cabot believes a balance must be struck between

⁴ Hamington (2012)

autonomy and self-expression on one hand, and empathy and self-sacrifice on the other. Here lies just one among many precarious boundaries which Cabot continuously struggled to negotiate.

The sixth chapter, “Cabot on Peace Education: Moral Psychology, Ethics, and International Affairs (1906-1930)”, shows how Cabot builds upon the psychological and ethical insights of her earlier works in writings on peace and education, the focus of much of her later work. These later writings include *Ethics for Children* (1910), *A Course in Citizenship and Patriotism* (co-edited with Fannie Fern Andrews) (1914) and *Our Part in the World* (1918). Thus, the range of dates referenced in the chapter’s title has the potential to mislead. However, 1930 is a date of no small moment in relation to Cabot’s thought on peace and education. On the evening of December 18 of this year, Cabot attended, by invitation from President Herbert Hoover, a dinner at the White House in honor of Vice President Charles Curtis. The invitation was extended on the basis of Cabot’s reputation as a social and educational reformer in the early decades of the twentieth century. Thus, the impact of Cabot’s works of the 1910s endured through the 1920s, finding formal recognition in 1930.

Ethics for Children was used as a textbook by many middle schools, especially in the Midwestern United States. The book is predicated on Cabot’s view that children are naturally attuned to lessons that draw on their budding imagination and their ability to imitate adult behaviors. As Kaag rightly points out, Cabot is here influenced by Royce’s early psychological work on imitation, an aspect of his thought that has gone underappreciated. Kaag also views Cabot as following George Herbert Mead and Dewey in believing that the end of education is not the acquisition of information, but the preparation for meaningful adult life. Much of the content of *Ethics for Children*, as well as *A Course in Citizenship and Patriotism*, involves the invoking of moral exemplars whose character and conduct youth are instructed to emulate in the process of constructing their own character. Women figure prominently among these exemplars; Kaag lists Dorothea Dix, Clara Barton, and Florence Nightingale among those canvassed by Cabot. *A Course in Citizenship and Patriotism* is explicitly aimed at training youth to grow into “citizens who shall bring into political life such upright devotion and such a high degree of efficient service that our civic life will show the results” (2011: 144). Telling of the impact that Cabot’s work had begun to make, recently succeeded President William Taft authored the introduction to the text. *Our Part in the World* is Cabot’s effort to reconcile cultural and political diversity with national cohesion. In the midst of World War I (1914-1918), this was a prominent theme of social-political philosophy of the day. In light of the present climate of international affairs, one would be warranted to hold that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Perhaps attending to texts such as Cabot’s might be instructive nearly a century later.

In the closing chapter, “‘Thought is Never at Rest’: Ella Lyman Cabot and the Struggle of Idealism”, Kaag acknowledges the difficulty of Cabot’s attempt “to shift idealism away from its traditional rendering as being monistic and dogmatic toward a way of thinking that emphasizes possibility without foregoing purpose” (2011: 174). This uphill battle is emblematic of those marking the discipline of philosophy today. In

Kaag's estimation, the causes reflected in Cabot's writing and life (e.g., the fostering of imagination, patience, insight, and loyalty) remain, at best, partially fulfilled. It is his hope that the recovery of thinkers such as Cabot will augur triumph over present-day cynicism concerning the value of philosophy in general and of women philosophers in particular.

Two additional features of Kaag's book should not go unnoticed. Deftly woven across the pages of the text is the captivating story of the courtship and marriage of Ella Lyman and Richard C. Cabot. This story reaches a riveting denouement in the closing chapter. Kaag is to be credited for the entrancing quality of this narrative; in other hands, the effect upon the reader may have been much less momentous. Readers are also treated to an Appendix containing selected writings of Cabot's. This compilation of unpublished archival writings includes assorted poetry and selected philosophical reflections excerpted from notebooks and drafts of essays.

If I were to level one major criticism against Kaag's book, it would be that contrary to his avowal to not be overly concerned with the question of "who came first?", he sometimes claims that Cabot precedes others in formulating or expressing a given idea when the matter is not altogether clear. Such cases sometimes hinge on questionable historical interpretation. For example, in support for his description of how *Everyday Ethics* (1906) stands in contrast to Royce's work up to that time, Kaag contends that during the time of his Radcliffe-Harvard seminars (1894-1904), "Royce's thinking had not taken the turn toward the concrete ethical issues of everyday life that would define his later writing in *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (1908) and *The Problem of Christianity* (1913)" (2011: 101). Neglected in this assertion are, at the least, Royce's *California: A Study of American Character from the Conquest in 1846 to the Second Vigilance Committee in San Francisco* (1886) and *Studies of Good and Evil: A Series of Essays Upon Problems of Philosophy and Life* (1898). In each of these works, Royce addresses practical problems besetting individuals and communities in their daily lives. Moreover, in substantiating Cabot's influence upon Royce, Kaag claims that "in *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, Royce thanks Cabot for her contributions to his writing" (2011: 102), however, the nature of Royce's acknowledgment of Cabot (and Richard C. Cabot) is vague:

Amongst the numerous friends to whom (whether or no they agree with all my views) I am especially indebted for direct and indirect aid in preparing this book, and for criticisms and other suggestions, I must mention: first, my wife, who has constantly helped me with her counsel, and in revision of my text; then, my sister, Miss Ruth Royce, of San José, California, with whom I discussed the plan of the work in the summer of 1907; then, Doctor and Mrs. R.C. Cabot in Boston; Doctor J. J. Putnam of Boston; and finally, my honored colleague, Professor George H. Palmer" (1908: xi-xii).

In addition, if one considers Cabot's goal to "translate Royce into popular and convincing language and to pull together the best material on the experience of ethics and religion" (recorded in a notebook months after the publication of *The Philosophy of Loyalty*), one might argue that Cabot conceives of at least some of her subsequent philosophical writing as a clarification and amplification of Royce's (2011: 102). This

last point, however, is not one with which Kaag would disagree.

With this criticism, I wish only to draw attention to one dimension of the text with which more precision would have been optimal. Most often, Kaag demonstrates a sharp acumen in his navigation of the conceptual lineages explored in the text. I am confident that readers will agree that Kaag convincingly demonstrates the ways in which Cabot's philosophy deserves recognition as playing a significant and innovative role in the development of the history of American philosophy. Kaag has done a major service to the scholarship with his thorough and thoughtful account of Cabot's philosophy. *Idealism, Pragmatism, and Feminism* is a pioneering contribution to the literature in American philosophy, setting the stage for future engagement of Cabot's thought. Future scholars of Cabot will be indebted to Kaag for this path-breaking work.

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