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978-0-521-76056-0 - The Politics of Persons: Individual Autonomy and Socio-historical Selves

John Christman

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## THE POLITICS OF PERSONS

It is both an ideal and an assumption of traditional conceptions of justice for liberal democracies that citizens are autonomous, self-governing persons. Yet standard accounts of the self and of self-government at work in such theories are hotly disputed and often roundly criticized in most of their guises. John Christman offers a sustained critical analysis of both the idea of the self and of autonomy as these ideas function in political theory, offering interpretations of these concepts which avoid such disputes and withstand such criticisms. Christman's model of individual autonomy takes into account the socially constructed nature of persons and their complex cultural and social identities, and he shows how this model can provide a foundation for principles of justice for complex democracies marked by radical difference among citizens. His book will interest a wide range of readers in philosophy, politics, and the social sciences.

JOHN CHRISTMAN is Associate Professor of Philosophy, Political Science and Women's Studies at Pennsylvania State University. His previous publications include *Social and Political Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction* (2002), *The Myth of Property* (1994), and as co-editor *Debates in Political Philosophy* (2009) (with Thomas Christiano) and *Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism: New Essays* (2005) (with Joel Anderson).

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JOHN CHRISTMAN

*The Pennsylvania State University*



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*To the surviving spirit of the people of New Orleans, my hometown,  
and to the courageous resilience of my family, who continue to  
recover and flourish with grace: my sisters Jan and Bonnie, my  
brother Tim, my father John and step-mother Dolores, and all  
the members of their families.*

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In addition, some of the chapters below include adapted material from previously published articles. Specifically, chapter 4 is a revised version of “Narrative Unity as a Condition of Personhood,” *Metaphilosophy* 35(5) (October, 2004), 695–713; chapter 5 is a revised version of “Why Search for Lost Time: Memory, Autonomy, and Practical Reason,” in Catriona Mackenzie and Kim Atkins, eds., *Practical Identity and Narrative Agency* (New York: Routledge, 2008); chapter 7 uses material from “Autonomy, History, and the Subject of Justice,” *Social Theory and Practice*, 33(1) (January, 2007), 1–26; chapter 8 is a much revised version of “Relational Autonomy, Liberal Individualism, and the Social Constitution of Selves,” *Philosophical Studies*, 117 (2004): 143–164 (all material used by permission). Also, chapter 5 is based on a presentation I made under the title

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