

# Expanding Human Rights. Critical Liberalism and its Links with Socialism and Ecologism

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*Abstract:* Neoliberalism, as a vision of liberalism prioritizing economic freedom and *laissez-faire* policies, has proved wrong for three main reasons: rising inequalities, the crisis of liberal-democracies and environmental deterioration. Through its history, however, liberalism can be viewed also as an ideology founded on the idea of progressively enlarged human rights. I argue that this view, alternative to the neoliberal one, leads liberalism to the encounter with democratic socialism and with ecologism: on the ethical level, thanks to a relational view of the human person and her happiness, which goes from T.H. Green in the late nineteenth century (and before him from Enlightenment thinkers) to Sen and Nussbaum's capabilities approach of our days; on the economic sphere, through cooperativism, economic democracy and, not least, a new Keynesian public intervention towards social and ecological goals; and on political grounds, starting from a correct approach to John Rawls' theories of redistributive justice and from rediscovering the liberal founding ideas about the limits of power. I argue, furthermore, that this encounter may help liberalism to recover from its current crisis and, unlike neoliberal faith in free markets, is consistent with liberal historical roots related to critical thinking, freedom of research, and the rejection of dogmas.

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