



The Virtues of Liberalism

James T. Kloppenberg

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This spirited analysis--and defense--of American liberalism demonstrates the complex and rich traditions of political, economic, and social discourse that have informed American democratic culture from the seventeenth century to the present. *The Virtues of Liberalism* provides a convincing response to critics both right and left. Against conservatives outside the academy who oppose liberalism because they equate it with license, James T. Kloppenberg uncovers ample evidence of American republicans' and liberal democrats' commitments to ethical and religious ideals and their awareness of the difficult choices involved in promoting virtue in a culturally diverse nation. Against radical academic critics who reject liberalism because they equate it with Enlightenment reason and individual property holding, Kloppenberg shows the historical roots of American liberals' dual commitments to diversity, manifested in institutions designed to facilitate deliberative democracy, and to government regulations of property and market exchange in accordance with the public good.

In contrast to prevailing tendencies to simplify and distort American liberalism, Kloppenberg shows how the multifaceted virtues of liberalism have inspired theorists and reformers from Thomas Jefferson and James Madison through Jane Addams and John Dewey to Martin Luther King, Jr., and then explains how these virtues persist in the work of some liberal democrats today. Endorsing the efforts of such neo-progressive and communitarian theorists and journalists as Michael Walzer, Jane Mansbridge, Michael Sandel, and E. J. Dionne, Kloppenberg also offers a more acute analysis of the historical development of American liberalism and of the complex reasons why it has been transformed and made more vulnerable in recent decades.

An intelligent, coherent, and persuasive canvas that stretches from the Enlightenment to the American Revolution, from Tocqueville's observations to the New Deal's social programs, and from the right to worship freely to the idea of ethical responsibility, this book is a valuable contribution to historical scholarship and to contemporary political and cultural debates.

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