



Liberalism: The Life of an Idea

By Edmund Fawcett

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Liberalism dominates today's politics just as it decisively shaped the American and European past. This engrossing history of liberalism--the first in English for many decades--traces liberalism's ideals, successes, and failures through the lives and ideas of a rich cast of European and American thinkers and politicians, from the early nineteenth century to today.

An enlightening account of a vulnerable but critically important political creed, *Liberalism* provides the vital historical and intellectual background for hard thinking about liberal democracy's future.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Fawcett gets liberalism basically *right* when so many others have gotten it almost all wrong...A dynamic, maddening synthesis of not quite opposites; an inspiration to thinkers who sneer at orthodoxy and compulsory allegiance; a guide to leaders and citizens who need to fix their eyes on principles because the ground beneath them is constantly shifting: that's Fawcett's liberalism. And it should be ours." **Andrew Sabl**, *Los Angeles Review of Books*

Honorable Mention for the 2015 PROSE Award in Government & Politics, Association of American Publishers

"[A] richly informative historical tour of liberal leaders and concepts. . . . [Fawcett] takes a commendably liberal approach."--**Alan Wolfe**, *New York Times Book Review*

"This remarkable book about a still controversial body of thought helps us understand not just the positions of philosophers but the actions of politicians...And that's the virtue of this book...[O]n the evidence of this book [Fawcett] is prodigiously learned...In chapter after chapter we are treated to rich, insightful passages of political history" **Jeremy Waldron**, *Guardian*

"[E]xcellent. . . . What Fawcett clearly and compellingly shows is that the relationship of capitalism to the state, of economics to politics, should be at the heart of any history of liberal ideas. Whether you take his version as a story about liberalism's realist adaptability or its counterrevolutionary intent, it's a fitting one for a moment in which capitalism and political economy are back on the agenda."--**Katrina Forrester**, *The Nation*

"Fawcett's...history of the bundle of ideas and practices that liberals have espoused since the Spanish liberals coined the term after the Napoleonic wars is an excellent guide to liberalism's rise and fall."--**David Marquand**, *New Republic*

"[A] comprehensive, quirky, scholarly and personal exploration of one of the dominant ideas in political discourse. . . . [T]his is a phenomenal work of research and synthesis. . . . A pool of profound, rigorous research and thought that has no shallow end."--**Kirkus Reviews**

"[*Liberalism: The Life of an Idea*] confirms the virtues of the disciplined generalist's approach to the exploration of politics. Deftly combining history, economic thought, and political theory, Fawcett has produced the sort of synoptic work that in our era is increasingly unlikely to come from universities. . . . [It] not only draws on the practicing journalist's close observation of political affairs but also the educated person of letters' facility across many disciplines. The result is an engrossing narrative of liberalism's dramatic career--often lustrous but also marked by its share of delusion, hypocrisy, hubris, and tragedy."--**Peter Berkowitz**, *Real Clear Politics*

"*Liberalism* by Edmund Fawcett is not only a gripping piece of intellectual history, it also equips the reader to understand today's threats--and how they might be withstood. . . . *Liberalism* is indeed under siege. Those who would fortify the walls would do well to study the foundations. Mr Fawcett's book offers an admirable

archaeology."--*Economist*

"A book so good I want to read it again. . . . [A]n intellectual page-turner made even more readable by its personal, sometimes quirky, style and its seamless mix of philosophy, history, biography and history of ideas."--**David Goodhart, *Standpoint***

"In *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea*, Fawcett draws on the experiences and ideas of dozen of thinkers and politicians in an informative, lively, and provocative history of a political tradition he deems 'worth standing up for.' . . . Fawcett's book is an immensely interesting, informative, and important assessment of liberalism. . . . Liberalism is as relevant as ever, Fawcett concludes, passionately and persuasively."--**Glenn C. Altschuler, *Huffington Post***

"[An] impressive account of the 'life of an idea.' . . . [O]ne of the many virtues of Fawcett's unfailingly stimulating book is that he makes you look past the misleading labels with which we characterise political argument. For anyone interested in the history of the ideas that have shaped our society, his book is essential reading."--**Simon Shaw, *Mail on Sunday***

"[A] fine work of intellectual history that shows, among much else, that experience can shape ideas, too."--**William Anthony Hay**

"[M]agnificent."--**Bruce Edward Walker, *Morning Sun***

"This remarkable book about a still controversial body of thought helps us understand not just the positions of philosophers but the actions of politicians...And that's the virtue of this book...[O]n the evidence of this book [Fawcett] is prodigiously learned...In chapter after chapter we are treated to rich, insightful passages of political history" **Jeremy Waldron, *Guardian***

"Fawcett has written a marvelous book. . . . [H]is erudition would be daunting if he didn't write with such verve. . . . [I]t's a pleasure."--**Clive Crook, *Bloomberg View***

"As Fawcett's compelling history reveals, the twentieth century turned out to be much more unstable and dangerous than the early liberals anticipated and has forced liberals ever since to temper their expectations for human betterment with a world-weary search for small steps that can keep the liberal international system on an upward trajectory."--***Foreign Affairs***

"*Liberalism* is an important and worthwhile book."--**Walter Moss, *History News Network***

"This is a good and well-written book. . . . [I]t is wide-ranging, informative, and independent in its judgments."--**James Kalb, *Chronicles***

"Fawcett expertly reveals [liberalism's] evolution, dead-ends, and permutations. A sprawling yarn that somehow remains utterly coherent and on-point, this is history at its very best."--**Jeff Bloodworth, *Gannon University, Cercles***

"[A] felicitous combination of wit and erudition."--***Choice***

"*Liberalism: The Life of an Idea*, by the distinguished British journalist Edmund Fawcett, is an accessible account of major liberal politicians and thinkers of the last two centuries, written from a position of unillusioned but profound solidarity with the liberal tradition." **Adam Kirsch, *City Journal***

From the Author

Some words of mine about *Liberalism* will be in the preface to the paperback later in 2015

From the Back Cover

"In this wonderfully fluent tour through the history of modern liberal thinking, Edmund Fawcett examines a generous selection of important thinkers from the 1830s to our own time in a way that locates both the lineage of their political thinking and the politics of their times. Sharp analysis is combined with a compelling narrative of serious thinkers at work. There is much to learn in this book, which is truly a joy to read. He makes judgments, but they are aids, not substitutes, for our own thinking about liberalism as an idea and about its present possibilities."--**Thomas Bender, New York University**

"*Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* possesses both the authority made possible by sustained scholarly research, and the clarity and simplicity found in first-rate journalism. It covers two centuries of the history of a principle guiding political practice and the various philosophies that have attempted to justify or defame it. It is a very timely reminder of the achievements and problems of a political tradition now everywhere under siege."--**Gareth Stedman Jones, University of Cambridge and Queen Mary, University of London**

"Elegant, fluently written, and wryly amusing, this enlightening history of liberalism tells a persuasive story of ideas and politics through the lives of a huge variety of characters. The result is tremendously enjoyable."--**Duncan Kelly, author of *The Propriety of Liberty***

"This is, quite simply, one of the most lively and engaging books that I've read in some time. With a brisk narrative that holds the reader's attention from start to finish, *Liberalism* provides a comprehensive survey of the subject, introducing a remarkable diversity of people and ideas, and offering a creative reconsideration of familiar tensions. It is impossible to imagine a reader who wouldn't learn much from it. I certainly did."--**Ryan Patrick Hanley, author of *Adam Smith and the Character of Virtue***

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Wendy Poston:

Now a day those who Living in the era where everything reachable by match the internet and the resources inside can be true or not call for people to be aware of each details they get. How many people to be smart in getting any information nowadays? Of course the solution is reading a book. Studying a book can help men and women out of this uncertainty Information particularly this Liberalism: The Life of an Idea book because book offers you rich data and knowledge. Of course the information in this book hundred % guarantees there is no doubt in it you probably know this.

Edmund Morrissette:

A lot of people always spent their own free time to vacation as well as go to the outside with them friends and family or their friend. Were you aware? Many a lot of people spent many people free time just watching TV, or maybe playing video games all day long. If you need to try to find a new activity here is look different you can read a book. It is really fun in your case. If you enjoy the book that you simply read you can spent 24 hours a day to reading a book. The book Liberalism: The Life of an Idea it doesn't matter what

good to read. There are a lot of those who recommended this book. These were enjoying reading this book. In the event you did not have enough space bringing this book you can buy the actual e-book. You can more simply to read this book from the smart phone. The price is not too fund but this book possesses high quality.

Dolores Young:

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Kimberly Foust:

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