

Abstract:

In this work I examine the notion that various, both past and present conceptions of liberalism in America share a commitment to identical fundamental values, as well as utilize a characteristic method of political philosophy, that can both be traced to the rationalist thought of the period known as the Enlightenment. However, because of its ever-changing constitutive setting and different understandings of the term, the meaning of liberalism can be often dark and its usage confusing. Therefore I find it necessary to approach this work as an investigation of a complex (and extremely influential) phenomenon *in time*. I argue that throughout most of the history of the American republic, it has been exactly this forward-looking, revolutionary, rationalist tradition of liberalism, that has gradually come to dominate not just American politics, but also the social and even the private lives of the American people. Based on the examinations of the different “genealogical branches” of liberalism, I make the case that even though we often imagine the prominent conflict between the American “conservatives” and “liberals” as a struggle of two categorically opposed worldviews, underneath their political agendas we find the same set of goals. And while both sides try to achieve them by their own, often mutually exclusive, irreconcilable means, they have hitherto always shared this *liberal ideal* of building a “rational” society of perfectly free and equal, independent and self-determining beings—autonomous individuals liberated from the confines of particular (unchosen) time and space. Because of the success of liberalism, the majority of society has become defined by this liberal paradigm—the (not only political) culture has slowly transformed into a monoculture; into a liberal hegemony, which sustains itself at the expense of other, today ever-more marginalized groups and views, and which is most certainly responsible for many of our most crucial, systemic social problems.