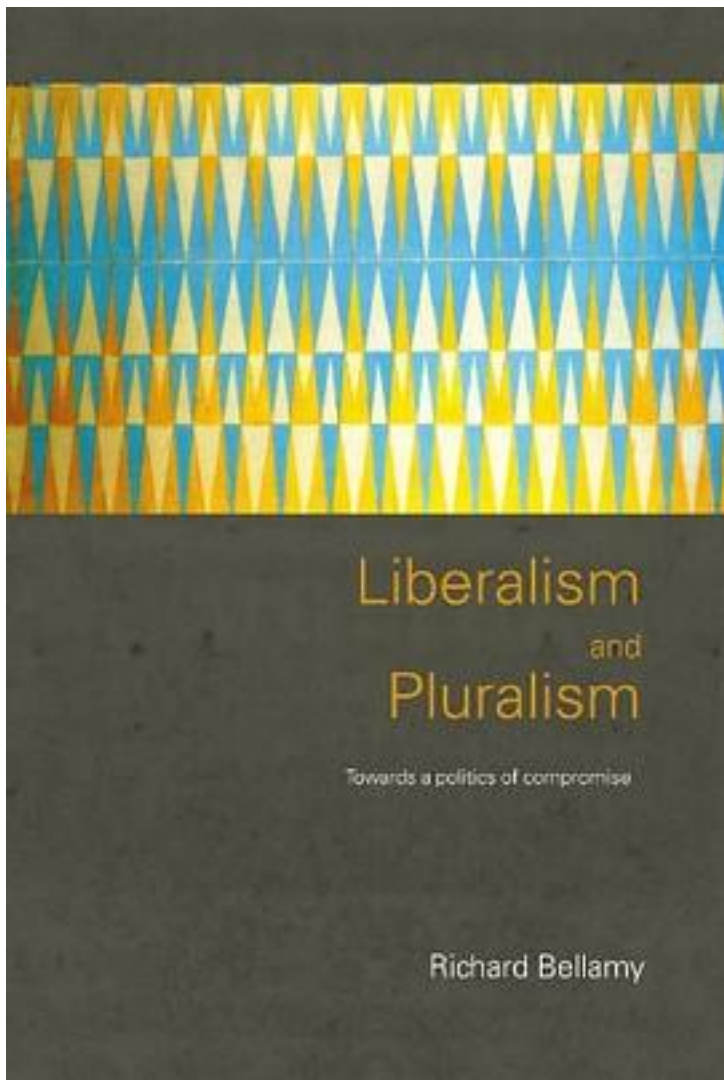


Liberalism and Pluralism



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Pluralism permeates modern societies, dividing the loyalties of their members. Richard Bellamy suggests standard liberal theory cannot resolve the resulting clashes of ideals, interests and identities. Its attempts to construct a consensus by either trading, trimming or segregation, all fail. Trading suggests we can reach mutually advantageous bargains; trimming that we can avoid contentious issues; segregation that different groups try and live as separately as possible. Each of these responses, this book argues, seeks to circumvent the tensions arising out of pluralism, and promotes unjust or unstable settlements. Bellamy advocates a fourth solution: negotiated compromise. He links this approach to a neo-republican political system, which guards against the domination of any values, ideals or concerns over others by dispersing power. The result is a democratic liberalism, which employs the resources of politics to produce mutually acceptable, fair solutions to the pluralist dilemmas. Liberalism and Pluralism critically examines the ways the main schools of contemporary liberal thought tackle the problem of pluralism. Part I analyses the views of libertarian traders, such as Hayek, liberal trimmers, such as Rawls, and communitarian liberal segregators, such as Walzer. Part II defends democratic liberalism, and proposes the political negotiation of compromises as a way of resolving plural conflicts. Part III moves from the ideal to the real, examining three attempts to reform British liberal democracy so as to meet the pluralist challenge: the Citizen's Charter programme, the Human Rights Act and the European Union. The combination of theoretical insight and detailed empirical case studies makes this book an important contribution to current debates within political theory.

作者介绍:

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