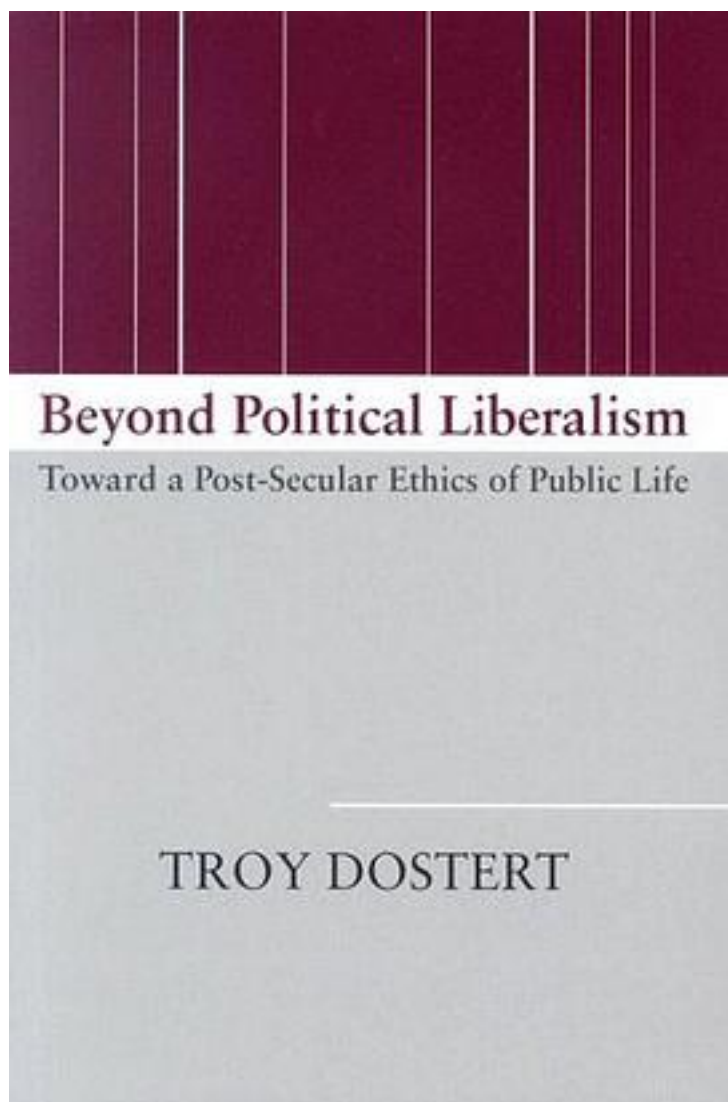


Beyond Political Liberalism



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出版者:Univ of Notre Dame Pr

出版时间:2006-11

装帧: Pap

isbn:9780268026004

In *Beyond Political Liberalism: Toward a Post-Secular Ethics of Public Life*, Troy Dostert offers a critical examination of political liberalism, the approach to liberal political theory advanced most forcefully in the later work of John Rawls. Political liberalism's defenders claim that an "overlapping consensus" of shared values holds out the strongest prospects for regulating democratic politics in light of our moral diversity. Dostert contends, however, that the attempt to establish such a consensus in fact works to restrict and control the presence of religious and other moral perspectives that can ennoble and invigorate public life. Dostert argues that there is a steep price to be paid for this conception of politics, for what results is a political vision characterized by a profound distrust and fear of citizens' comprehensive convictions--the animating source of many citizens' political activity. He suggests that a "post-secular" ethics is a more appropriate response to moral diversity than restricting and managing the presence of religion and other moral perspectives in public life. From this perspective we are best served not by looking for epistemic norms of public discourse, as political liberalism counsels, but by encouraging dialogic practices such as forbearance, discipline, creativity, and sincerity. Such practices allow us to negotiate our moral disagreements in a spirit of mutuality, while also remaining open to discovering new formulations of worthwhile political ideals. By drawing on the religious witness of the civil rights movement and the work of theologian John Howard Yoder, Dostert elucidates these core dialogic practices and illustrates their value through a consideration of the contemporary debates surrounding international debt relief and abortion. Challenging the secular presuppositions of contemporary liberal political theory, *Beyond Political Liberalism* will appeal to scholars in political philosophy and contemporary theology. It will also interest religious communities and parishes dedicated to political activity.

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