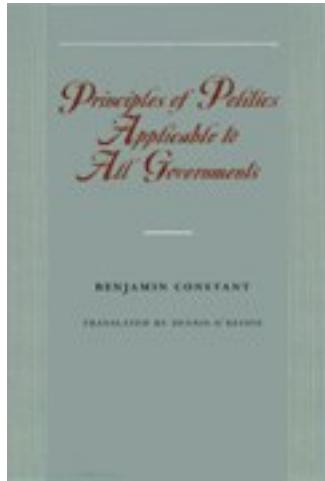


# Principles of Politics Applicable to All Governments



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著者:Benjamin Constant

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Principles of Politics, first published in 1815, is a “microcosm of [Constant’s] whole political philosophy and an expression of his political experience,” says Nicholas Capaldi in his Introduction. In Principles, Constant “explores many subjects: law, sovereignty, and representation; power and accountability; government, property and taxation; wealth and poverty; war, peace, and the maintenance of public order; and above all freedom, of the individual, of the press, and of religion. . . . Constant saw freedom as an organic phenomenon: to attack it in any particular way was to attack it generally.”

Benjamin Constant (1767–1830) was born in Switzerland and became one of France’s leading writers, as well as a journalist, philosopher, and politician. His colorful life included a formative stay at the University of Edinburgh; service at the court of Brunswick, Germany; election to the French Tribune; and initial opposition and subsequent support for Napoleon, even the drafting of a constitution for the Hundred

Days.

Constant wrote many books, essays, and pamphlets. His deepest conviction was that reform is hugely superior to revolution, both morally and politically. While Constant's fluid, dynamic style and lofty eloquence do not always make for easy reading, his text forms a coherent whole, and in his translation Dennis O' Keeffe has focused on retaining the "general elegance and subtle rhetoric" of the original.

Sir Isaiah Berlin called Constant "the most eloquent of all defenders of freedom and privacy" and believed to him we owe the notion of "negative liberty," that is, what Biancamaria Fontana describes as "the protection of individual experience and choices from external interferences and constraints." To Constant it was relatively unimportant whether liberty was ultimately grounded in religion or metaphysics—what mattered were the practical guarantees of practical freedom—"autonomy in all those aspects of life that could cause no harm to others or to society as a whole."

This translation is based on Etienne Hofmann's critical edition of *Principes de politique* (1980), complete with Constant's additions to the original work.

作者介绍:

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标签

Politics

Government

BenjaminConstant

评论

现代自由主义的经典之作！论述审慎周全（其中的原则今天看来也尤为亲切，毫不过时），满满的英国风格（贡斯当在英国接受了教育），同时在语言上又保留了法国式的激情。法国政治思想从此能够一扫启蒙思想家偏执和卢梭式浪漫激进的阴霾。当然，贡斯

当本人在政治实践中还是有不少弱点。

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书评

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