



## Two Faces of Liberalism

By John Gray

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### **Two Faces of Liberalism** By John Gray

Following in the footsteps of the widely praised *False Dawn*, John Gray's new book offers a thoughtful and provocative analysis of the failure of traditional liberalism to keep up with the complex political realities of today's increasingly divided world. John Gray, hailed as "one of Britain's leading public intellectuals" by the *Wall Street Journal*, argues that in its beginning, liberalism contained two contradictory philosophies of tolerance. In one, it put forward the enlightenment project of a universal civilization. In the other, it framed terms for peaceful coexistence between warring communities and between different ways of life. Developed at a time when society was dominated by a single way of life, each of these liberal ideals of toleration has many historic achievements to its credit. But how relevant is traditional liberalism in a world where Kosovo represents the collapse of the spirit of cohabitation? In a spirited attack on today's liberal orthodoxies, Gray argues that establishing a *modus vivendi* among the different cultures and regimes of our time should be at the heart of contemporary liberalism. In this major contribution to political theory, Gray proposes a new framework for a liberal thought that addresses these burning issues.

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### Editorial Review

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Gray traces the historic roots and modern manifestations of liberalism; not the one bandied about by politicians but the one based in the philosophical underpinnings of Western civilization. Gray's premise is that tolerance is a major element in the tradition of liberalism and that there are currently two conflicting philosophies regarding tolerance. One is the assumption that there is one ideal of the "good life" and that rational progress will lead all to this conclusion; the other allows for many philosophical paths to the "good life." Gray examines some of the one-ideal philosophies of John Locke and Immanuel Kant versus the peaceful coexistence of multiple-ideal philosophies postulated by Thomas Hobbes and David Hume. But Gray is at his best when he evaluates the human quest for the "good life," *modus vivendi*. Gray notes that modern reality reflects such a multitude of paths to the good life, not only among different people but also within a single group, that to assume a single ideal is incompatible with modern life. This is an appropriate philosophical paradigm shift in this age of globalization and diversity. *Vernon Ford*

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### Review

An impassioned argument for a contemporary liberalism in the new millennium, from one of Britain's leading public intellectuals -- *The Wall Street Journal*

### About the Author

John Gray is a professor of European thought at the London School of Economics. His books include *False Dawn*, *Isaiah Berlin* and *Enlightenment's Wake*. He lives in London.

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