

Reviews

Marcela Gbúrová – Daniel Dobiáš: The Liberalism Idea in European and Slovak Political Thought

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This scientific monograph by Prof. Mgr. Marcela Gbúrová, PhD. and Doc. Mgr. Daniel Dobiáš, PhD. provides insight into the nature of thought in the political context of the development of social events. A certain understanding of liberalism serves as a springboard for orientation in a political science framework. Through mapping political thought in selected historical contexts of international development and Slovak development in particular, the authors clearly and attractively portray liberalism as a value orientation, political ideology and social practice. The strengths of the text are its clarity, expertise and above all its engagement. The authors' ambition was to name the underlying basis and source of liberal thought and liberal democracy in Europe, particularly in Slovakia, and this was undoubtedly fulfilled.

As is well-known, after 1989, space for the full development of public and thus political life opened in Slovakia. Ideas, mainly from the political mainstream of conservatism, social democracy and liberalism, became key to constructing the so-called civic platform. The authors wisely emphasize the need to understand that the ideas of liberalism's platform include several levels of political philosophy. They note that two lines of investigation are most significant – theory and practice/application, and they organise the text of the monograph accordingly. Expert discussions reflect a positive and normative approach, which, on the one hand, address the issues of the theoretical understanding of liberalism and on the other hand, search for answers to questions of a synthetic and analytical nature. While this scientific monograph primarily focuses on historical aspects of the development of liberal political thought in 19th century Slovakia, there are also interdisciplinary interpretations of the issue as part of the authors' attempt to explain the nature of liberalism. The close links which they make between philosophy, political science, economics and law reflect this interdisciplinarity.

The work is divided into two main parts. The first chapter, by D. Dobiáš, discusses liberalism in the context of European political thought. He attempts to explain a conflict in the assessment of liberalism between a traditional interpretation of the classical type and more modern concepts of perception. He indicates a basis for the implementation of liberal approaches in the real socio-political practice of modern social systems. The second chapter, by M. Gbúrová, contains an overview of the development/formation of Slovak political liberalism from the first half of the 19th until the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918 mainly through an examination of the most important personalities of this period. Highlighting particularities and specificities of political thought in Europe adds to the text's value. Thus the reader can find specific answers to many questions or get clear instructions for orientation in the issue of liberal political thought. Both authors draft the text with an appropriate combination of a philosophical perspective with substantive arguments based on facts and context. Within their historical excursions, both chapters resonate with findings and conclusions formulated by intellectuals as they were inscribed in the history of knowledge. The effort of these intellectuals to name their contemporary problems and find ways to solve them is described in such a way that the reader is naturally drawn into the

“story” of finding an optimal socio-political model for the functioning of a modern civil society. The many correlations between key underlying concepts such as freedom, justice, pluralism, humanism, individualism and criticism are presented.

With a slightly pathetic tone, it would be possible to say that after reading the text, one gains a desire to come to a judicial verdict of "good and evil" in the social process of forming political events. The idea of finding moral consciousness is an interesting journey with lots of insights and directions suggesting how far mankind has come and where people can and probably will move in a longing for ideals in the future. Cross-cutting the idea of this unit is an investigation of the liberal and democratic element in the genesis of social systems. There is an appeal to use all available and legitimate means to maintain the parameters of freedom, at least during those times when it is not obvious that democracy goes hand in hand with liberalism. The monograph contains relevant and understandable explanations of the context and concepts that correlate with freedom – liberalism – democracy – justice. Efforts are made to closely examine the historical parallels of the philosophical, economic, legal and political context, and above all, the ideas of liberalism. Knowledge means an understanding of the complicated formulation of social ideas concerning the material and spiritual world that surrounds us. Against the background of these age-old efforts of interested individuals, ideas for a happy and dignified life in a righteous world can be formulated.

The monograph provides both professionals and the general public with a number of enlightening conclusions. The first is that a person must be seen as a human being with dignity and the freedom to think and act. What follows from this is the idea that the moral will of civilizations is based on rationality and respect for freedom as the essence of humanity. Establishing a social reality at a certain stage of a society's genesis involves ambitious tendencies to shape the social system built on the pillars of morality, tolerance of the pluralism of opinions, and the inherent possibility of a political emancipation of citizens. The analysis of a basis for the creation and promotion of liberalism in European and Slovak political thought in this monograph provides a comprehensive overview of admittedly wide-ranging issues. It also evokes a permanent discussion in the public and political sphere as part of a search for diverse forms of social welfare and their role in the effective operation of political systems. One can only hope that this scientific monograph will find a positive response from a broad range of professionals and the general public. Public actors currently employed in politics will find it particularly beneficial.

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