

a myriad of abilities shaped by natural selection, he is unable to explain the advantage of his reductive view. The very complexity of artistic expression suggests deeper roots than the need to impress and attract a mate.

Dutton's thesis is also undermined by his brilliant penultimate chapter, in which he shows that the senses of smell and hearing, both vital to survival, have not developed to the same potential as vehicles of artistic expression. Music, in particular, presents a challenge to his theory about the unity of the arts as evolved under the pressures of sexual selection. He bluntly admits that "annexing music wholly to the procreative interests in the way that sexual selection suggests misses a great deal of the art itself as we understand it today." As he goes on to point out, "Much music making is communal on a large scale (chorus or orchestra before a large audience), whereas love-making remains cross-culturally a private transaction." At the end of his chase, the single explanation eludes him.

Still, the odd bent feather does nothing to diminish the overall achievement of this peacock's tail of a book. Taking us on a world tour of creative masterpieces and exploiting a rich spectrum of the mind's resources, Dutton succeeds in persuading us that we will never understand human culture unless we understand human nature.

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Down With Dogma

Reviewed by Theo Anderson

READERS MAY BE SURPRISED to see the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau likened to the fundamentalist preacher Jerry Falwell in *The Future of Liberalism*. But Rousseau is only one among many unwitting bedfellows with fundamentalists, according to Alan Wolfe, a political scientist and the direc-

tor of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College. Others include sociobiologists, extreme atheists, and anti-globalization activists. What they have in common is an illiberal worldview. To some degree, they all lack liberalism's resistance to dogma and its commitment to openness and pragmatism.

The Future of Liberalism—part history, part prescriptive treatise, part polemic—defines liberalism not by strict adherence to any particular ideology but as "a set of dispositions." Among these are a sympathy for equality; a preference for "realism," which Wolfe defines as a reliance on facts; and a taste for deliberation and governance. He sets liberalism's dispositions against conservatism, which originated in opposition to the democratic ferment of 18th-century Europe. Traditionally, conservatism endorsed high levels of social inequality and relied on strong state institutions to enforce the status quo. But in the United States, a nation committed in principle to equality, conservatives recognized that anti-egalitarianism had a dim political future. Rather than align themselves with the state, they have cast it as the great enemy of "the people."

Wolfe believes that antistatism has become a dysfunctional dogma among conservatives. Its logical outcome was put on full display by Hurricane Katrina, which tested the idea—one of conservatism's first principles—that private charities and local governments are best suited to delivering relief and supporting communities. The disastrous aftermath of the storm, and the failures of government at all levels, he writes, "should therefore be viewed as a decisive event in the history of political philosophy, at least as far as the United States is concerned."

The relevant question in Katrina's wake, according to Wolfe, is not whether we need strong governmental institutions, but how to harness their powers wisely. By denying this reality, conservatives have consigned themselves to long-term irrelevance. The corollary of this striking claim is Wolfe's equally striking—and

THE FUTURE OF LIBERALISM.

By Alan Wolfe.
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exaggerated—assertion that liberalism is the only viable political philosophy left standing, at least in the West. Yet after decades of defending themselves from attacks on “big government,” liberals are timid at a moment when they should be proclaiming liberalism’s triumph. One of Wolfe’s central aims is to fortify liberals by explaining why they should be proud of their tradition and aggressive in advocating their philosophy.

Wolfe is deft in tracing the development of political ideas and worldviews. He covers many of the familiar thinkers of European and American intellectual history and introduces readers to lesser-known figures such as German jurist Carl Schmitt (1888–1985), one of the most influential antiliberals of recent times. This historical dimension is the book’s great strength. Wolfe is less persuasive in his role as prophet of liberalism’s triumph. His title borrows from an address the philosopher John Dewey gave in 1934, and the homage is appropriate. Like Dewey, Wolfe possesses a deep faith in the powers of reason and democracy. Consistent with his optimism, he believes that there is much more uniting Americans

than dividing us. Perhaps so.

But it is worth noting that in the early 1930s, Dewey and many of his colleagues were similarly convinced. They believed that old sources of division—particularly orthodox religion—were dying and that a new era of cooperation and reason was dawning. They said as much in 1933, in the “Humanist Manifesto.” Four decades later, Dewey and the “Manifesto” became powerful galvanizing tools for the rising Religious Right in the United States, as leaders such as Falwell warned that Dewey’s “secular humanism” had poisoned American life.

Wolfe has a keen sense of irony, and he surely understands this one: What he sees as liberalism’s great virtues—openness, tolerance, and faith in national and international institutions, informed by reason—many others see as fatal flaws worth fighting against. If liberalism has indeed triumphed, liberals can take little comfort in that fact. As they should know, its victories are—and always must be—provisional and profoundly uncertain.

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