



The Market of Virtue: Morality and Commitment in a Liberal Society (Law and Philosophy Library)

Michael Baurmann

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The Market of Virtue - Morality and Commitment in a Liberal Society is a contribution to the present controversy between liberalism and communitarianism. This controversy is not only confined to academic circles but is becoming of increasing interest to a wider public. It has become popular again today to criticize a liberal market society as being a society in which morality and virtues are increasingly being displaced by egoism and utility maximization. According to this view the competition between individuals and the dissolution of community ties erode the respect for the interests of others and undermine the commitment to the common good. The present book, however, develops quite a different picture of a liberal society. An analysis of its fundamental principles shows that anonymous market-relations and competition are by no means the only traits of a liberal society. Such a society also provides the framework for freedom of cooperation and association. It gives its citizens the right to cooperate with other people in pursuit of their own interests. Just as the rivalry between competitors is a basic element of a liberal society so is the cooperation between partners. Thus not only self-centred individualism is rewarded. The main part of the book explains how the freedom to cooperate and to establish social ties lays the empirical foundation for the emergence of civil virtues and moral integrity. It is the basic insight of this analysis that it can no longer be maintained that a liberal society is incapable of producing moral attitudes and social commitment. If a civil society can develop under a liberal order, then one can reckon with citizens who voluntarily contribute to public goods and who commit themselves of their own accord to the society, its constitution and institutions. However this book not only develops further arguments for the current debate between liberalism and communitarianism by explaining the emergence of morality and virtue in a market society. It also provides new aspects for the present theoretical and methodological controversies over the fundamentals of the social sciences and contributes to the advancement of the modern individualistic approach in social theory. In this context it aims especially at an improvement of a sociological model of behaviour.

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