

Between Fear and Freedom: Political Theory of Judith N. Shklar

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Abstract

The dissertation offers an interpretation of the political theory of Judith N. Shklar. Usual reception of Shklar's work does not acknowledge conceptual relatedness of her theory of liberalism to her arguments on injustice and citizenship. The dissertation shows how this liberalism – which Shklar termed the liberalism of fear – is incomplete without the latter two. Moreover, I argue, this liberalism requires particular institutions and proceduralist means to generate norms of political life, which are developed in the argument on injustice, as well as a certain type of citizenship. In this sense, the dissertation gives sense and order to an allegedly disparate body of work Shklar produced in her most productive period – starting in late seventies and ending by her death in 1992. Equally, the dissertation gives an answer to Shklar's own question from her first book, in which she asked why freedom was so valuable to us and what was its social value? I suggest the answer is to be sought in Shklar's focus on suffering, the bodily element of which gave her a moral ground to limit her philosophical skepticism.

The dissertation focuses on the liberalism of fear and in each of its four chapters examines one of its key concepts. These are: (1) cruelty as the worst evil; (2) historical memory; (3) sense of injustice and (4) vigilant citizenship. While Shklar conceives her liberal political theory negatively, as rooted in the moral argument that cruelty is the worst evil – a *summum malum*, the dissertation argues that a notion of freedom as a right to political participation has a special and decisive role in the theory. Thus, the dissertation presents, interprets, reconstructs and develops the liberalism of fear as a viable theory of liberal politics, especially suited for those who seek moral constraints on politics but accept criticisms of liberalism based on social contract and legalistic theories.