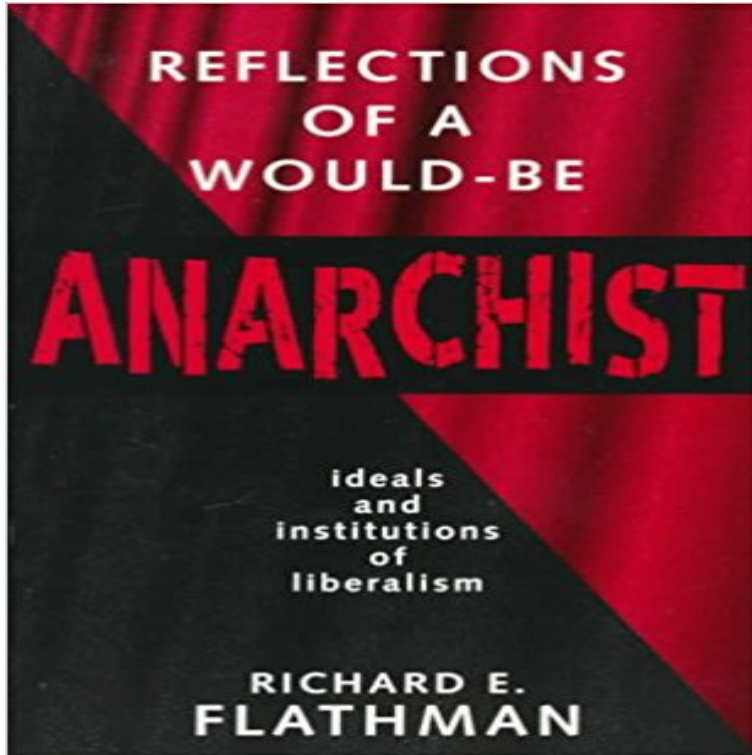


# Reflections of a Would-Be Anarchist: Ideals and Institutions of Liberalism



A superbly original version of liberalism by a major figure in political theory. In this provocative work, Richard E. Flathman puts forward his idiosyncratic view of liberalism, one that is particularly concerned with putting freedom and individuality first, one that warns of the individualism-limiting potential of even liberal efforts to promote social justice. Focusing on the ideals he regards as appropriate to liberalism, Flathman analyzes repeated patterns and tendencies that influence societies -- their sustaining institutions. Part I (Ideals) elaborates and vigorously promotes a conception of the ideals appropriate to liberalism and liberal politics, a conception that foregrounds and celebrates individual self-making or self-enactment. Drawing on but critically assessing ideas and arguments from liberal thinkers from Locke and Kant through Mill, Berlin, and Rawls, the work also reaches out to sources usually regarded as not only outside of but actually antagonistic to liberal tradition: Hobbes, Nietzsche, William James, Proust, Ortega y Gasset, and Oakeshott. Part II (Institutions) goes on to critically examine the relationship between these ideals and various institutions that are prominent in all liberal societies -- the rule of law, police power, and institutionalized education. At once attracted and resistant to anarchist, antinomian, and active nihilist arguments, Flathman approaches these institutions in a skeptical and wary spirit influenced by such thinkers as Montaigne, Wittgenstein, Cavell, Derrida, and Foucault. *Reflections of a Would-Be Anarchist* is a unique attempt to move liberal thought and action toward individuality and away from homogeneity, toward unrelenting skepticism and away from unifying conceptions of rationality and reasonableness. It will be required reading for political, moral, and legal theorists, as well as anyone concerned with the

challenges of sustaining and enlivening liberal thought and action.

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