



Globalization and Liberalism

Montesquieu,
Tocqueville,
and Manent

TREVOR SHELLEY

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TREVOR SHELLEY is a post-doctoral associate at the Arizona State University School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership.

“I have been reading Montesquieu, Tocqueville, and Manent for more than thirty years. I have also read many, many commentators and commentaries on them. But I have never encountered such a penetrating treatment of them taken together; and with his treatment of Manent, Trevor Shelley has gone further than anyone else, French or American, in grasping and laying out Manent's distinctive political science.”

—Paul Seaton, St. Mary's Seminary and University

In this learned and wide-ranging book, Trevor Shelley engages the controversial topic of globalization through philosophical exegesis of great texts. This study illustrates and defends the idea that at the heart of the human world—in thinking, reflecting, and acting—is the antinomy of the universal and the particular. Various thinkers have emphasized one aspect of this tension over the other. Some thinkers such as Rousseau and Schmitt have defended pure particularity. Others such as Habermas have uncritically welcomed the intimations of the world state. Against these twin extremes of radical nationalism and antipolitical universalism, this book seeks to recover a middle or moderate position, that is, the liberal position. To that end, Shelley traces a tradition of French liberal political thinkers who attempt to take account of both sides of the antinomy: Montesquieu, Tocqueville, and Manent. As Shelley argues, each of these thinkers in his own way defends the integrity of political bodies, denies that the universal perspective is the only legitimate one, and recognizes that, without differences and distinctions across the political landscape, self-government and freedom of action are impossible.

As human beings, we cannot live free and fulfilling lives either as isolated individuals or merely as members of humanity. Rather, we require a properly constituted particular political community in which we can make manifest our universal humanity. In the liberalism of these three thinkers, we find the resources to think through what such a political community might look like. In showing the importance of these writers for addressing today's challenges, *Globalism and Liberalism* will interest political theorists, historians of political thought, and specialists of French political thought.