



The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments

Gertrude Himmelfarb

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The Roads to Modernity reclaims the Enlightenment—an extraordinary time bursting with new ideas about the human condition in the realms of politics, society, and religion—from historians who have downgraded its importance and from scholars who have given preeminence to the Enlightenment in France over concurrent movements in England and America. Contrasting the Enlightenments in the three nations, Gertrude Himmelfarb demonstrates the primacy of the British and the wisdom and foresight of thinkers such as Adam Smith, David Hume, Thomas Paine, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Edward Gibbon, and Edmund Burke, who established its unique character and historic importance. It is this Enlightenment, she argues, that created a moral and social philosophy—humane, compassionate, and realistic—that still resonates strongly today, in America perhaps even more so than in Europe.

This is an illuminating contribution to the history of ideas.

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