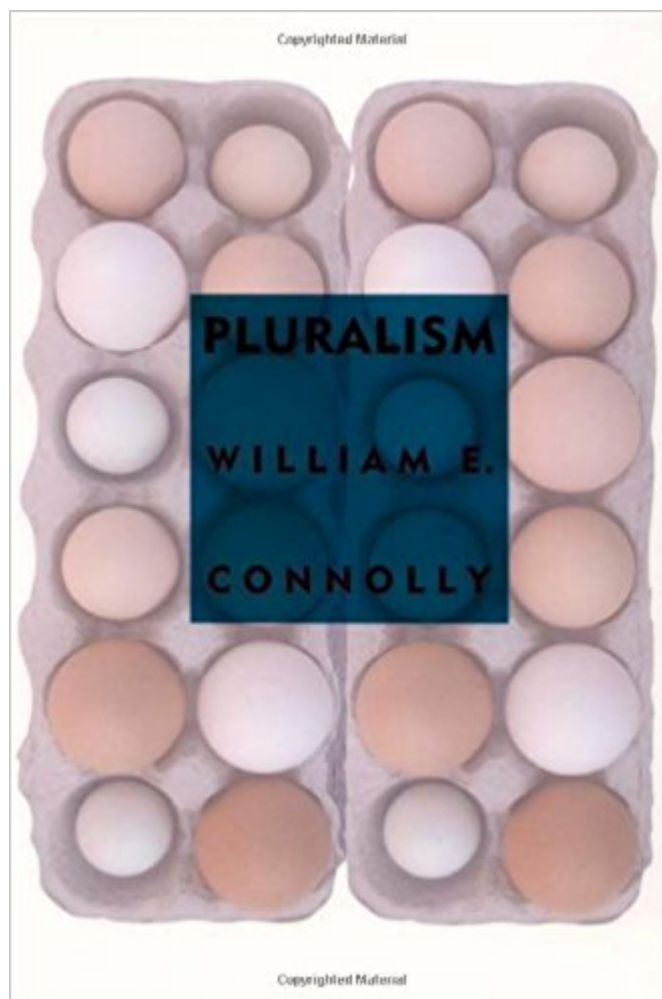


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Pluralism



Synopsis

Over the past two decades, the renowned political theorist William E. Connolly has developed a powerful theory of pluralism as the basis of a territorial politics. In this concise volume, Connolly launches a new defense of pluralism, contending that it has a renewed relevance in light of pressing global and national concerns, including the war in Iraq, the movement for a Palestinian state, and the fight for gay and lesbian rights. Connolly contends that deep, multidimensional pluralism is the best way to promote justice and inclusion without violence. He advocates a deep pluralism "in contrast to shallow, secular pluralism" that helps to create space for different groups to bring their religious faiths into the public realm. This form of deep pluralism extends far beyond faith, encompassing multiple dimensions of social and personal lives, including household organization and sexuality. Connolly looks at pluralism not only in light of faith but also in relation to evil, ethics, relativism, globalization, and sovereignty. In the process, he engages many writers and theorists "among them, Spinoza, William James, Henri Bergson, Marcel Proust, Gilles Deleuze, Giorgio Agamben, Talal Asad, Michael Hardt, and Antonio Negri. Pluralism is the first book in which Connolly explains the relationship between pluralism and the experience of time, and he offers readings of several films that address how time is understood, including Time Code, Far from Heaven, Waking Life, and The Maltese Falcon. In this necessary book Connolly brings a compelling, accessible philosophical critique together with his personal commitment to an inclusive political agenda to suggest how we might "and why we must" cultivate pluralism within both society and ourselves.

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Customer Reviews

This is a fantastic book. Pluralism not only offers a sophisticated diagnosis of some of the most pressing tensions and difficulties in contemporary democratic politics today by revealing how broad modes of thought, discourse, feeling and behaviour help shape and orient the mood of Western politics today. It also offers a nuanced, heartfelt and principled vision of what a truly pluralistic political society might be able to achieve - as well as suggesting ways that we as individuals and communities can work to cultivate such a society. Whether you have already read some of Connolly's previous work or are thinking about reading one of America's pre-eminent theorists of pluralism for the first time, Pluralism is a must read book. It offers Connolly's clearest and most persuasive outline and defence of his unique pluralistic worldview to date. It also provides compelling and straightforward responses to many questions that have been posed by critics (the chapter on the difference between pluralism and relativism is worth the price of the book on its own). Moreover, it embodies its own pluralistic approach by engaging respectfully and openly with many approaches - including those with which he agrees, some with which he strongly disagrees, and, perhaps most interestingly, others with which he disagrees but with whom he sees the possibility of cultivating areas of mutual respect and discussion. In sum, it is a work that should be read by anyone who is interested in understanding the ways that political theory can illuminate and (hopefully) influence the fundamental debates and pressures of contemporary politics.

"Connolly is one of the very few theorists I know of who knows how to unlock the democratic promise of pluralism. He has honed in on the forces of a democratic society that undermine pluralism and those that foster it, and he understands how a pluralist society can become genuinely inclusive of all voices, including religious voices, and just as importantly how each voice itself can become inclusive of the pluralistic possibilities that belong to a democratic society and its participating voices as a whole. Connolly's Pluralism is the Bible of pluralist thought." EU Pluralist

I'm deeply disappointed in the direction that William Connolly has taken. "The Augustinian Imperative" and the "Political Theory and Modernity" were my favorite books about eight years ago. I was almost a true believer in the William Connolly gospel. I still believe that the old books are excellent books, but I think he has refused to grow and become enmeshed in a rhetoric that gets dull through overuse and insufficiently attuned to the possibilities of an indifferent universe. In this book, he seems so concentrated on his war with William Bennett and his views of pluralism that he seems to ignore other possibilities. For instance, and this is an extremely important for instance,

what if a religion preaches war as the way its believers should relate to non-believers? Should we brush that fact under the table to further our anti-William Bennett agenda? Another, for instance, what if one is a homosexual? Is a homosexual really intolerant who doesn't want immigrants in his countries who believe that he should be stoned to death? Is Connolly in any sense compassionate to teach an ethos that questions the logic of such a homosexual? Such an ethos may well drive the homosexual into the arms of William Bennett. Bennett seems more likely than Connolly to return any kisses.

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