

Reading/Discussion Questions for November 12

17.042 Citizenship and Pluralism

1. Previously Gray argued for abandoning the universal aspirations of liberal theory on the grounds that liberal principles are incommensurable and indeterminate. On this “post-liberal” view, political conflicts are only resolvable in practice within liberal civil society. In this article, Gray now argues that the “post-liberal” view was mistaken and endorses a “pluralist” view. What is the “pluralist” view?
2. How does Gray’s “pluralist” view take the fact of value-pluralism more seriously than the traditional liberal or post-liberal view?
3. If we abandon any liberal or democratic project, as Gray advises, what form will the political order take? What will be the standard by which we can evaluate any regime?
4. What does Connolly mean that pluralism must be pluralized?
5. Connolly states that we do not need “a wide universal ‘we’ (a nation, a community, a singular practice of rationality, a particular monotheism) to foster democratic governance of a population” (xx). Where then should politics be located, and what will hold the members of a society together?
6. In Connolly’s view, what is “an ethos of critical responsiveness” and what role does it play in the pursuit of justice? See xv-xix and 178-187.
7. What are the dangers in pluralizing culture, and how does Connolly address the fears about these dangers? See 193-198.
8. Honig discusses four different versions of what she calls “the myth of immigrant America”: the capitalist, communitarian, traditional/patriarchal, and liberal versions. According to each version of the myth, what function do immigrants serve? Why have Americans felt ambivalent toward foreigners?
9. Honig herself advocates a “democratic cosmopolitanism” (98-106). What is the content of this view, and how does it differ from the different versions of the myth of immigrant American she discusses?