

## **Political Theory in an Age of Disenchantment: The Problem of Value Pluralism: Weber, Berlin, Rawls**

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### **Abstract**

Max Weber's ideas of value pluralism and disenchantment haunt modern political thought often without explicit acknowledgement. The problem of value pluralism in the work of Isaiah Berlin and John Rawls is explored. Is there an uncritical, even if implicit, acceptance of the idea of a connection between 'the fact of pluralism' as Rawls calls it and the idea of disenchantment?

Keywords: Pluralism, disenchantment, Weber, Berlin, Rawls.

### *1. Value pluralism*

Socrates: Haven't we also said that the gods are divided, Euthyphro, and disagree with one another, and feel enmity towards one another?<sup>1</sup>

It has become almost commonplace to refer to the emergence of a 'value-pluralist movement' in contemporary moral and political theory.<sup>2</sup> William Galston has conveniently listed what he takes to be the main elements in the value pluralist standpoint. These are that (1) value pluralism is not to be confused with relativism; (2) that there is no available measure for the ranking of value, that there is no common measure nor *summum bonum* that is the good for all individuals; (3) that, nevertheless, there are some goods that are basic in the sense that they must form part of any reasonable human life; (4) beyond this there is a wide range of legitimate diversity of goods, purposes, and cultures; (5) value pluralism is to be strongly contrasted with all forms of monism in the sense of theories that reduce values to either a common measure or attempt to create a comprehensive hierarchy. It can be argued, following this suggestion, that 'the wide diversity and deep conflict among

1. Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates* (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 27.
2. William A. Galston, *Liberal Pluralism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).