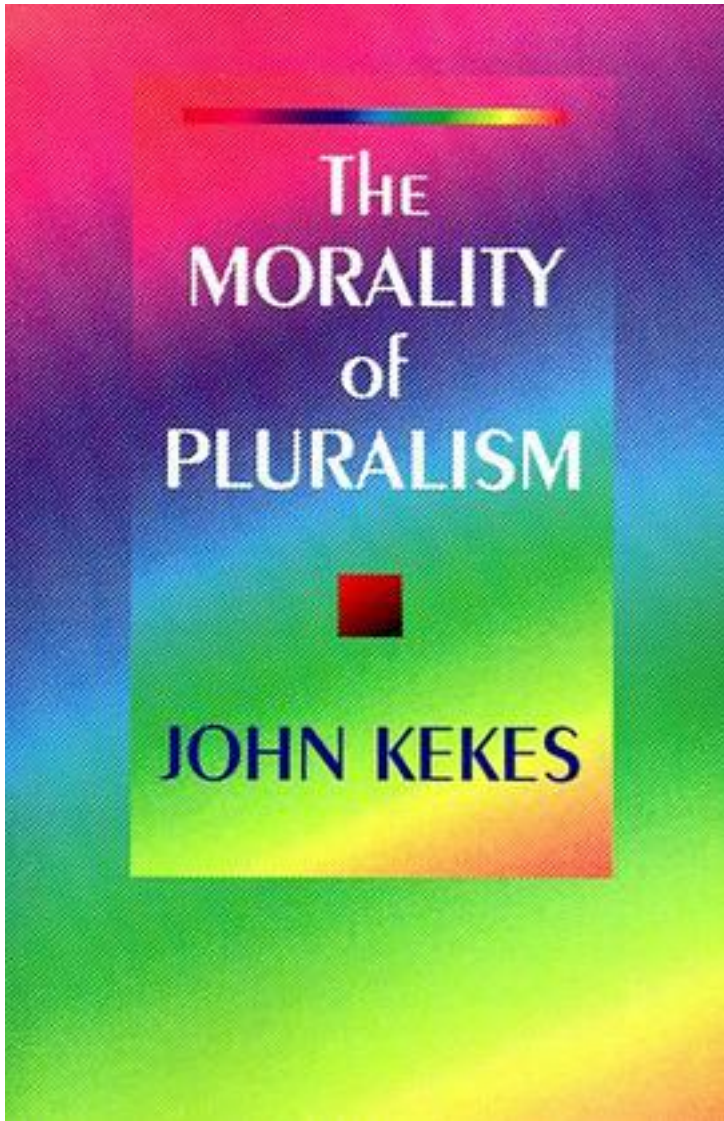


The Morality of Pluralism



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Current controversies about abortion, the environment, pornography, AIDS, capital punishment, and similar issues naturally lead to the question of whether there are any values that can be ultimately justified, or whether values are simply conventional. John Kekes argues that the present moral and political uncertainties are due to a deep change in our society from a dogmatic to a pluralistic view of values. Dogmatism is committed to there being only one justifiable system of values. Pluralism recognizes many such systems, and yet it avoids a chaotic relativism according to which all values are in the end arbitrary. Maintaining that good lives must be reasonable, but denying that they must conform to one true pattern, Kekes develops and justifies a pluralistic account of good lives and values, and works out its political, moral, and personal implications. The author defines values as possibilities whose realization would make lives good. He recognizes that their realization is difficult, especially since it involves choices among many, often conflicting, values. He argues, however, that living a good life requires a resolution of these conflicts, although reasonable resolutions are themselves plural in nature. His central claim is that pluralism is both reasonable and a preferable alternative to dogmatism and relativism.

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