

IBO, OT.12

**English, John Douglas, 'Rethinking the Political: Political Ontologies of Modernity',
Ph.D. thesis, The Johns Hopkins University, 1997**

In this dissertation I demonstrate the importance of ontology to political theory. I do so by engaging two dominant voices of modernity, Kant and Hegel, and contemporary pluralists who draw substantially on their thought, including Jurgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, John Rawls, and Isaiah Berlin, many of whom deny the necessity of ontological inquiry. I then consider their thought in relation to two expressions of countermodernity, Carl Schmitt and Nietzsche. I draw on these two thinkers to expose and to contest political ontologies in these recent theories of pluralism. These pluralisms manifest monistic political ontologies that cannot support the articulations of political pluralism they propose. Therefore, under scrutiny, their theorizations of politics fail to escape or transcend singular logics of the political exemplified by Schmitt's anti-pluralism. I argue that without sensitivity to political ontology, contemporary political thought will continue to present concepts of pluralism inadequate to the complexities of global life. In response to this shortcoming, I appeal to Nietzsche, who, in contrast with Schmitt, suggests an ontology that is pluralistic and productive. I turn then to two contemporary theorists sensitive to these considerations, Michel Foucault and Michael Oakeshott, broadly sketching what a concept of political pluralism might look like informed by a Nietzschean appreciation of ontological diversity.