

**London School of Economics and Political Science**  
**Department of Government**

**Some Varieties of Liberalism and Pluralism with Special  
Reference to the Political Theory of Joseph Raz**

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**Thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of London**

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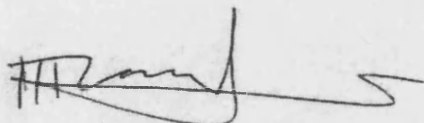


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## ABSTRACT

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The thesis argues that there are a number of pluralist ethical theories each one of which exemplifies traits that make it compatible, to different degrees, with different liberal doctrines. The pluralist ethical theories on which I focus are Berlinian value pluralism, lexical pluralism, non-linear value pluralism, value pluralism as reasonable disagreement and Kekes' theory of primary and secondary values. While delineating these pluralist variations, I also investigate their relationship with moral relativism and moral objectivism. Then I proceed to examine their compatibility with different liberal doctrines. The liberalisms examined are Mill's liberalism, Rawls' liberalism in *A Theory of Justice* and Rawls' liberalism in *Political Liberalism*, while there is also reference to Kekes' conservatism which is derived from pluralist premises. Then I continue by focusing specifically on the relationship between ethical pluralism and Raz's liberal perfectionism. I present my understanding of Raz's liberal system of ideas and I specify the two concepts in which I will tackle the issue of its compatibility with ethical pluralism. Firstly, I exercise the methodology that I have used in my discussion regarding the compatibility between different pluralisms and different liberalisms by examining the compatibility of liberal perfectionism with ethical pluralisms of variable radical aspirations. Secondly, I examine the compatibility in question through an inquiry into Raz's theory of value. This inquiry, however, does not yield results only with respect to the compatibility between liberal perfectionism and ethical pluralism, since it also reveals a problem which relates, but cannot be completely identified with, the issue of the compatibility between liberal perfectionism and ethical pluralism. Namely, the theory of value upon which Raz bases his liberal perfectionist doctrine is too ambiguous and after closer inspection it becomes apparent that if liberal perfectionism is to be a valid doctrine, it must advocate some kind of conservatism which must be further complemented by a belief in meliorism.

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P. Papoulias

London, Lent Term, 2007

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. The Context

The liberal tradition has included many divergent attempts to justify or ground liberal values. Karl Popper's and Michael Oakeshott's attempts to ground liberalism on their respective theories of knowledge, Friedrich Hayek's attempt to defend liberalism with reference to historical evolution and spontaneity, John Stuart Mill's attempt to reconcile liberalism with classical utilitarianism and John Rawls' attempt to replace utilitarianism with a set of Principles of Justice are some of the most prominent examples.

It is noteworthy, however, that in as much as these attempts aimed at justifying the liberal project from their respective perspectives, they also provided some of the most formidable critiques of liberalism. Hayek's assertions highlighted that rationalism and historicism are not monopolized by philosophers such as Plato or doctrines like the Marxist one; instead, they are ever present in the liberal tradition. Mill, in his attempt to reconcile the liberal idea of freedom with rule utilitarianism, effectively demonstrated that the two could be in deep conflict while their reconciliation is far from obvious. Rawls, in his attempt to substitute the prevalence of utilitarianism as the ultimate criterion for public decision making, ended reshaping his liberal doctrine of Justice as Fairness from the ambitiously normative theory of *A Theory of Justice* into the political one of *Political Liberalism*. The latter political doctrine in its turn gives rise to a number of

issues that are far from resolved. The best that Popper's theory offers in terms of a political argument may be an argument in favor of piecemeal social engineering rather than a rigorous political argument with necessarily liberal implications. Finally, Oakeshott appears to be first and foremost a conservative; his liberal convictions being the result of his particular type of conservatism.

Similarly, the attempt to ground a liberal doctrine on value pluralist premises has been turned on its head and now poses a formidable criticism to the liberal project. I consider this particular criticism to be an interesting one because it involves, at some point or another, references to the issues that I have briefly outlined above – rationalism, historicism, etc. Moreover, it is a criticism that encompasses most of the major liberal doctrines in the sense that if they are to be valid, they have to present an adequate response to it. For instance, Lakatos' objection to Popper's liberal system of ideas is not relevant to most other liberal doctrines. On the other hand, the pluralist objection to liberalism is applicable to the liberalisms advocated by Isaiah Berlin, Mill, Rawls, and Raz.

In the thesis I will pay special attention to the last of these liberalisms (Chapters Four, Five and Six will be devoted to it) for two reasons. The first reason is that the existing secondary literature on Raz's liberal doctrine is very small in comparison to that of the other theories. This is an important reason which, nevertheless, I do not consider to be sufficient for the production of a thesis. The second reason is that Raz's liberalism is one that stems *explicitly* from value pluralist convictions. One may claim the same about Rawls' and Mill's liberalisms as well, since Rawls' doctrine is an attempt to accommodate 'the fact of pluralism' and Mill's doctrine – despite being avowedly



grounded in utilitarianism – is inspired by the Herderian German romantic tradition which holds that there is not one, but a plurality of lifestyles through which human beings can flourish. However, none of these two doctrines is as intimately and as strongly connected to value pluralism as Raz’s doctrine. In this sense, and despite Raz’s commitment to a more “positive” view of freedom in the context of his perfectionist liberalism, Raz’s liberalism resembles Berlin’s, which develops its notion of freedom as negative liberty from a strong and deeply rooted commitment to value pluralism.

## **2. The Problem**

The main subject matter of the thesis is Raz’s liberal perfectionist theory which has many ambiguities and inconsistencies, most salient of which is its relationship with pluralism. It is my aim in this thesis to challenge the claim that liberal perfectionism collapses on value pluralist grounds and to clarify its ambiguities.

In the first part of the thesis I deal with the claim that liberal perfectionism collapses on pluralist grounds, to which I will refer as “the pluralist critique of liberalism”,<sup>1</sup> in a general manner and I make the argument that different pluralisms are compatible with different liberalisms. By doing so I argue that despite the fact that liberal perfectionism is, indeed, incompatible with Berlinian pluralism, it is still compatible with less radical pluralist variations. The purpose of this argument is twofold. First, it deals with a strong objection which applies to many liberal theories and to liberal perfectionism in particular. Second, this argument lays the ground for the argument in the second part

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<sup>1</sup> I will sometimes also refer to this critique as “the pluralist challenge to liberalism” or “the pluralist objection to pluralism”.

of the thesis whose aim is to aid liberal perfectionism in overcoming its various ambiguities and inconsistencies. If needed, the argument of the first part can be approached as an independent argument that addresses the relationship between liberalism and pluralism in general. However, for the purposes of the present thesis, whose subject matter rests with liberal perfectionism, the argument of the first part of the thesis is an integral part of the overall argument and a necessary requirement of the argument in the second part. To put it differently, the argument of the first part together with the argument of the second part form the overall argument of the thesis, while at the same time the validity of the argument of the second part is conditional upon the argument in the first part.

In the argument of the second part of the thesis I argue that in order for Raz's liberal perfectionism to be consistent, it must advocate certain characteristics; these are conservatism with both Oakeshottian and Kekesian aspects and a belief in meliorism. Both of these characteristics are incompatible with radical value pluralism. Nevertheless, the argument of the first part of the thesis, according to which it is credible to argue that liberal perfectionism is compatible with less radical pluralist variations, allows for the argument in the second part without endangering the overall validity of the liberal perfectionism system of ideas.

In my discussion of Raz's liberal perfectionism I will refer to a number of his works and not just *The Morality of Freedom*<sup>2</sup>, where he mainly develops the liberal perfectionist argument. This is because I find that many of his latter works, such as

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<sup>2</sup> Raz, J., *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1986)

*Engaging Reason*<sup>3</sup> and *Ethics in the Public Domain*<sup>4</sup> address, either directly or indirectly, the equivocal aspects of his argument which I try to clarify and improve in this thesis. Whether it was Raz's intention to create a body of work which addresses the issues that arise from his argument in *The Morality of Freedom* is of no importance. What is significant is the fact that much of Raz's subsequent work touches on issues, such as theory of value issues, which are vital for the clarification of the liberal perfectionist argument in *The Morality of Freedom*. Consequently, my aim in this thesis is not to try and give an argument which will render all of Raz's body of work consistent; it may not be. My aim in the thesis is to examine Raz's theory of liberal perfectionism and it is with reference to the latter that I examine some other of Raz's works and arguments.

As I have already stated, my general discussion of the pluralist challenge to liberalism is a prelude and will lead to my more specific discussion of Raz's attempt to reconcile liberalism with pluralism. The claim that liberalism collapses on value pluralist grounds, can be broken down into three main steps.

The first has to do with an acknowledgement of what is entailed in a value pluralist ethical theory. Generally, when one refers to the theory of value pluralism one does so with respect to Berlin's elaboration of it. The latter holds, as John Skorupski correctly puts it, that value pluralism 'does more than record the fact that choice often involves conflicts, moral or other, and that choosing can be difficult and sometimes even an appalling thing to do'.<sup>5</sup> Berlin alleges that value pluralism is the 'conception that there

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<sup>3</sup> Raz, J.; *Ethics in the Public Domain: Essays in the Morality of Law and Politics* (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1995)

<sup>4</sup> Raz, J., *Engaging Reason: On The Theory of Value and Action*; (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

<sup>5</sup> Skorupski, J.; *Ethical Explorations* (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 65

are many different ends that men may seek and still be fully rational'.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, these ends are often incommensurable and incompatible with each other. The incompatibility of these rational ends does not only mean that two or more of them might not be combined in one single life, such as the life of a rock star and a monk. In addition, it implies that the choice between different worthwhile values, such as the idea of choice and the idea of the right to life – as they appear in the abortion debate – may be a radical choice between incommensurables which are mutually exclusive. Two implications can be derived from the above. First, moral conflicts as understood in value-pluralism are objective features of ethical life. Another implication of value pluralism is the irreparable loss that might be entailed in some of our moral choices. In a nutshell then, the first step of the argument that poses the problem in question is an acknowledgement of the value pluralist theory as one which encompasses claims to the objective, plural, incommensurable and agonistic – that is to say, inherently conflictual – nature of the ethical domain.

The second step of the pluralist critique of liberalism refers to the argument according to which the fulfillment of the moral requirements that stem from value pluralism necessitates the establishment of a liberal philosophical framework. This argument can be found in both Rawls and Raz. In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls' liberal doctrine starts by assuming the plurality of the ethical domain and tries to devise a normative political theory that will pay adequate respect to this plurality by preventing the primacy of utilitarianism in the political process. In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls' point shifts from a normative into a political one, but the purpose is similar to that presented in

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<sup>6</sup> Berlin, I.; "The Pursuit of the Ideal" in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, edited by Hardy, H. (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1990), p. 11

*A Theory of Justice* to the extent that it argues for the indispensable need of liberal institutional values – at least in the context of the western democratic state – which will safeguard the ‘fact of pluralism’. Similarly, Raz bases his argument for a perfectionist liberal doctrine which prioritises autonomy on value pluralist premises. Unlike Raz, Rawls aims to side-step the question of whether value-pluralism is in some sense true; but both assume that a type of pluralism is an established fact.

The third step of the critique is to verify the plural yet objective nature of the ethical universe that was presented in the first step, but to invert the argument of the second step and claim that it is not the case that liberalism can be necessarily derived from value pluralist ambitions. On the contrary, if one were truly a value pluralist, one would have to accept that liberalism could be at odds with other objectively worthwhile lifestyles. That is, there are worthwhile lifestyles for which it is not only the case that they do not require liberalism as an essential ingredient, but which are actually incompatible with liberalism.

In the case of Raz’s perfectionist theory, the pluralist critique of liberalism questions the plausibility of a normative argument for the prioritization of autonomy within a liberal context.

### **3. The Responses to the Problem and the Problems with the Responses**

There have been three main responses as to the above problem. The first response argues that the pluralist critique of liberalism is unanswerable and as a consequence the liberal

project, whether Rawlsian, Berlinian, Millian, or Razian, is unsalvageable on normative terms. John Gray is the main advocate of this view.<sup>7</sup>

Glen Newey points out that Richard Rorty argues for a position similar to this.<sup>8</sup> However, it appears to me that Rorty's argument is from a different perspective. Whereas Gray uses a value pluralist standpoint to argue for the impossibility of making a normative argument specifically for liberalism, Rorty's argument is an instantiation of his contention about the impossibility of foundational political justification. When I refer to the forcefulness of this first response in the thesis, I will refer to the one which is formulated by Gray.

Gray's argument against Raz's liberal perfectionism is exemplified in his criticism of the functional and the cultural arguments.<sup>9</sup> He argues that these two arguments, which he identifies in Raz's work and whose aim is to make a normative case for the priority of autonomy in modern liberal contexts, fail if one takes into account Raz's commitment to value pluralism. This is because a commitment to value pluralism would entail the admission that there are worthwhile lifestyles that do not require Razian autonomy as a necessary ingredient. Even more so, there might be valuable lifestyles which cannot flourish under conditions which promote autonomy. As a consequence, a convincing normative argument for the compatibility of autonomy based liberalism with pluralism is not possible.

The second response, which is advocated by liberals who belong in the Kantian tradition, holds that the critique from pluralism is unsuccessful and that liberalism does

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<sup>7</sup> Look at **Gray, J.**; *Mill On Liberty: A Defence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1996), *Postscript*; and **Gray, J.**; *Two faces of Liberalism*, (Polity Press: 2000)

<sup>8</sup> **Newey, G.**, *After Politics: The rejection of Politics in Contemporary Liberal Philosophy* (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave, 2001)

<sup>9</sup> **Gray, J.**; *Two faces of Liberalism*, (Polity Press: 2000)

not, after all, fail on value pluralist grounds. The best reason for this response is that liberalism is a political doctrine. Yet, there are two issues with this response. First, on a general level, even if liberalism is a political doctrine, it is not certain that it can avoid making at least *some* normative claims. Second, and more importantly for my thesis, Raz is not a political liberal. Raz's liberal perfectionism has very strong normative foundations both in terms of its explicit advocacy of value pluralism as well as in terms of its commitment to parochial value theory, which I discuss in Chapters Five and Six. Thus, contrary to this second response, the pluralist critique of liberalism in general and of Raz's liberal perfectionism in particular is still relevant.

The third response is that the tension between liberalism and pluralism described above occurs because of fundamental flaws in the theory of value pluralism. More specifically, this response holds that value pluralism collapses into ethical relativism and it is because of this that the issue of the incompatibility between liberalism and pluralism arises. The claim that value pluralism collapses into moral relativism can be traced back to Leo Strauss and his criticism of Weberian pluralism, which for him seems to be nothing more than relativism with nihilistic implications. The idea of value pluralism itself might be traced even further back, since Berlin claims that he salvaged Herder's value pluralism from the misinterpretation that it was merely an expression of moral relativism.

As the pluralist critique of liberalism is based on value pluralist premises and as value pluralism is equated with moral relativism, this third response does not offer anything more than a critique of liberalism from a moral relativist standpoint. This also means that the defence against this moral relativist criticism does not need a new set of

arguments; it suffices to approach the pluralist critique of liberalism in the manner one would approach a moral relativist critique of liberalism.

In the case of Raz's liberal theory, this third moral relativist critique would hold that no normative case can be made for the prioritization of autonomy, since from a simple moral relativist perspective no normative case can be made out of any moral demand – such as the one that stems from Raz's revised harm principle for the prioritization of autonomy. In order to reply to this, one would merely have to reject the assertion that value pluralism collapses into simple moral relativism. In this case, the pluralist critique of liberalism would produce either one of the previous two responses which I have presented in this section. In fact, as I will show in Chapters Five and Six, Raz's advocacy of parochial value theory is an explicit rejection of moral relativism. By advocating parochial value theory Raz contends that value pluralism is an objective ethical theory. Consequently, the criticism that pluralism collapses into moral relativism is one which does not apply to Raz's liberal perfectionism, since the latter rejects moral relativism at a very early stage in its development.

At the core of this third response to the pluralist critique of liberalism was the assertion that value pluralism collapses into moral relativism. There are thinkers like Glen Newey, nevertheless, who attack value pluralism on very much the opposite grounds; that is, on the grounds that it fails to insulate itself from monistic ethical tendencies.<sup>10</sup>

It is true that value pluralism does exemplify some rather relativistic traits, as it is also true that there are some aspects of it that, when pressed, can reveal strong monistic

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<sup>10</sup> Look at Newey, G., After Politics: The rejection of Politics in Contemporary Liberal Philosophy (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave, 2001), Ch. 4



tendencies. In Chapter Two, however, I investigate the claims of the value pluralist ethical theory and in the process of doing so I find this response to the pluralist objection to liberalism to be flawed; value pluralism – at least Berlin’s view of it – cannot be equated with either moral relativism or monism. As a consequence, at least *prima facie*, Raz’s advocacy of some form of value pluralism is compatible with his commitment to moral objectivity in the context of parochial value theory.

Value pluralism aspires to be something different, neither a relativistic nor a monistic doctrine. Whether some of the ambiguities of the theory of value pluralism are due to a lack in the philosophical or the conceptual tools needed in order to make a conclusive argument about its truth, or whether these ambiguities are indication of a deeper fact of the matter, are not issues that I aim to resolve in the thesis. For the purposes of this thesis, I am assuming the truth of some form of value pluralism. As a consequence, those who are convinced that value pluralism is a bogus ethical theory should limit themselves in being interested not in the truth, but only in the validity of my argument.

In the thesis then I argue that the third response to the pluralist critique of liberalism does not fully appreciate the issues at stake since it misconceives the fundamentals of the critique in question. The other two responses are diametrically opposed to each other. One claims that liberalism collapses under the demands of value pluralism whereas the other claims that liberalism can withstand these demands; the disagreement is absolute.

#### **4. The Alternative Response and the Cost of Being Liberal**

The aim of the present thesis is to provide a fourth response that will aid the breakup of this deadlock. I argue for the plausibility of a response which appreciates the full force of the pluralist challenge to liberalism, but which refuses to see this challenge as its tombstone. At the core of my argument is the claim that the pluralist critique of liberalism assumes that there is a single uncontroversial conception of pluralism; this, I argue, is a mistake. In the first part of the thesis I explore a plurality of pluralisms from Berlin's radical pluralism to various pluralist theories such as lexical and reasonable pluralism. Without turning the dissertation into a discussion of meta-ethics and a proof or disproof of value pluralism, I examine the variety of candidate theories of pluralism and their relation to liberalism as a prelude to examining Raz' own peculiar approach to pluralism and liberalism and their potential reconciliation. I argue that a reconciliation between liberal perfectionism and radical pluralism is not possible. However, liberal perfectionism can be compatible with less radical versions of pluralism.

This is a very important observation. When I examine liberal perfectionism in greater detail in the second part of the thesis, I find that if liberal perfectionism is to be a coherent liberal theory it has to incorporate within its system of ideas some conservative traits, while at the same time liberal perfectionism will also have to commit to some form of meliorism. These characteristics, which may not be fully compatible with Berlin's radical pluralism, can be compatible with other pluralist variations which are less radical, such as Kekes' pluralist theory of primary and secondary values.

This is the cost of being liberal. If one is to consider oneself as a liberal, one will have to play down some of her pluralist ambitions since radical pluralism cannot be

compatible with any liberal theory. However, limiting one's pluralist ambitions does not, of course, make one automatically a non-pluralist; at first instance, it merely makes one a non-radical pluralist.

At the centre of this argument is the claim that the responses to the pluralist critique of liberalism do not take into account the possibility of subtle differentiations between different kinds of pluralistic ethical outlooks. This is a very different position from the third moral relativist response to the pluralist critique of liberalism that I presented earlier and which claims that value pluralist ethical theory is false. The position that I present here is that one can be an advocate of one type of pluralism amongst many, since it is not the case that there is only the possibility of either an affirmative or a negative answer to the question "are you a pluralist"? This question is more meaningful and relevant if it reads "if you are a pluralist, what kind of pluralist are you"?

If this is the question that is asked instead, one might find out that what many liberals actually endorse is not Berlinian radical value pluralism. Instead they endorse some other pluralist variation which, on the one hand, can still be considered pluralistic and which, on the other, because it is more tamed, can be consistent with a liberal doctrine without having to be subject to the otherwise devastating pluralist objection to liberalism.

Two arguments similar to the moral relativist response to the pluralist critique of liberalism might be advanced against my suggestion of tackling the problem by distinguishing between different types of pluralisms, whose compatibility with different pluralisms I then examine. The first is that there is only one true theory of pluralism, which is radical and agonistic, while any watered down version of it cannot properly be

counted as pluralism. As I have already indicated, there is no single uncontested account of value pluralism. Consequently, the statement that alternative variations of pluralism cannot be considered to be viable pluralist alternatives is weak. The second objection to my proposed response is that the alternatives that I propose to Berlinian value pluralism are not true, since they cannot withstand the weight of philosophical scrutiny. My response to this criticism in the thesis is that – at least for the time being – the existing conceptual tools at our disposal are inadequate both in proving that any one pluralist variation is false as well as in concluding that Berlinian pluralism is a more plausible pluralist theory than any one of the alternatives that I present. The inverse is of course also the case; it cannot be proven that Berlinian pluralism or any of its variations are true. Since this is the case, as I again have indicated before, I will assume the validity of the pluralisms that I present. A necessary consequence of this is that if we acquire new conceptual tools, or the use of the existing conceptual tools is such that pluralism is proven false then, even if valid, my argument here will be untrue since it would be based on false premises.

In a nutshell, the thesis deals with the question of the compatibility between liberalism and pluralism as this is prompted from the consideration of the question in Raz's liberal theory. The main thrust of my argument is that Berlin's discussion of value pluralism does not exhaust the terrain, as all the responses to the aforementioned problem assume. Without getting involved in the meta-ethical discussion on the proof or disproof of any variation of value pluralism, I argue that different pluralisms are compatible with different liberalisms. This discussion is a prelude to the examination of Raz's own particular attempt to reconcile pluralism and liberalism in his perfectionist theory. During

my examination I will also investigate other aspects of Raz's liberal system of ideas, such as his view of autonomy and his theory of value as these pertain to his value pluralism and liberalism.

In order to make the schematic comments above more specific I will now present a summary of the argument in the thesis as this develops in each of the chapters.

## **5. The Argument for the Alternative Response**

### *5.1. The Idea of Value Pluralism*

In the second chapter of the thesis I investigate the idea of value pluralism as it is presented in Berlin's writings. I deem this to be a necessary task for three reasons. First, Berlin's idea of value pluralism is at the very core of the pluralist challenge to liberalism. Furthermore, the alternative solution that I give for the pluralist objection to liberalism rests heavily on a reappraisal of what one ought to understand when one refers to Berlin's value pluralism. Second, I elaborate on Berlin's value pluralism in a manner that points out the inconclusiveness of the view that it is merely moral relativism or even, at the other extreme, monism. Third, the strengths, shortcomings and characteristics of the Berlinian view of value pluralism will be a constant reference for the presentation and evaluation of the pluralist variations in the third chapter of the thesis.

I start my elucidation of Berlin's pluralism by identifying the basic characteristics of pluralist ethical theories in general. These I find to be universalism, pluralism, incommensurability (both internal and external) and incompatibility. It is generally due to variations on the intensity of these characteristics that one can talk about different types

of pluralism. I then move on to investigate the relationship between Berlinian value pluralism and moral relativism.

The relationship between the two has been intimate not only in the context of the history of ideas but also in terms of the nature of Berlinian value pluralism. For example, despite its claim to universality, Berlinian value pluralism provides no explicit list of generic human goods. Lacking an objective list of human goods, it has been argued, Berlin cannot avoid moral relativism.

On the other hand, Berlinian value pluralism is different from standard versions of moral relativism in that when the former refers to the incommensurability of values and lifestyles, it refers to something different from clashes of *Weltanschauungen*. On the contrary, for Berlinian value-pluralism rational judgment is a possibility in some contexts. Furthermore, Berlin's advocacy of universal intelligibility is another reason for its distinction from at least some kinds of moral relativism. This is because the advocacy in question refers to Berlin's commitment to universal features of human nature and as such is an indication of his objectivism. Moreover, though he does not specify their contents, Berlin elsewhere refers to the existence of pan-human generic goods. Whereas this initially appears to be a project similar to the Enlightenment one, since Berlin appeals to universal human traits and needs, his methodology is mainly historicist and, consequently, less rationalistic than the Enlightenment approach. In general, the argument that value pluralism collapses into moral relativism is inconclusive.

I proceed by investigating the claim that pluralism, when put under further scrutiny, collapses into monism. It is true that there are some similarities between the two doctrines. One of them is that they can both accept the possibility of moral loss – a

position rejected by most versions of ethical relativism. Nevertheless, a monistic doctrine does not commit to an agonistic nature of the moral universe. Another indication of the divergence between monism and pluralism is that pluralists argue for the fact of pluralism partly from an empirical/phenomenological point of view whereas monists normally argue for an overarching value or principle from a rationalistic point of view. It is true that pluralist ethical theories – and Berlin’s is no exception here – have some affinity to rationalism. This affinity, however, is less potent than the monistic affinity to rationalism. Even pluralisms which are closer to monism than Berlin’s value pluralism – like some versions of lexical value pluralism – are generally less rationalistic than straightforward monistic doctrines. Furthermore, in the pluralist ethical theory well informed and rational individuals or groups do not agree on an overarching value; monism, in contrast, is about the agreement of rational individuals or groups on what this overarching ideal is. Even pluralist variations that tend to argue in favor of this kind of agreement – like John Kekes’ primary and secondary value distinction and lexical pluralism – claim that the overarching value is not singular; that is, they claim that there is a plethora of overarching values.

My conclusion with regards to the above is that there are very strong reasons to differentiate the pluralist doctrine from monism. Moreover, there are reasons that differentiate it from moral relativism.

In order to clarify the traits of the Berlinian pluralist doctrine I then contrast it with the Aristotelian and the Kekesian pluralist accounts.<sup>11</sup> The Aristotelian and the Berlinian views on pluralism are similar in that their ethical theory is based on a

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<sup>11</sup> **Kekes, J.;** The Morality of Pluralism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993)

conception of what it is to be human – though this is more apparent, it has to be said, in the Aristotelian than in the Berlinian theory. The two are also similar in terms of the importance they place on the political, historical and social circumstances in conjunction with which their normative prescriptions are best realized. The Aristotelian doctrine flourishes in conjunction with the *polis* whereas the Berlinian one flourishes best under conditions of freedom as negative liberty. They differ, very importantly, on the fact that the Aristotelian ethical theory sees that rational deliberation can, in principle, always yield a right answer as the intrinsically different valuable things in life can exist in a harmonious whole. On the contrary, as I have already mentioned, Berlinian pluralism is agonistic in the sense that an irreparable loss of value sometimes cannot be avoided even when moral deliberation occurs under fully rational conditions.

Kekes defines as primary values those which correspond to generic human needs which always have priority over any other considerations. He defines secondary values as those about which there can be reasonable disagreement. Thus, Kekes' argument for the distinction between primary and secondary values is both an epistemological one as well as an ontological one (primary values are defined in accordance with human needs). As a consequence, primary values are more important than secondary values and are ranked lexically in the sense that the fulfillment of the former presides over that of the latter. In this sense, Kekes' pluralism is an instantiation of lexical pluralism – which I develop in Chapter Three – and as such the two share many strengths and weaknesses as well as many of the similarities and differences that each of them has with Berlinian pluralism.

Specifically, Kekes asserts that there is consensus both in terms of the content of the primary values as well as in terms of their priority over secondary values. If



consensus is not reached then Kekes would claim that the agents in question are unreasonable. On the contrary, Berlinian pluralism would hold that there can be cases where there is lack of consensus between reasonable agents for values that Kekes would classify as primary.

There are clear differences between the two theories but there are also similarities. Berlin's theory ultimately holds that negative liberty should have priority over other values – if only to safeguard those other values – very much like Kekes holds that there are values that have priority over others. Moreover, I argue that in Berlin's case this primacy is derived, to some extent, from a view of human nature. Likewise, Kekes' theory was based on a specific conception of human needs.

In Kekes' ethical pluralism primary values, which are always assigned a priority, are need-sensitive and refer to essential human requirements. The values which belong in the group of secondary values are not repugnant; it is just the case that their fulfillment is secondary. It is noteworthy that Kekes does not examine the possibility of clashes between primary values. In radical Berlinian value pluralism there is no hierarchy of values – just the distinction between worthwhile and condemnable values. As I will go on to argue in Chapter Three, there is a linear hierarchy in lexical pluralism between worthwhile values while there is also recognition of the existence of a group of repugnant values which is not part of this hierarchy. In effect, Kekes' distinction is a more unrestricted version of a more elaborate lexical pluralism since in the theory of primary and secondary values Kekes does not account for conflicts between primary values whereas in lexical pluralism if a conflict occurs, there is a specific hierarchy which has to be followed in order to solve the conflict in question.

Finally, I go on to investigate Ronald Dworkin's argument against pluralism.<sup>12</sup>

Dworkin argues that value pluralist theory is the exemplification of not very well thought out moral judgments. I find this position to be unconvincing, albeit impossible to prove wrong. More importantly, though, I argue that this criticism cannot give us a conclusive disproof of pluralism.

To conclude, in this first step of my argument I examine the theory of Berlinian value pluralism which is the pluralism that the pluralist objection to liberalism uses to make its case. Then, by arguing that it is a doctrine that has not been proved to be reducible to either monism or moral relativism I effectively reject the third response to the pluralist critique of liberalism. By presenting Berlinian pluralism and contrasting it with Aristotle's and Kekes' pluralisms I also delineate an area of pluralist discourse with reference to which I will elaborate on the pluralist variations in the third chapter of the thesis. Finally, I do not refute but instead reverse Dworkin's argument against pluralism and turn it into a contention in favor of the assumption of the truth of radical pluralism rather than its falsehood.

## *5.2 Different Pluralisms for Different Liberalisms*

The second step of my argument is presented in Chapter Three where I expound the idea that there is not one but a multiplicity of pluralist ethical theories and then go on to link these with different liberalisms. My point here is to stress that Berlin's discussion on the issue, though important, does not exhaust the terrain. As a consequence, the pluralist critique of liberalism is weakened.

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<sup>12</sup> Dworkin, R.; "Do Liberal Values Conflict?" in Dworkin, R., Lilla M. & Silvers B. R. [eds.]; The Legacy of Isaiah Berlin, (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001)

Lexical value pluralism is a hierarchical theory, which defends the position that there is an absolute value that should be fulfilled or a minimum standard of some kind that should be satisfied before the fulfilment of other values takes effect. What lexical pluralism has in common with Berlinian value pluralism is the universalistic, pluralistic and incompatibility components. They are different in that even though lexical pluralism does subscribe to the idea of incommensurability, it does so in a much more restricted manner so as to be able to make rational hierarchical rankings between values, which Berlinian pluralism claims is impossible to do rationally. There are two ways for this ranking to take effect. One is to substitute for the values some common medium of measurement and the other is via the advocacy of a rationalist theory of knowledge. Lexical pluralism does the latter and in this it is reminiscent of the hierarchical rankings in Aristotle's pluralistic ethical theory (or even, to some extent, Kekes'). This rationalist inclination shows that lexical pluralism is closer to monism than Berlinian pluralism is, but the two can still be shown to be distinct since, whereas monism does not commit to the idea of incommensurability at all, lexical pluralism does – although in a less radical way than Berlin's pluralism. I argue that Rawls' liberalism in *A Theory of Justice*<sup>13</sup> and Mill's liberalism are compatible with this kind of pluralism – the former, however, with important qualifications regarding Rawls' idea of basic liberties. A strong indication of Mill's compatibility with lexical pluralism is the fact that the latter is consistent with the theory of higher and lower pleasures as well as with Mill's positivistic view about the accumulation of moral knowledge and human progress. On the other hand, I argue that Rawls' liberalism in *Political Liberalism*<sup>14</sup> is incompatible with lexical pluralism. Finally,

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<sup>13</sup> Rawls, J.; *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford University Press: 1971,1999)

<sup>14</sup> Rawls, J.; *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, 1996)

even though lexical pluralism does not *guarantee* the priority of autonomy in Raz's liberal perfectionism, it does nevertheless still *allow* it; consequently, the two are not necessarily incompatible.

In *The Morality of Freedom*<sup>15</sup> Raz expresses the idea of incommensurability as a non-linear ordering, i.e. as an ordering that fails the test of transitivity. This take on incommensurability is but one aspect of his pluralist theory which is supplemented by his theory of parochial values.<sup>16</sup> Despite the overall Aristotelian appeal of his system of ideas, his view of incommensurability is as radical as that of Berlin's. The difference between the two is that Berlin's is expressed in a somewhat historicist manner whereas Raz's is expressed in deductive analytical terms. The implications of what Newey calls 'non-linear pluralism' when he refers to Raz's take on incommensurability, are the same as those of Berlinian value pluralism despite the more analytical method that Raz uses in demonstrating it. It is because of this that no more shall be said in terms of this pluralist variation and its compatibility with the various liberal doctrines that I examine.

Another pluralist variation found in the writings of Charles Larmore and the later Rawls is value pluralism understood as reasonable disagreement. Rawls' aim in *Political Liberalism* is to argue that the prescription of action in terms of reasonable pluralism is a political one. His liberalism in *Political Liberalism* is compatible with reasonable pluralism – even though this compatibility does not make the liberalism in focus necessarily true. On the contrary, neither Mill's, nor Raz's, nor Rawls' liberalism in *A Theory of Justice* are compatible with reasonable pluralism. The latter is incompatible with Mill's liberalism because of complications with respect to the limits of toleration

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<sup>15</sup> Raz, J., *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1986)

<sup>16</sup> I discuss Raz's theory of parochial values mainly in Chapters Five and Six.

and its relation to public or private sphere activities. In Rawls' case in *A Theory of Justice*, pluralism understood as reasonableness cannot guarantee the priority of basic liberties and as result the two are rendered incompatible. Finally, Raz bases the priority of autonomy on a specific view about moral objectivity which is hostile to the idea of reasonable pluralism.

Moreover, I argue that none of the above liberalisms is compatible with radical pluralism. Specifically, I find that Mill's doctrine with its theory of higher and lower pleasures is an Aristotelian pluralist doctrine, albeit one which cannot account for the agonistic and incommensurable nature of the Berlinian pluralist ethical outlook. Another reason for its incompatibility with Berlinian value pluralism is not that Mill's liberalism endorses a theory of moral and human progress as such, but instead because it endorses the *specific* theory of progress that it does. Rawls' liberalism cannot accommodate radical pluralism because an admission to the truth of the latter would compromise Rawls' argument for the promotion of basic liberties. Rawls' liberalism in *Political Liberalism* is incompatible with radical pluralism because an advocacy of the latter would undermine the strengths of the application of reasonableness – if such a concept could be even devised under radical pluralism – in the public sphere. Moreover, it appears that there is some compatibility between Kekes' pluralism and all of the liberal variations which I examine. The latter observation is very important since it will be a central theme in my evaluation of Raz's liberalism in the remainder of the thesis.

To conclude, no liberal theory is compatible with radical pluralism, but different liberal theories are compatible with different pluralist variations. This argument concludes the first part of the thesis and is indispensable for my discussion of Raz's

perfectionist theory and its potential reconciliation with pluralism, which takes place in the second part.

The reason for this is as follows. In the second part of the thesis I argue that within liberal perfectionism there exist two conflicting tendencies; those of radicalism and conservatism. I contend that if liberal perfectionism is going to be a coherent liberal theory, it will have to settle with its conservative inclinations at the expense of its radical ones. The characteristics of this conservative interpretation are incompatible with Berlin's radical value pluralism whereas, on the contrary, they are compatible with Kekes' pluralist theory of primary and secondary values and could even be compatible with lexical value pluralism – as the latter can allow for the prioritization of autonomy.

### *5.3 Raz' Liberalism: The Arguments and the Problems*

The argument in the second part of the thesis complements the argument of the first part of the thesis as my interpretation of Raz's theory develops out of the latter. In the course of this interpretation I also engage in a discussion of Raz's conception of autonomy and his theory of value as these pertain to his value pluralism and liberalism.

In this part of my argument I present Raz's arguments for liberal perfectionism and I indicate a number of problems that will be taken up in the remaining chapters of the thesis. First, I examine Raz's three arguments against anti-perfectionism. In examining his first anti-perfectionist argument which is directed against the overruling of ideals I identify a deep seated objective theory of value and a number of practical problems that have to do with one's obligation to obey authoritative political directives. Furthermore,

Raz's argument on this issue exemplifies some rationalistic traits that would definitely be at odds with the ethical convictions of a radical value pluralist.

Raz's second argument against anti-perfectionism asserts that perfectionism is not coercive. I find his view that the overruling of some ideals for the promotion of others by 'soft means' is not coercive disputable. In doing this I discuss the challenges that modernity poses for Raz's theory.

The third argument against anti-perfectionism proposed by Raz makes a case for the compatibility between perfectionism and pluralism. This is a claim which I accept because of my argument in the first part of the thesis, where I discussed how pluralist variations different to Berlinian pluralism can be compatible with different liberal theories. Consequently, it is possible that liberal perfectionism can be compatible with a variety of pluralisms, but not radical pluralism.

Then I examine the role that autonomy plays in Raz's liberal perfectionist doctrine and I briefly refer to the issue of the compatibility between autonomy-based liberalism and value pluralism; an issue which I discuss in even greater detail in Chapter Five. At this stage of the argument I establish the prevalent role that autonomy has in Raz's doctrine and I examine the two arguments identified by Gray in Raz's work; the functional and the cultural arguments.

After doing this I elaborate on Raz's conception of the autonomous agent, which is also complemented with a more detailed discussion of the compatibility between Raz's conception of autonomy and radical value pluralism in Chapter Five. For the time being my aim is to establish the content of Raz's view on the issue so as to be able to refer back to it when I make the complementary argument later in the thesis.

Finally, in the conclusion to the chapter I identify the two directions with respect to which Raz's liberalism needs to be improved and clarified. These two directions, with which I deal in the remaining chapters, have to do firstly with the compatibility between liberal perfectionism and pluralism and, as a consequence, secondly with Raz's theory of value – the content of which is ambiguous and at times inconsistent. My examination of Raz's theory of value will be important because it further specifies the kind of value that autonomy really is. If autonomy is an objective value, then the normative argument for its priority is possible. At the same time the compatibility between liberal perfectionism and some form of pluralism is also possible, as an objective pluralist ethical theory could only be compatible with an objective value of autonomy. If the value of autonomy were not objective, then liberal perfectionism could not be based on objective pluralist premises.

#### *5.4 Liberal Perfectionism, its Compatibility with Radical Pluralism and the Role of the Value of Autonomy in Raz's Liberalism*

In this part of my argument I examine the compatibility between liberal perfectionism and untamed value pluralism in greater detail. This leads my argument to the discussion of the role of autonomy in Raz's system of ideas and the exact value status of autonomy.

First, I start by examining the arguments that Raz gives for his distinction between what he refers to as "weak" and "strong" pluralisms. Even though Raz commits himself to the truth of a strong pluralist ethical theory – non-linear pluralism – he then abandons it and bases his argument on a weak pluralist conception. I argue that there are two problems with respect to the above. First, the term "weak pluralism" is too broad and does not pay adequate attention to the different varieties of pluralism whose compatibility



with different liberal theories I discussed in the first part of the thesis. As a consequence, Raz's argument for the compatibility between liberal perfectionism and weak pluralism is too crude. Secondly, it is absurd for Raz to base a liberal doctrine on an ethical theory that he has implicitly rejected – by arguing for the truth of an ethical theory that he does not use, i.e. strong ethical pluralism.

The solution to the second problem follows from my discussion in the first part of the thesis where I argue that Berlin's discussion on value pluralism is not exhaustive of the issue and I contend the possibility of the existence of different pluralisms. My argument that strong ethical pluralism is not necessarily the true pluralist theory provides the necessary backdrop that allows Raz to advocate weak rather than strong ethical pluralism.

The solution to the first problem is also related to my argument in the first part of the thesis, which was a prelude to my discussion of Raz's attempt to reconcile radical pluralism with liberal perfectionism, and which takes place in this stage of my argument in the thesis. Whereas it was in the first part of the thesis where I argued in favor of the specific liberal variations with which liberal perfectionism is compatible with, it is here where I expand on the actual reasons for the incompatibility between liberal perfectionism and radical pluralism (i.e. strong – or non-linear pluralism in Raz). I argue that the two are incompatible for two main reasons. The first is the idea of Razian autonomy *per se*, while the second is due to the role that the said autonomy has in Raz's liberalism. Actual fulfillment of the conditions of autonomy, Raz argues, will have to entail the filtering out of bad options from an individual's or a group's domain of choice. Irrespectively of whether this is a valid statement, its advocacy is at odds with a strong

radical pluralist commitment. Although the radical pluralist does advocate moral objectivity and allows for the existence of morally repugnant options, because of the close relation between value pluralism and empiricism, a radical pluralist would feel uncomfortable with the demand for the aforementioned filtering of options from one's domain of choice. This is even more the case in the context of modernity which makes the demarcation between bad and good options a very difficult and ambiguous endeavor. Overall, I argue that liberal perfectionism entails an Aristotelian view about the relationship between normative philosophical considerations and their embodiment in the political realm. Second, in terms of the place of autonomy within liberal perfectionism, Raz claims that the former should always be promoted and prioritized. A failure to do so would violate his revised version of the Harm Principle. I argue, however, that such a position is directly at odds with the radical pluralist approach which rejects the idea of value commensurability and, hence, the normative demand for the prioritization of autonomy.

The discussion of the nature of autonomy is such that it leads to a discussion on the theory of value which liberal perfectionism advocates. This discussion is vital in better understanding what is entailed in Razian autonomy, on what further grounds it is prioritized within liberal perfectionism and the latter's compatibility with ethical pluralism.

### *5.5. Raz's Theory of Value, Radicalism, Conservatism and Liberal Perfectionism*

Raz, on the one hand, often appears to make an objective point about both the worth of autonomy as well as about its priority. On the other hand, he often indicates that the value

of autonomy is contingent and its priority culturally specific. This fluctuation is the product of the fluctuation of all forms of pluralism – different pluralisms to different extent – between objectivity and particularism. Raz tries to come to terms with this ambiguity by developing the theory of parochial values.

Parochial value theory holds that not all objective values can be mastered by everyone and an example of this is the value of autonomy. In my discussion of parochial value theory I identify as its main weakness the inability to give a precise account of the importance of contingent and particularistic considerations in the formation of parochial values. This weakness is reflected in the ambiguities that Raz's liberal system of ideas exemplifies in terms of autonomy being a necessary part of the good life in modern conditions. The weakness in question is also reflected in the oscillation of liberal perfectionism between radicalism and conservatism. This is the result of the undeveloped and unsystematic co-existence of objectivity and particularism within parochial value theory and is due to the fact that the latter cannot fully resolve the ambiguities presented by the value pluralist premises on which liberal perfectionism is based. An advantage of this oscillation, nevertheless, is that it gives liberal perfectionism the ability to assert that failure to advance autonomy is not necessarily a moral failure in contexts in which autonomy is not valued whereas, at the same time, failure to promote it in contexts that recognize its value is condemnable.

Parochial value theory still poses a problem as it renders the liberal perfectionist theory somewhat equivocal in terms of its normative demands. After I examine the relationship between Raz's theory of value and other theories, such as Popper's, Oakeshott's, Mill's and Hayek's, I argue that this ambiguity can only be accounted for by

a commitment to an Oakeshottian conservative account of moral knowledge, a Kekesian approach to the plurality of the ethical universe as well as a simultaneous advocacy of the melioristic tendency of moral agents to converge on their beliefs regarding morally worthwhile forms of life.

Overall, the ambiguity of value pluralism and its oscillation between objectivity and particularism which I identified in the first part of the thesis trickles down into Raz's liberal perfectionism and its prioritization of autonomy, which is based on value pluralist premises. Raz tries to solve this ambiguity by developing parochial value theory which claims that not all objective values can be mastered by everyone. I contend that despite its merits, an advocacy of parochial value theory in itself cannot assist liberal perfectionism in overcoming the ambiguity in question, which exemplifies itself as the liberal perfectionist oscillation between radicalism and conservatism.

My argument is that unless Raz's perfectionist system of ideas incorporates elements of the conservative theories of Oakeshott and Kekes along with a more explicit commitment to the meliorism which I identify in Raz's discussion of parochial value theory, its coherency is severely undermined. This argument is consistent with a reconciliatory view in terms of the relationship between liberal perfectionism and Kekes' ethical pluralism or even lexical pluralism.

## **6. Conclusion**

The subject matter of the thesis is prompted by Raz's attempt to reconcile pluralism with liberal perfectionism and deals with the criticism that no liberal theory can be compatible with value pluralism. There have been many responses to this criticism. However, they

all assume that there is a single uncontroversial conception of pluralism which applies to all liberalisms. I argue that, though important, Berlin's discussion of value pluralism is by no means exhaustive.

In the first part of the thesis I am going to explore a plurality of pluralisms, from Berlin's radical pluralism to various liberal pluralist theories. Without turning the thesis into a discussion of meta-ethics on the truth or falsity of value pluralism, I want to examine the variety of candidate theories of pluralism and their relation to liberalism as a prelude to examining Raz' distinctive approach to pluralism and liberalism and their potential reconciliation.

## THE IDEA OF VALUE-PLURALISM

The aim of this chapter is to demarcate an area of value-pluralist discourse within which subsequent discussions about the variations of the value-pluralist doctrine and their relationship to different forms of liberalism in the thesis will take place. The aim is not to *prove* the truth of the value-pluralist claim but to indicate that objections to value-pluralism are not necessarily wrong but, instead, inconclusive. I will do this primarily by using conceptual tools of analysis and secondarily by using narrative tools which have to do with the history of ideas.

First, and foremost, I will investigate the value-pluralism of Isaiah Berlin. The conclusions and analysis that will take place will set the ground for the examination of other value pluralist variations and their compatibility with different liberalisms. This will be discussed in the third chapter and it will involve the examination of lexical pluralism, reasonable pluralism, non-linear pluralism and pluralism as reasonable disagreement.

The present chapter starts by briefly pointing out the four basic components which identify value pluralism in general: universality, plurality, incommensurability and incompatibility.

Then I investigate the similarities and the differences between Berlinian value-pluralism and moral relativism. The section acknowledges the close relationship between pluralism and moral relativism, but resists the claim that the former collapses into the latter because of value pluralism's strong objectivist foundations.

The chapter then goes on to compare Berlin's pluralism with Kekes' theory of primary and secondary values, and examines their similarities and differences.

Following this, I show that Berlinian value-pluralism cannot be equated with monism, or any of its more refined and weaker forms, since monism is incompatible with the plurality and incommensurability components of Berlinian value-pluralism.

Finally, after another brief comparative analysis between Berlin's value-pluralism and Aristotelianism, I contrast radical pluralism with Dworkin's position on the issue of value incommensurability and conflicts.

## 1. Components of Berlinian Value-Pluralism

Pluralistic intimations within ethics, political theory and even religion are not an entirely modern phenomenon. There have been pluralist allusions in the pagan polytheistic system in which different deities exist simultaneously and in rivalry with each other.<sup>17</sup> In the field of political theory pluralist allusions have been present in the writings of Aristotle, Machiavelli, Vico and Herder, Montaigne, John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty*<sup>18</sup> as well as David Hume and Oakeshott<sup>19</sup>. One could also identify pluralist allusions in the writings of Max Weber - especially in his *Politics as a Vocation* - where Weber 'invokes clashes of irreconcilable values, and indeed of irreconcilable moralities, in political life', even though he identifies 'the sources of such clashes' solely 'in moral psychology, in

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<sup>17</sup> Nussbaum, M; 'The Costs of Tragedy: Some Moral Limits of Cost-Benefit Analysis' in *Journal of Legal Studies*, 29 (June 2000), pp. 1005-1036

<sup>18</sup> Look at Berlin, I.; "The Counter-Enlightenment" in *The Proper Study of Mankind: an Anthology of Essays*, edited by Hardy, H. (Pimlico: 1998), pp. 243-268 and Berlin, I.; "Herder and the Enlightenment" in *ibid.* pp. 359-435.

<sup>19</sup> Kekes, J.; *The Morality of Pluralism* (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1993), p.12

philosophical anthropology, or in conflict between different cultural forms'.<sup>20</sup> Isaiah Berlin, who wrote extensively on the value-pluralist sentiments of thinkers such as Machiavelli and Vico and Herder, never fully explored the presence of pluralist traits in Weber's writings. His references to Weber are few and sporadic. Berlin mentions Weber in his discussion of the differences between the historical and the scientific forms of inquiry<sup>21</sup>, in his discussion on historical knowledge<sup>22</sup> and, furthermore, he shares Weber's reservations towards holistic utopians.<sup>23</sup> Despite the omission of any extensive reference to Weber's value-pluralism in Berlin's corpus, and despite Weber's many differences with Berlin, 'if there is any explicit anticipation of Berlinian value-pluralism to be found anywhere, it is in Weber's thought, where it supports an agonistic view of political life that has many points of contact with Berlin's'.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, it is still only since the writings of Isaiah Berlin that a number of philosophers explicitly identify themselves as value-pluralists.<sup>25</sup>

Berlin defines value-pluralism as the 'conception that there are many different ends that men may seek and still be fully rational'.<sup>26</sup> That is, a claim to value-pluralism is not just a claim pointing to the obvious fact 'that different ways of life honour different goods and virtues' or, even more so, that 'what one life praises another life condemns'. Value-pluralism says that 'the good is independent of our perspectives on it, but it is not

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<sup>20</sup> Gray, J.; Berlin (Fontana Press: 1995), p. 58

<sup>21</sup> Berlin, I.; "The Counter-Enlightenment" in The Proper Study of Mankind: an Anthology of Essays, edited by Hardy, H. (Pimlico: 1998), p. 56

<sup>22</sup> ibid., p. 77 and p. 89

<sup>23</sup> ibid., p. 242

<sup>24</sup> Gray, J.; Berlin (Fontana Press: 1995), p. 58

<sup>25</sup> For a comprehensive list of these thinkers and for a list of their major works look at Crowder, G.; Liberalism and Value-Pluralism (London and New York, Continuum: 2002), p. 17, n.7 and Kekes, J.; The Morality of Pluralism (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1993), p.12, n. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Berlin, I.; "The Pursuit of the Ideal" in The Crooked Timber of Humanity, edited by Hardy, H. (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1990), p. 11



the same for all'.<sup>27</sup> Value-pluralists, therefore, recognize the existence of several universal values that 'range from the satisfaction of survival needs, such as the need for food and shelter, to benefits required for any human life to count as a good life, such as friendship and intimacy, to social and political values such as justice, liberty and equality'.<sup>28</sup>

The co-existence of universalism and pluralism in the value-pluralist moral theory points to the inability to rationally commensurate between the range of these objectively valuable options. Some values or lifestyles are so radically different from one another that they cannot be subordinated to the same system of evaluation. One might credibly say for example that essay A is better than essay B because A makes a more rigorous and coherent argument than B. But it strikes one as unreasonable, irrational or meaningless to claim that a rigorously argued and coherent piece of essay writing is better or more worthwhile than a well-conducted and performed piece of music. Furthermore, some values are so radically different that not only is it senseless to weigh them using a singular system of evaluation, but it is also the case that some values are incompatible and cannot coexist within the same system of ideas. As Gray points out, 'neither theoretical nor practical reasoning' about such 'ultimate values' or radical lifestyles will resolve the conflict that their radical nature ensures.<sup>29</sup> Security versus personal liberty and libertarian versus egalitarian convictions are two examples of such conflicting values. In the first case, measures to enhance and guarantee security from threats such as terrorist attacks or organised crime may invade or tamper with a citizen's sphere of personal freedom. In the second case the libertarian position, which makes a claim to the right to private property, comes into conflict with the egalitarian position that makes a claim to

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<sup>27</sup> Gray, J.; *Two faces of Liberalism*, (Polity Press: 2000), p.6

<sup>28</sup> Crowder, G.; *Liberalism and Value-Pluralism* (London and New York, Continuum: 2002), p. 2

<sup>29</sup> Gray, J.; *Berlin* (Fontana Press: 1995), p. 43

equality. In the same manner, there are a number of lifestyles which are worthy of pursuit but which are irreconcilable with each other and 'the realization of one excludes the realisation of another'.<sup>30</sup> Such incompatible lifestyles may be the lifestyles of a monastic religious life of solitude and a politician's highly active and socialised lifestyle.

Many moral goods are not only incompatible with each other, but are also 'internally complex and inherently pluralistic'.<sup>31</sup> Berlin indicates that this is the case with positive and negative liberty<sup>32</sup> and one can say the same for the existence of 'rival equalities within the concept of equality, such as equality of opportunity and equality of income'.<sup>33</sup>

To conclude my argument so far, it can be said that pluralism as an explicit moral theory is a contemporary phenomenon even though aspects of it can be traced back to the writings of Vico, Herder, Machiavelli, Weber and others. One can also identify some general characteristics that most pluralists share; the recognition of the existence of some universal values, the recognition that those universal values are several in number, that they are incommensurable and the identification that amongst those incommensurable values there are some incompatible ones.

The above value-pluralist constituents are only general and approximate characteristics. Their purpose is only to demarcate an area of value-pluralist discourse within which my investigation of the different types of pluralism will take place. For that matter, there is a plethora of different value-pluralist doctrines whose pluralist allusions

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<sup>30</sup> **Kekes, J.**; The Morality of Pluralism (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1993), p.21

<sup>31</sup> **Gray, J.**; Berlin (Fontana Press: 1995), p. 43

<sup>32</sup> He does this in **Berlin, I.**; "Two Concepts of Liberty" in The Proper Study of Mankind: an Anthology of Essays, edited by Hardy, H. (Pimlico: 1998), pp. 191-242 where he distinguishes between the notions of 'negative' and 'positive' liberty – and at the end he actually seems to come down in favour of the former as the correct understanding of what 'liberty' is.

<sup>33</sup> **Gray, J.**; Berlin (Fontana Press: 1995), p. 43

vary. These doctrines differ not only with each other; they often find themselves in difference with the rough value-pluralist traits that have been identified above. Berlinian value-pluralism shares these common characteristics to a greater extent than other variations of value-pluralism. The conclusions derived from a further inquiry into a number of objections to the Berlinian account of value-pluralism will also be of relevance to these other accounts of value-pluralism, which I examine in the next chapter.

Several distinctions will be of use in order to better grasp Berlinian value-pluralism. The latter is often misinterpreted or confused with moral relativism. Furthermore, an explicit distinction between Berlinian value-pluralism and monism, 'the idea of the world and of human society as a single intelligible structure'<sup>34</sup> is useful as later expositions of other types of value-pluralism, such as lexical pluralism, will revolve to some extent around this issue.

## **2. Berlinian Value-Pluralism and Moral Relativism**

First I discuss Berlin's differentiation between value-pluralism and moral relativism through the history of ideas. Then I acknowledge three reasons by virtue of which pluralism is closer than other objectivist ethical doctrines to moral relativism. This is embodied in Berlin's view of human nature which is more pluralistic than the monistic one which I also examine in the next section. Nevertheless, I stress that, far from initial appearances, Berlinian value-pluralism is not merely *Weltanschauungen* by demonstrating Berlin's commitment to universal moral intelligibility and his rejection of cognitive radical relativism. Then, I argue that Berlin's moral empiricism is not a strong

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<sup>34</sup> Berlin, I.; "The Originality of Machiavelli" in *The Proper Study of Mankind: an Anthology of Essays*, edited by Hardy, H. (Pimlico: 1998), pp. 312-313

enough reason to claim that his value-pluralism collapses into ethical relativism. Furthermore, I examine Berlin's recognition of some generic panhuman needs and values which exemplify the anti-relativistic traits of his pluralism. Finally, I claim that the possession of tools for the passing of moral judgment as well as the possibility of moral progress in Berlinian pluralism, place it more in the tradition of moral objectivism rather than that of moral relativism.

Berlin understands 'relativism' to be 'a doctrine according to which the judgment of a man or a group, since it is the expression or statement of a taste, or emotional attitude or outlook, is simply what it is, with no objective correlate which determines its truth or falsehood'.<sup>35</sup> A common mistaken interpretation of Berlinian value pluralism is that it inevitably collapses into this kind of moral relativism.

Prima facie it should be conceded that there is more common ground between pluralism and relativism than between monism and relativism. Berlin himself, who otherwise traces the beginnings of an objectivist pluralist moral theory to Vico and Herder, acknowledges that:

because of their conception of the cultural autonomy of different societies (whether divided by space or time) and the incommensurability of their systems of values, Vico's and Herder's opposition to the central tenets of the French Enlightenment have commonly been described as a form of relativism.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Berlin, I.; "Alleged Relativism in Eighteenth-Century European Thought" in The Crooked Timber of Humanity, edited by Hardy, H. (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1990), p. 80

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 76

Such a relativistic description is given by Arnaldo Momigliano who, in his response to Berlin's *Vico and Herder*<sup>37</sup>, claims that Berlin does not fully appreciate the force of relativism in the writings of Vico and Herder and the impossibility of reconciling cultural pluralism and universal values.<sup>38</sup> Berlin, as suggested earlier, does recognize the danger of this happening due to anthropological observations on the vast variety of different cultural practices and lifestyles. Nevertheless, at least from the narrative perspective of the history of ideas, he identifies the roots of relativism not in the anti-Enlightenment writings of Vico and Herder, which he still insists are permeated by a value-pluralist conviction but to

other and later sources: German romantic irrationalism, the metaphysics of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the growth of schools of social anthropology, the doctrines of William Graham Sumner and Edward Westermarck, above all from thinkers who were not necessarily relativists themselves - Marx, for example or Freud, whose analyses of appearance or illusion and reality entailed belief in the objectivity of their own disciplines, without, perhaps, awareness of at any rate some of their full implications.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, value-pluralism can be said to be close to relativism in at least three more aspects. To start with, it is difficult for a Berlinian value-pluralist to come up with a list of explicit objective generic human goods – since it would be expected that such a list could be demanded by value-pluralism's proclaimed objectivity. Secondly, the difficulty to come up with a list of that sort is exemplified by the lack of clarity that is demonstrated

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<sup>37</sup> Berlin, I.; *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London, Hogarth Press: 1976)

<sup>38</sup> Momigliano, A.; "On the Pioneer Trail" in *The New York Review of Books*, 11 November 1976, pp. 33-

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<sup>39</sup> Berlin, I.; "Alleged Relativism in Eighteenth-Century European Thought" in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, edited by Hardy, H. (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1990), pp. 78-9

by the Berlinian value-pluralist theory in its demarcation between universal human goods on the one hand and culturally specific ideals on the other. Thirdly, a value-pluralist perspective such as Berlin's holds that many of the different and often incompatible ends that human beings seek are fully rational. That means that for a Berlinian value-pluralist there might be a number of equally rational ways of settling conflicts between values when the conflicting values are all worthwhile, yet incommensurable and sometimes even incompatible. So for instance, Homeric bravery and Gandhian non-violence may both be worthwhile values but when they conflict there is no rule that would determine which quality should override the other. This pluralist view is much closer to moral relativism than most other objectivist ethical doctrines, which ascribe to a monistic ethical framework that always generates the same type of specific prescriptions in situations of value conflicts; for instance, a utilitarian should always act in a way that would maximize overall happiness.

Nevertheless, despite these preliminary similarities between value-pluralism and moral relativism, it is vital that pluralism is not to be confused 'with the existence of entire moral outlooks, conceptual frameworks or *Weltanschauungen*'<sup>40</sup>; nor is value-pluralism identical with the attitudes expressed through the accounts of anthropologists, emotivists or social relativists. Such views 'interpret our moral judgments to be components of comprehensive views of the world, so different from one another that they are mutually unintelligible'<sup>41</sup> thus rendering us unable to reason about them. Pluralism says something very different; that, despite the variety of different values and perspectives, rational moral judgment is still a possibility. This is so because the fact that

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p. 48

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

‘the values of one culture may be incompatible with those of the values of another, or that they are in conflict within...a single human being at different times...does not entail relativism of value, only the notion of a plurality of values not structured hierarchically’.<sup>42</sup>

Partly because this plurality of values does not necessarily entail relativism, as ‘ends, moral principles, are many; but not infinitely many: they must be within the human horizon’<sup>43</sup>, partly because ‘what makes men human is common to them, and acts as a bridge between them’<sup>44</sup>, and despite the fact these values cannot be ranked, Berlin can explain value-pluralism in terms of universal intelligibility. That is, he acknowledges the existence of contextual values but he denies that this inevitably leads to a radical cognitive relativism:

‘Members of one culture can, by the force of imaginative insight, understand...the values, the ideals, the forms of life of another culture or society, even those remote in time or space. They may find values unacceptable, but if they open their minds sufficiently they can grasp how one might be a full human being, with whom one could communicate, and at the same time live in the light of values widely different from one’s own, but which nevertheless one can see to be values, ends of life, by the realization of which men could be fulfilled’.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Berlin, I.; "Alleged Relativism in Eighteenth-Century European Thought" in The Crooked Timber of Humanity, edited by Hardy, H. (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1990), p. 80

<sup>43</sup> Berlin, I.; "The Pursuit of the Ideal" in The Crooked Timber of Humanity, edited by Hardy, H. (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1990), p. 11

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10

For Berlin, universal intelligibility is not only an essential feature of human beings; it is also a necessary condition for the workability of his value-pluralist doctrine. It was Davidson who noted that in order to disagree, we have to agree on a mass of other things.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, if human beings could not agree on a basic framework of values or categories of value on the basis of which they would unravel their subsequent disagreements, then value pluralist conflicts would be no different than diverging perspectives about different world views.

It is important to stress, nevertheless, that whereas Berlin's commitment to universal intelligibility is a characteristic that moves it closer to objectivity, it does not guarantee objectivity. For Berlin, moral agents could have intelligible views about their respective morality but fail to come up with an agreement regarding the objectivity of specific moral values. This disparity could be so radical that it could result in a pluralism which in practice often resembles relativism – even though, in theory, it makes a case for its distinction from the latter.

Berlin's rejection of conceptual relativism enables him to have a sense of moral progress which in turn facilitates comparisons between different societies and cultures. The rejection of conceptual relativism is a move away from relativism in the sense that human moralities exemplify common universal traits. What this means, for instance, is that all human beings have an idea of, let's say, fairness, but that humans disagree on what the specific value substantiation of fairness is and how far is to be reconciled with other values. Thus, in Berlin's theory, universal intelligibility gives us non-relativism in

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<sup>46</sup> **Davidson, D.**, 'The Very Idea of A Conceptual Scheme' in his Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984)



the sense that Berlin's theory recognises the existence of universal moral concepts but permits the existence of irresolvable value conflicts.

Berlin's account of the rejection of conceptual relativism has both advantages as well as deep problems. As said previously, the anthropological non-relativism that Berlin's theory entails enables it to make normative cross-cultural comparisons, moral judgments and demands; a very important feature of any moral theory with a claim to objectivity. Moreover, Berlin's conceptual non-relativism allows for value conflicts and permits his radical value pluralism to make a claim to objectivity without necessarily having to advocate monism or other less pluralistic moral theories.

On the downside, an understanding of value-pluralism of the sort that Berlin presents is one which is applied and makes sense only with respect to a specific view of human nature. There are two dangers with this; the first, and the more serious one, is a methodological danger, while the second danger is one against which, I believe, Berlin has an adequate defence. A line of argument which is based on a specific conception of human nature shares all the weaknesses and the uncertainties with the ethical theories which are based on grand foundations; they are theories upon which there is rarely universal consensus. In addition to this critique, it might be claimed that applying value-pluralism to a universal account of human nature is a practice not very much unlike the intellectual endeavours of the Enlightenment; endeavours against which Berlin has repeatedly and forcefully argued against.<sup>47</sup> Despite the appearances, nevertheless, there is no real contradiction between Berlin's anti-Enlightenment discourse and his advocacy of a specific conception of human nature, for the latter is very different from the rationalist

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<sup>47</sup> He did this in his essays "The Counter-Enlightenment" and "The Apotheosis of the Romantic Will". Both can be found in **Berlin, I.**; *The Proper Study of Mankind: an Anthology of Essays*, edited by **Hardy, H.** (Pimlico: 1998), pp. 243-268 and 553-580 respectably.

version of it, which was advocated by many of the theorists of the Enlightenment. Moreover, even though Berlin holds that not all values are human constructs and that some of them are rooted in human nature, he is never explicit about which of these values are good and which bad. This is a problem that will be encountered repeatedly not only in my elucidation of Berlinian pluralism but in other pluralist variations as well. Also, I have argued that Berlin's advocacy of common universal moral concepts allows for cross-cultural normative comparisons. Nevertheless, as radical pluralism allows for the occurrence of value conflicts, comparisons within a cultural system, especially in light of the lack of any explicit list of morally worthwhile and repugnant options, could be very difficult indeed. As a consequence, Berlinian value pluralism would find itself in the peculiar position of being able to pass judgment on a cross-cultural basis, but not on an intra-cultural one. Even if this position were attainable on a theoretical level, its practical instantiation – and hence its application on the political realm – could be very problematic.

Moreover, Berlin's value-pluralism and the idea of radical choice that it entails give his liberalism an existentialist element that differentiates it from most other liberalisms. According to Berlin, it is through choice that human beings are self-realized. The plural and self-creative nature of human beings finds reciprocation in his anti-naturalistic view of history which is shaped by the unpredictability and diversity of many self-transforming species. In this sense, Berlin's conception of human nature is mainly a historicist and not a naturalist one in that it does not identify, at least explicitly, a dominant or unique view of human nature such that all other diversions are considered to be merely distorted aspects of that one and only true human nature. Instead, as Gray

argues, Berlin's view of human nature is more like the 'anthropological premise, or pre-supposition, of his value-pluralism inasmuch as it asserts as a primordial propensity of the human species the disposition to form for itself a plurality of diverse natures or...to invent for itself a variety of forms of life'.<sup>48</sup>

In addition, value-pluralism's anti-relativistic nature is further exposed via its recognition of some panhuman generic needs and values – as opposed to moral relativism, which makes ethics in some sense empirical. For an objectivist, it is a fact that even if people's opinions change regarding values, their fundamental human needs do not. It is necessary that for one's own or a group's life to flourish, one needs to live free from the fear of constant and unjustified persecution, one should not be separated from loved friends and family, one should not live under extremely hostile conditions of hunger and utter poverty and so forth. It is partly considerations of this sort that in Berlin's opinion urged Chaim Weizmann to 'understand instinctively that people only develop freely in a country in which they are not perpetually uneasy about what other people think about them, how they look to others, does their behaviour attract unfavourable or perhaps too much attention – are they accepted'.<sup>49</sup>

So, for Berlin nationality is not only the exemplification of very basic and fundamental considerations – such as protection from hunger and prosecution – but also, as Richard Wollheim notes, the exemplification of the view that 'man has fundamental needs beyond those which arise out of the exigencies of life, and these include the need

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<sup>48</sup> Gray, J.; *Berlin* (Fontana Press: 1995), p. 75

<sup>49</sup> Exchange between Berlin and the Iranian philosopher Ramin Jahanbegloo cited by Silvers, B. R.; 'Introduction to *Nationalism and Israel*' in *The Legacy of Isaiah Berlin*, edited by Dworkin, R., Lilla M. & Silvers B. R., (New York, New York Review of Books: 2001), pp. 143-144

for a community in which he can discover his identity'.<sup>50</sup> The recognition of the existence of universal human needs is an indication of the close relationship between pluralism and objectivism. Where this objectivism deviates from the standard monistic objectivism of most objective ethical doctrines is that nationality is only one exemplification of a range of universal human values. It is a central claim of value-pluralists that in many instances these common human needs might conflict in a way that rational inquiry does not yield a single solution to the conflict. As I discuss in greater detail later, this is very different from the Aristotelian approach to such conflicts which holds that with the exercise of practical reason, a rational solution is achievable.

It will be useful to briefly examine the connection between pluralism and moral empiricism. Moral empiricism is often misunderstood to be a version of ethical relativism. Instead, it would be more accurate to claim that moral empiricism is a *reason* for, rather than a version of, for ethical relativism.<sup>51</sup> The fact that moral empiricism does not necessarily entail moral relativism is indicated from the combination in value-pluralism of moral empiricism with an explicit recognition of universal human goods. These goods are derived from Berlin's recognition of an inherently pluralistic human nature, common to all human beings. To the extent that value-pluralism is a moral empiricist but not an ethical relativistic doctrine, Berlin is on common grounds with Hume. Hume, nevertheless, does not have Berlin's Herderian or Vicconian belief that there is a plurality of virtues. Furthermore, whereas Hume believes that the constancy of

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<sup>50</sup> Wollheim, R.; 'Berlin and Zionism' in *ibid.*, p. 164

<sup>51</sup> This view is supported by the arguments in Mackie, J. L.; *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) and Harman, G.; 'Ethics and Observation' in *Ethical Theory 1: The Question of Objectivity* edited by Rachels, J. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 85-91.

human nature is exemplified in common universal moral practices which permeate time and culture, Berlin on the other hand believes that culture is inherently plural.<sup>52</sup>

Having clarified that the inclusion of a moral empiricist element in value-pluralism is not a sufficient condition for value-pluralism to collapse into simple moral empiricism, I will now examine the relationship between value-pluralism and a moral relativist understanding of moral empiricism. My examination yields the conclusion that it is not so much the case that relativism is a totally distinct and different doctrine from Berlin's value-pluralism, as it is the case that his value-pluralism entails relativism but is not exhausted by it.

Steven Lukes defines moral relativism as the claim that 'each culture is valid in its own terms, that its norms and principles are only applicable within' and 'that to understand means not to criticize'.<sup>53</sup>

The relativistic variation in focus is a more constructive statement than radical moral scepticism because it stresses the importance 'of caution on those who make, and above all apply, moral judgments, especially if they are powerful and do so in alien moral

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<sup>52</sup> In this, Hume's account of human nature can be contrasted to the positivist one which Frazier presents in his anthropological study *The Golden Bough* (Frazier, J.; *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London: Wordsworth, 1922, 1993). Frazier's aim is to identify through the mystical and religious practices of different cultures common human traits according to which, as human beings progress they will abandon practices that are as cruel and morally repugnant as the rule that regulated the succession to the priesthood of Diana at Aricia. One would expect Berlin to resist such a claim because of his belief in a pluralist human nature that exemplifies itself through different cultural practices. But, it is questionable how far Berlin could go in this direction since, even though he is by no means a positivist, he allows – as I will discuss later – for the possibility of the accumulation of moral knowledge in terms of the practices that we can know are wrong. As a consequence, many cultural practices of the past, such as succession to the priesthood of Diana at Aricia which Frazier describes, should now be considered morally obsolete. This position, however, could conflict with Berlin's aversion to rationalism. On the other hand, all encompassing toleration of all cultural practices in the name of plurality would push Berlin's theory too far into the relativist direction. These are ambiguities which I will subsequently discuss in the chapter.

<sup>53</sup> Lukes, S.; *Liberals and Cannibals: The Implications of Diversity* (London and New York, Verso: 2003), pp.7-8

cultural contexts', a view proposed by Montaigne and espoused by Lukes.<sup>54</sup> Berlin also notes something along those lines when he recognizes that the validity of some ideals and practices is culture-bound:

Each of these [ethical, social and aesthetic cultural] systems is objectively valid in its own day, in the course of 'Nature's long year' which brings all things to pass. All cultures are equal in the sight of God, each in its time place.<sup>55</sup>

What is noticeable here with respect to the differences between value-pluralism and moral relativism is that ultimately, despite the apparent conclusive relativism of the above statement, its expressed theodicy, which is ascribed to Ranke, 'is a complacent version of Herder's theses, directed equally against those of Hegel and moral scepticism'.<sup>56</sup> One should, nevertheless, also keep in mind that the above statement, being presented by an advocate of value-pluralism of the sort that Berlin is, ultimately constitutes a recognition of the intricate relationship between value-pluralism and moral relativism.

It is clear from the above that the difference between Berlin's pluralism and moral relativism is not as straightforward as the difference between pluralism and simple moral empiricism. As a consequence, it might seem that Berlinian value pluralism inevitably collapses into moral relativism. This would be a wrong conclusion to draw.

For, if understanding the system of values and practices of a culture entails accepting that these values and practices cannot be criticised because of their quality of

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>55</sup> Berlin, I.; "Herder and the Enlightenment" in The Proper Study of Mankind: an Anthology of Essays, edited by Hardy, H. (Pimlico: 1998), p. 431

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

being part of a certain contextual cultural domain, then it is unavoidable that too much value is put on social convention. And if the value put on social convention is so great, then it has to be accepted that it was, for example, right – or at least not condemnable – for Oscar Wilde to be put in jail effectively because he was a homosexual; since he was acting within a cultural context which judged homosexuals to be morally culpable. In a similar manner, a moral relativist would not be able to condemn a culture which in order to justify its practice of slavery, would make the spurious claim that "slaves don't suffer". A value-pluralist can impugn such a claim due to its commitment on the existence of a plurality of universal human goods. Even if slaves were educated, or somehow conditioned, to consider a truly miserable existence with a low life expectancy spent serving their masters as worthwhile; a value-pluralist could still consider their slavery as "unjust", "unworthy" or plainly "wrong".

Value-pluralism's morally objective and uncompromising stance on some issues indicates its possession of moral tools for dealing with issues of false-consciousness; tools that the moral relativist lacks. So, despite the opposition of some of the most prominent value-pluralists against the grand philosophical project of the Enlightenment to ground moral reasoning on universal and rationally undisputed foundations, in this instance value-pluralism offers us something that can be seen as an anti-monistic Enlightenment project. This anti-monistic and anti-hierarchical Enlightenment project, being a direct derivative of value-pluralism, benefits from its pluralistic component and allows for the existence of several universally valuable lifestyles in the manner that other more monistic and hierarchical Enlightenment projects - such as Aristotle's - do not. The

importance of social convention and objectivity are persistent and recurrent themes in the study of liberalism and will be referred to and re-examined in due course.

In support of pluralism's position as a version of moral realism rather than moral relativism, one can point to another fundamental conceptual difference *per se* between relativism and value-pluralism. By claiming that each value is contextually true or that each lifestyle and cultural practice is valid in each own terms, relativism tries to *eliminate* truth claims about the conflict that inevitably arises between different values or lifestyles. Berlin's value-pluralism on the other hand does exactly the opposite; it tries to lay bare the fact that values and lifestyles often conflict in a manner that sometimes forces us to take radical choices that entail inescapable wrongs. Any equation between the two moral systems is conceptually untenable. It is to this radical character of Berlin's pluralism that I refer in the thesis as "agonistic".

Contrary to relativism, subjectivism claims that moral judgments are nothing more than the avowal of personal feeling and preference. And since, for subjectivism, preferences cannot be assessed in terms of truth or falsehood – unless we are misinformed about our factual beliefs – 'subjectivism denies that moral knowledge is even a possibility'<sup>57</sup>, let alone the fact that there is such a thing as moral progress. Contrary to this position, value-pluralists have a set – even if an unspecified one – of moral values on which they base their moral judgments. Furthermore, it can be said that through the identification of ethical errors one gets a better understanding of the constitution and the dynamics of the ethical universe. Similarly, every time one makes a moral judgment which is based on a correct conception of the values involved, for instance the choice of altruism over unnecessary aggression, one can be said to have

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<sup>57</sup> Gray, J.; Two faces of Liberalism, (Polity Press: 2000), p. 60



accumulated moral knowledge.<sup>58</sup> This is another instance in which Berlin's value-pluralism can be said to be closer to objectivism than to moral relativism.

To conclude, the distinction between value-pluralism and moral relativism has two dimensions. On the one hand, from the perspective of the history of ideas, value-pluralism and moral relativism are derived from different sources. Value-pluralism derives from the writings of Vico and Herder, relativism from the writings of German romantic irrationalism, from the development of schools of thought such as social anthropology and from certain other metaphysical doctrines. On the other hand, value-pluralism is an anti-relativist doctrine in that it makes an explicit recognition of universal human values. Nevertheless, it can still be said to be closer to moral relativism than other objectivist moral doctrines as, even though Berlin's differentiation between value-pluralism and moral relativism may ultimately be correct, it is not as sharp and clear as Berlin might have hoped. This is mainly due to the fact that pluralism recognises a plurality of rational solutions to situations of conflicting values.

### **3. Berlinian Value-Pluralism and Primary and Secondary Values**

Even though Berlin's argument for the distinction between moral relativism and Berlin's value pluralism is present, it is also often unclear and, ultimately, inconclusive – as is the argument that value pluralism collapses into moral relativism. It might be thought that

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<sup>58</sup> It begs further inquiry whether this could also be said for one who, for instance, chooses unnecessary aggression over altruism, even though she acknowledges the moral culpability of the latter and the moral worth of the former. Philosophy has given a range of answers upon which there is, as yet, no consensus; Aristotle would call it weakness of will, for Hume there is no connection between the fact of the matter and the action that might result from it while for Kant, to the extent that such behaviour cannot be universalised, it is irrational and hence immoral.

this problem could be surpassed if one held to a theory of values which distinguished between what Kekes calls "primary and secondary values".

If Kekes' theory were true, one would decide between two conflicting values with respect to which one has primacy over the other. So, if a specific lifestyle insults any one from a set of values that Kekes calls primary values, then the values encompassed by the lifestyle in question should be overridden by that value. Be that as it may, Kekes' method for the resolution of value-conflicts will not hold if the theory of primary and secondary values is unsustainable.

According to Kekes, 'it seems reasonable to suppose that some benefits and harms are, under normal circumstances, universally human'.<sup>59</sup> We can call 'the resulting values 'primary values'".<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, 'in addition to primary values' there are values that 'vary with persons, societies, traditions, and historical periods' which can be called 'secondary values'.<sup>61</sup> 'Reasonable people will share primary values because their common humanity renders some things beneficial and other harmful. But, reasonable people will also recognize that there are vast differences that emerge above the level of values we are bound to hold in common. Secondary values reflect these differences'.<sup>62</sup>

It seems to be the case that Kekes' thesis is based on a specific conception of what constitutes universal human needs and that, moreover, it can be rejected on the grounds that reasonable people do not seem to agree on these universal human needs. Human nature 'is composed of universally human, culturally invariant, and historically constant

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<sup>59</sup> Kekes, J.; The Morality of Pluralism (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press: 1993), p. 18

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19

characteristics'.<sup>63</sup> These characteristics have to do with 'facts about the self, intimacy and social order'.<sup>64</sup> Primary values are defined in response to the fulfilment of the needs of these universal human characteristics. Primary goods are the 'satisfactions' of the above needs 'by exercising the capacities included in the description of the facts of human nature'.<sup>65</sup> Primary evils 'are the frustration of those needs whose satisfaction human nature requires'.<sup>66</sup> For Kekes it is, indeed, the case that primary goods define 'the minimum requirements of all conceptions of a good life' however such life is conceived 'because they are required for the satisfaction of needs that all human beings have due to our shared nature'.<sup>67</sup>

The thesis that there is a consensus on the nature of primary values - and in consequence on what constitutes the primary goods and the primary evils - amongst all reasonable people is a different type of argument. It is not the thesis from which Kekes derives his argument on primary and secondary values. This he does by deriving our basic and foremost moral obligations from a specific conception of what constitutes our human nature. The thesis that all reasonable people agree on these basic and foremost moral obligations is consequential to the previous one.

The latter consequential thesis is a thesis through which one can test the soundness of Kekes' primary and secondary values distinction. If the nature of values is the one that Kekes argues that it is, then all reasonable people must perceive it as such and agree on it. If such a consensus is not found, then it is the case that either the moral

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<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p. 39

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p. 40

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, p. 41

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

perceivers are not reasonable or, if these perceivers are indeed reasonable, it is the case that the theory is untrue.<sup>68</sup>

Now, it is a fact that human beings vehemently and often disagree on what constitutes a primary value and on whether a good is a primary or a secondary one. There are individuals as well as groups that value religion over survival and social order or tradition over intimacy. As there is no consensus, the question then is whether these people are unreasonable, in which case the implications of the lack of consensus are not devastating for the theory, or whether these people are, indeed, reasonable in which case the implications of this disagreement for Kekes' theory are more pressing.

Kekes does not provide a systematic account of what constitutes a reasonable agent. One could nevertheless infer that for him a person can be called reasonable only insofar as she agrees with his view on human nature *and* if she acts in a manner that fulfils certain needs that arise from such a conception of human nature; needs which, furthermore, must be ranked in a specific hierarchical manner. Any deviation from this would render a person unreasonable. This is a very rigid approach. There are people that theorise about human nature differently and identify different basic human traits from the ones that Kekes identifies, let alone all those who do not recognize an inherent human nature that is common to all human beings whatsoever. Different people have different accounts of human nature which influence their moral judgements and moral behaviour.

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<sup>68</sup> The argument here is that in the case where there is a lack of consensus on the primary values it will be either the case that the perceivers are not reasonable - and/or maybe they do not perceive under normal conditions - *or* the argument is unsound. Of course, it might also be the case that both of the above conditions occur simultaneously; that is, both the perceivers are unreasonable *and* the argument is actually unsound. When this is the case, one cannot offer a definite disproof of Kekes' argument. The argument will still be unsound, but there will be no way of showing that it is so. In a similar manner, a disproof of Kekes' argument - even though it might be actually unsound - will not be possible when the moral perceivers perceive under skewed conditions. For more on the relationship between moral judgement and the conditions of moral perception look at McDowell, J., 'Values and Secondary Qualities' in *Ethical Theory 1: The Question of Objectivity* edited by Rachels, J. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 210-226

That is, their actions are consistent with the goals that they recognize to be valid and coherent within their own conception of our common human traits. In this sense of the term "reasonable", people with different views on human nature and thus, different goals and practices, can all act reasonably.

But, this kind of reasonable behaviour - which is equated with rational choice theory<sup>69</sup> and which Raz calls 'reasoning capacity'<sup>70</sup> - cannot be what Kekes wants us to understand by the term "reasonable behaviour". Kekes is not making an argument about what action is consistent or logical, given one's recognition of any conception of human nature. Instead, he is making a moral argument according to which we should act in accordance with the common needs of this inherent nature of ours as this, and hence the needs and obligations that such a conception prescribes, is so defined by his theory of primary and secondary values. What then Kekes means by "reasonable" behaviour is "moral" behaviour. But, even in this case, it is not clear why, given the validity of the conception of human nature that Kekes proposes, one should act towards the ends that human nature prescribes. One can be subjected to such a moral demand only if there is a further metaphysical argument in place which specifically demands that one ought to promote the ends prescribed by human nature on, let us say for instance, deontological or utilitarian grounds. In Kekes' exposition this argument is nowhere to be found. Nevertheless, even if it were to be found, it would have still been unclear why such a principle for action should be granted universal priority. Furthermore, even if one went a step further and allowed for the existence and universal applicability of such a

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<sup>69</sup> Allingham, M.; *Choice Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

<sup>70</sup> Raz, J., *Engaging Reason: On The Theory of Value and Action*; (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 69. For Raz's argument against this account of rationality see *ibid.* pp. 69-75.

metaphysical directive, this directive would contradict Kekes' anti-rationalist sentiments as these are expressed elsewhere.<sup>71</sup>

Moreover, for Kekes there are conflicts between secondary values that can be settled by, to use Larmore's words, 'those who think and converse in good faith and apply, as best as they can, the general capacities of reason that belong to every domain of inquiry'.<sup>72</sup> There are also conflicts between primary and secondary values in which the former override the latter. But, Kekes does not give any indication of whether it could ever be the case that conflicts between primary values arise and, if they do, how these conflicts might be rationally resolved – were a solution to be even possible. A Berlinian value-pluralist, for instance, would claim that irreconcilable conflicts occur *within* the realm of generic values, *within* the realm of secondary values and *between* the two realms.

In support of Kekes' theory, one might suggest the defence that it is not so much the case that he thinks that conflicts between primary values do not occur, but more the case that this is just not the subject with which he concerns himself with. Kekes, this response may go, is interested in the conflict between primary and secondary values. The conflict within the primary domain, or even the secondary one for that matter, is actually an issue that he never rejects explicitly. However, even if this the case, the Berlinian pluralist claim in favour of the possibility for an irreconcilable conflict between what Kekes calls primary values is still very much relevant and makes the normative demands of Kekes' ethical theory very problematic.

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<sup>71</sup> See section *Value-Pluralism and Monism* in the present chapter.

<sup>72</sup> Larmore, C.; *The Morals of Modernity* (Cambridge University Press: 1996), p. 168

It is surprising then that contrary to one's expectations Berlin often expresses a conception of value which is very similar to Kekes'. This is because, in my opinion, Berlin also ends up arguing for the primacy of some values over others - thus making a distinction similar to Kekes' primary and secondary values distinction.

It is Berlin's elaboration on the notion of negative freedom that points towards a prioritisation of values, despite the fact that his advocacy of value-pluralism would, as we have already seen, commit him to the view that values are incommensurable and, hence, impossible to rank. It is true that in his discussion on the value of negative liberty Berlin initially recognises that 'individual freedom is not everyone's primary need'<sup>73</sup> and that 'liberty is not the only goal for men'.<sup>74</sup> There are a number of other goods and values distinct from that of negative liberty that one might have to consider advancing at the expense of negative liberty or vice versa:

'If I curtail or lose my freedom in order to lessen the shame of...inequality, and do not thereby materially increase the individual liberty of others, an absolute loss of liberty occurs. This may be compensated for by a gain in justice or in happiness or in peace, but the loss remains, and it is a confusion of values to say that although my 'liberal', individual freedom may go by the board, some other kind of freedom - 'social' or 'economic' - is increased'.<sup>75</sup>

In any case, one is often forced to come up with a maxim on the basis of which one is to resolve conflicts between ultimate values that involve an irreversible loss, even if that maxim has the form of a 'practical compromise'. Berlin pays tribute to the failed attempts

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<sup>73</sup> Berlin, I.; "Two Concepts of Liberty" in The Proper Study of Mankind: an Anthology of Essays, edited by Hardy, H. (Pimlico: 1998), p. 196

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p. 197

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 197-198

of thinkers such as John Locke, Adam Smith and, at times, Mill to harmonise conflicting human interests. The common trait that permeates all of the above attempts as well as the attempts of Thomas Jefferson, Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine, is the recognition that there is a 'portion of human existence' that 'must remain independent of the sphere of social control. To invade that preserve, however small, would be despotism'.<sup>76</sup> It is a fact of life, nevertheless, that 'we can not remain absolutely free and must give up some of our liberty to preserve the rest'.<sup>77</sup> The amount of liberty that we are prepared to give up in exchange for some other valuable goods varies and is different in different situations. But, 'total self-surrender is self-defeating'.<sup>78</sup> There must be a minimum level of freedom which cannot be given up; that minimum level being the one that 'a man cannot give up without offending against the essence of his human nature'.<sup>79</sup> This minimum level of freedom is designated by the value of negative liberty.<sup>80</sup> Negative liberty, not unlike some other 'absolute stands', like belief in 'natural law' or 'the word of God' or 'in the permanent interests of man', is 'grounded so deeply in the actual nature of men' that it is 'an essential part of what we mean by being a normal human being'.<sup>81</sup>

Berlin's thesis here is similar to Kekes' in three specific respects. First, Berlin makes an argument for the primacy of a value – a very minimal and basic version of negative liberty – over other values. Negative liberty for Berlin is intrinsically valuable, unlike Mill whose perfectionist standpoint values freedom mainly because it contributes to individuality, a position very much influenced by the German tradition of

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<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p. 198

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Berlin does not try to mask the fact that the borders of negative liberty are elusive. On the contrary he elaborates on this in an extensive and important note in *ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 235-236



Romanticism. Second, the primacy of negative liberty over other values is derived from a specific conception of human nature. It is also noticeable that Berlin's conception of human nature is not a rationalist one, according to the tradition of the Enlightenment, but a rather historicist one which is based, very much like Kekes' conception, on the recognition of some panhuman generic goods. Berlin's theorization on the issue is, nevertheless, rationalist not because of the fact that his historicist conception of human nature has negative liberty as a necessary ingredient, but because for Berlin negative liberty is intrinsically valuable and it is ultimately this that gives it primacy over other values in his liberalism. It should also be noted that a primacy of that sort is not only rationalist, but it also contradicts the non-hierarchical aspect of his value-pluralism. Third, it seems that the importance of negative liberty is so great and that it is embedded so deeply into what we consider to be a normal life, that everyone recognises it to be so. This is a very similar claim to Kekes' argument that all reasonable people would agree on the nature and the composition of primary values.

In addition, one might be tempted to argue that Berlin's view with regards to the possibility of bridgeable moral differences is similar to Kekes' conception of secondary values. It is true that the two ideas are similar in that they refer to conflicts which can be effectively settled. They are still different, however, in that Berlin's view of this settlement can be seen as a more amicable one in the sense that the conflicts in question can be resolved by resource to cognitive realism or mutual understanding. Kekes, on the other hand, makes no such claim. For him, secondary values represent a domain of values in which people are allowed to disagree on as they are not as important as the vital

primary values and since they are conceived without exclusive reference to human nature and needs, but rather with appeal to people's backgrounds, experiences, culture etc.

Overall, it can be said that the commitment to a theory of value similar to the one embraced by Kekes is not an asset for Berlin's system of ideas, partly because the truth of Kekes' theory was shown to be far from evident. Furthermore, considering other tendencies in Berlin's writings, such as his attempt to avoid an endorsement of anything more elaborate than a very minimal conception of the existence of a common human nature and his rejection of rationalism<sup>82</sup> - even though his success on both of these attempts is dubious – his support for a Kekesian theory of values would be incoherent. In order for Berlin to account for such a theory, he would have to hold to some idea of progress - which might in itself contradict other aspects of Berlin's system of ideas, such as his criticism of J.S. Mill's meliorism. It is true, nevertheless, that even though Berlin would argue against Mill's strong sense of moral progress, he would still commit himself to the subtler view that moral progress does, indeed, occur in the sense that moral agents can come to understand what constitutes a moral wrongdoing. This modest sense of progress, however, is not expressed in as solid and definite grounds as it is in Kekes' theory, which appeals to a very specific conception of human nature. Instead, Berlin's modest sense of moral progress is rather based on the romantic belief that even though pan-human mutual understanding may not create an agreement on all forms of the good, it may eventually lead to a mutual recognition on the practices which are wrong. As a consequence, despite the elusive nature of Berlin's ethical theory and its ambiguous relationship with monism and relativism, a sense of moral progress can still be identified in Berlin's system of ideas. Even if Kekes' view must ultimately appeal to the above

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<sup>82</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 212-216.

condition in order to make its case for the pan-human applicability and recognition of primary values, it does aim to make a much stronger and more specific point in terms of moral knowledge since it gives a number of particular human needs the violation of which constitutes moral wrong.

In spite of his commitment to some form of moral progress and his conviction in 'our ability to recognise virtually universal values', Berlin still holds that rationalist 'efficiency and organisation should not be regarded as the ultimate goals in life'. Nevertheless, he still values reason as enabling means for 'men and women to live better and happier lives' and to 'diminish the bruising conflicts between good ends'. Moreover, Berlin's claim that 'reason is needed to sort out the conflicting claims of justice, mercy, privation and personal freedom' on the basis of the context in which they arise is an indication of his belief in social progress, albeit – due to value pluralism – not to a strongly positivistic one.<sup>83</sup> Kekes' moral theory, on the contrary, is one which would indicate a much stronger and more explicit view of what constitutes social development. For Kekes, any social context which does not fulfil the moral demands set out by generic values is problematic whereas any establishment of practices which fulfil these demands is a step in the right direction.

#### **4. Berlinian Value-Pluralism and Monism**

The monistic idea that 'One is good, Many - diversity - is bad, since the truth is one, and only error is multiple' is much older than the western tradition of the Enlightenment, 'and

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<sup>83</sup> All quotes are from Annan, N., "Foreword" to Berlin, I.; *The Proper Study of Mankind: an Anthology of Essays*, edited by Hardy, H. (Pimlico: 1998), pp. xiii-xiv.

deeply rooted in the Platonic Tradition'.<sup>84</sup> Monists 'hold that the diverse goods human beings seek are forms of, or derive from, a single overarching good'.<sup>85</sup> They share with value-pluralists a common objectivist approach to the moral universe, but lack the component of pluralism, which is central to value-pluralism. Furthermore, the moral universe of the monist is one in which all moral facts can be organised and co-exist harmoniously with (or within) an overarching universal monistic principle. As Lukes puts it, these moral facts 'can be subject to a complete and consistent ordering - or if they are 'moral utopians', monists may believe, as Marx and Engels did, that the incompatibility can be overcome by overcoming the conditions that generated it'.<sup>86</sup> Value-pluralism on the other hand rejects the notion of the rational harmonious co-existence of different values and moral facts. 'Ends, moral principles, are many', albeit 'within a human horizon'; but are also irreconcilable, and between these irreconcilable moral principles 'we are doomed to choose, and every choice may entail an irreparable loss'<sup>87</sup> or as Dworkin puts it: 'an irredeemable moral stain'.<sup>88</sup> On a political level, the monistic 'notion of a perfect civilisation in which the ideal human being realises his full potentialities' is for Berlin 'absurd' and 'not merely difficult to formulate, or impossible to realise in

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<sup>84</sup> **Berlin, I.**; "The Apotheosis of the Romantic Will: The Revolt against the Myth of an Ideal World" in The Proper Study of Mankind: an Anthology of Essays, edited by Hardy, H. (Pimlico: 1998), p. 553. Also on this topic look at **Popper, K.**; The Open Society and its Enemies Vol I: The Spell of Plato (London, Routledge [& Kegan Paul Ltd.]: 2003 [1945]) and **Popper, K.**; The Poverty of Historicism (London, Routledge [& Kegan Paul Ltd.]: 2002 [1957]), pp. 50-95 [chapter III].

<sup>85</sup> **Lukes, S.**; Liberals and Cannibals: The Implications of Diversity (London and New York, Verso: 2003), p. 91

<sup>86</sup> **ibid.**

<sup>87</sup> **Berlin, I.**; "The Pursuit of the Ideal" in The Crooked Timber of Humanity, edited by Hardy, H. (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1990), p. 11 and p. 13

<sup>88</sup> **Dworkin, R.**; "Do Liberal Values Conflict?" in The Legacy of Isaiah Berlin, edited by **Dworkin, R.**, **Lilla M.** & **Silvers B. R.** (New York, New York Review of Books: 2001), p. 80.

practice, but incoherent and unintelligible'.<sup>89</sup> For Berlin, the notion that moral principles do not constitute a 'perfect whole' is a 'conceptual truth'.<sup>90</sup>

Pluralists argue for the plurality and the incompatibility of moral values in the first instance from an empirical standpoint. We do, in fact find ourselves in situations where any of the available choices will entail not only an irreversible loss but, also, an inevitable and often irrevocable wrong. This loss is anticipated by value-pluralism since there are many distinct and different worthwhile values, only some of which can be feasibly chosen. As Berlin puts it:

'...in choosing one thing [we] lose another, irretrievably perhaps... If we choose justice, we may be forced to sacrifice mercy...If we choose equality we may be forced to sacrifice some degree of individual freedom. If we choose to fight for our lives, we may sacrifice many civilised values, much that we have laboured greatly to create. Nevertheless, the glory and dignity of man consist in the fact that it is he who chooses'.<sup>91</sup>

The loss can be more excruciating when the dilemma is between radical choices but irreversible losses also occur when one is engaged in less agonising dilemmas. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the thesis that choice making entails losses is not necessarily a position embraced only by value-pluralists. A monist, as I will discuss shortly, might well recognize that a decision concerning one value might necessitate the loss of another value and that this loss might be tormenting. Nevertheless, this type of

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<sup>89</sup> Berlin, I.; *Four Essays on Liberty* (London and New York, Oxford University Press: 1969), p. lv

<sup>90</sup> Berlin, I.; "The Pursuit of the Ideal" in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, edited by Hardy, H. (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1990), p. 13

<sup>91</sup> Berlin, I.; "European Unity and its Vicissitudes" in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, edited by Hardy, H. (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1990), pp. 201-202

monist could still hold to the position that, no matter how saddening, there is only one correct way of action since there must be one overriding value. So, the position that choice making entails loss is not a monopoly of the value-pluralist conviction nor is it necessarily derived from value-pluralist premises alone; it can, also, be compatible with some versions of monism.

What is peculiar to the value-pluralist position is the claim that our moral choices often involve not only an irreversible loss, but also an irreversible wrong. In William Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice*, 'a Nazi forces Sophie, a Polish Mother in a concentration camp, to choose which one of her children will live and which one will die'.<sup>92</sup> If she does not make a choice, both of them are condemned. If one approaches the moral dilemma from a utilitarian monistic perspective, given the circumstances and assuming Sophie's attachment to each one of her two children is equal and that she was coerced in this position, there is one "correct" course of action which does, undoubtedly, involve a great loss and suffering but which does not involve moral wrong. This action will be the one that maximises utility – or in this case minimises loss of it – and would entail that Sophie makes a choice about which one of her children is to live and which is to die without recognising any wrong in that choice. A deontologist, on the contrary, would claim that wrong is committed since it is the case that a mother has to decide on the death of her child. If Sophie decided not to choose any one of her children, something which would result in the death of both, the wrongness of infanticide would be avoided - at least on an initial level, because ultimately she would still commit infanticide because, by not choosing anyone of the two, both of her children are condemned to death. If we assume

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<sup>92</sup> **Gaus, G. F.**; *Contemporary Theories of Liberalism: Public Reason as a Post-Enlightenment Project* (Sage Publications: 2003), p. 41

that no such wrong is committed when Sophie does not choose between her children, then it is only natural to acknowledge that utilitarian concerns should come into consideration, for two lives will be lost instead of one.

A value-pluralist recognises the relevance of both the deontic and the utilitarian concerns in this moral dilemma which entails an inescapable and irreversible wrong. No matter how Sophie decides, apart from the loss and the emotional torment, at least one of the children, as well as Sophie, would be inescapably wronged. This value-pluralist conclusion is evidence of the elusive pessimism that often permeates Berlin's writings and which co-exists with his humane and optimistic celebration of the plurality of valuable lifestyles which human beings can choose to pursue.

It should be noted, however, that for the Berlinian value-pluralist there also exist choices which involve an irrevocable loss, but not necessarily an inescapable wrong. When one has to choose between a repugnant option and a valuable option, there is no wrong entailed in choosing the valuable one, despite the fact that in choosing the valuable option, one loses the repugnant one. It is important here to stress that for Berlin, human beings exercise their freedom appropriately not only between valuable options but also between repugnant ones and when in a dilemma, one is chosen while the other is lost. The fact that the lost option is not a valuable one is not a reason for Berlin to not consider it a loss. It is only a reason to not consider the loss of it to also entail the committal of wrong.

In another general counter-argument against monism, value-pluralists point to the inconclusiveness of the monist position since, so far, there has been no obvious agreement on what the monistic overarching moral principle is. For Berlin, 'we are faced

with conflicting values; the dogma that they must somehow, somewhere be reconcilable is a mere pious hope; experience shows that it is false'.<sup>93</sup> These reasons are more intuitive and empirical than deductive and do not constitute a *proof* of the plurality and incompatibility of moral principles.<sup>94</sup> When put together, though, they are an indication of the *possibility* of the correctness of value-pluralism; or, in any case, at the very least they lay bare the possibility of the monist argument being void.<sup>95</sup>

A very elaborate account of the nature, similarities and differences of monism with value-pluralism is given by Kekes who distinguishes between three different types of monism.<sup>96</sup> According to Kekes, what unites pluralists and monists is the acceptance of the fact that conflicts between values occur. What differentiates monists from pluralists is the monistic denial of the significance of such a conflict. The pluralists subscribe to a pluralist theory of values that interprets these conflicts as conflicts between ultimate values. For a value pluralist the empirical fact that conflicts between values occur is an affirmation of the truth of the value-pluralist doctrine. The monist explanation of the above conflict is very different from the pluralist one and it varies. An initial monistic response could be that appearances are deceiving and that the nature of these conflicts is contextual and not one between ultimate values. A second response could be that the value conflicts that we experience in life are, indeed, conflicts between ultimate values; these values are, nevertheless, commensurable and a single value that outweighs all the others can be found. A third response tries to reconcile value-pluralism with monism by

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<sup>93</sup> Berlin, I.; "European Unity and its Vicissitudes" in The Crooked Timber of Humanity, edited by Hardy, H. (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1990), p. 201

<sup>94</sup> This will not be the case if one were a moral empiricist. But, if one were an empiricist, one's position would be incompatible with the value-pluralist position since - as has already been discussed - moral empiricism cannot account for the objectivist component of value-pluralism.

<sup>95</sup> For a more detailed account of this look at Crowder, G.; Liberalism and Value-Pluralism (London and New York, Continuum: 2002), pp. 64-73

<sup>96</sup> Kekes, J.; The Morality of Pluralism (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1993), pp. 51-75



focusing on the similarities of the two doctrines. Finally, a fourth response that is not monistic as such, but which is closer to monism than it is to pluralism, is the one advocated by Dworkin according to which if one redefines values appropriately one can do away with Berlin's agonistic conflict.

The first explanation, which has been advocated from as early as Plato, has already been partly examined elsewhere in this chapter. According to monism, incompatibility is only apparent and is due to human beings' irrationality. There is only one *summum bonnum*, nothing else should count as a value, or if it does, it is only secondary and instrumental for achieving the one intrinsic value which will be interpretable at a higher and more refined level of moral consciousness. A classic counter-argument to this view is the Kantian argument directed against all transcendental metaphysical theories. A value-pluralist would not accept the latter counter-argument to this - rather crude - form of monism because a dangerous consequence of such an acceptance would be to shake the moral universalism which pluralism advocates. If the pluralist does use the Kantian argument against this form of monism, the monist could resort to abandoning the metaphysical part of his claim and argue that we can't find the *summum bonnum* because of our incapacity for adequate rational reasoning. But, argues Kekes, 'what reason is there for disturbing appearances in this case? Why should we doubt what millions of reasonable people conceive as being clashes between incommensurable and incompatible choices?'<sup>97</sup> To this extent, these anti-rationalist arguments are similar to the ones proposed by Berlin and Oakeshott.

The second version of monism which is presented by Kekes and tries to offer an alternative explanation of the occurrence of moral conflicts is the one that recognizes the

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<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, p. 66

existence of ultimate values on the one hand, but does not recognize their incommensurability on the other. In this view, ultimate values might clash but, because of a commitment to a metaphysical doctrine, one could come up with a specific ranking which gives priority to one value over all the others. This monistic view is similar to the kind of monism expressed earlier in that it is often grounded in a metaphysical conviction and, thus, is also subject to the same anti-rationalist critiques. Where it differs from the former view is that whereas the former considered all conflicts to be contextual, the latter accepts that ultimate values conflict; but from this conflict one single overriding value always emerges. Values might be ultimate, but some carry more weight than others. So, an extreme egalitarian might accept that equality and liberty are ultimate values, but when the two are in conflict we should always decide on the side of equality, no matter what the cost and loss in terms of liberty.

Kekes seems to believe that a monistic view of a similar kind can come about by substituting for values 'equivalent units of some medium'.<sup>98</sup> He lists a number of problems why this view cannot be accepted – one of which is that because it is hard, if not impossible, to come up with a universal idea of what that medium might be, it is mistaken to rank values according to such a principle. If that medium is defined by something like Bentham's hedonistic utilitarianism, it will be opposed by systems of ideas, such as Mill's, which advocate quality differences between different experiences.<sup>99</sup> This latter view, however, moves away from an objective medium of evaluation to a more subjective one. These criticisms are valid and they point to the problems that are entailed in substituting values for some other medium. Nevertheless, what Kekes misses

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<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, p. 67

<sup>99</sup> See Mill, J. S.; *Utilitarianism* edited by Sher, G. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1979)

is that this is a methodology of ranking values that does not necessarily lead to a monistic outlook unless it is conjoined with a specific monistic metaphysical conviction of the sort that was examined earlier. This is because comparing values via some other universal medium give us different rankings between values when they are examined under different circumstances. This counter-argument would be embraced by Berlin's value-pluralism and it relates to the significance and the role which he ascribes to human reason in aiding our moral judgments. Reason tries to assist us – and not make a normative single prescriptive ruling – in deciding whether we should choose 'boots or Pushkin', as Berlin puts it, according to the situation in which we find ourselves in. Furthermore, the substitution of values by some other medium will be accepted by lexical value-pluralists who recognize the existence of many values but, nevertheless, hold that some values will always override the others. This is a view which is closer to monism than Berlin's pluralism but, at least at a first glance, it cannot be said to be a straightforward variation of monism. The issue becomes more complex when a lexical value-pluralist recognizes only a very limited number of overriding values. In such a situation, what should count as an adequate number of values above which one might be called a pluralist? In any case, it should be clear that the ranking of values according to some medium couldn't give us a monistic conclusion by itself, as Kekes seems to assume. In order to derive a monistic theory of value from it, one would have to resort back to some sort of metaphysical doctrine which ranks values in a specific manner that gives superiority to a single overriding value. The other possibility would be to make an observation according to which the method of ranking values according to some medium would always show that a specific value always scores higher in the ranks than all others, independently of its

application in time, place, context, and different cultures. To my knowledge, this has not been shown to be true of any value.

The third version of monism which Kekes refers to, the 'Canonical Principle for Ranking Values' tries to reconcile itself with value-pluralism by working on the similarities of the two doctrines rather than on the differences. Pluralists and monists disagree about the causes of conflicts. Nevertheless, they agree on the actual occurrence of conflicts and, more importantly, they agree about the importance of settling conflicts. The 'strong sense' of this monism is one where values are ranked into higher and lower values. At first glance, this approach might seem compatible with pluralism, especially if one substitutes "higher values" for "worthwhile options" and "lower values" for "unworthwhile ones". Nevertheless, this 'strong sense' approach collapses into either one of the previous two versions of monism which I have already mentioned and found incompatible with value-pluralism – some values will be ranked higher than others either because of some transcendental metaphysical principle or because they score higher in some ranking unitary medium. In the weak sense of monism, there is still the insistence 'on the need for a ranking of different types of values, for unless it was available, there would be no principled way of resolving conflicts among values'.<sup>100</sup> The weak interpretation, nevertheless, 'does not suppose that the ranking is, or must be, based exclusively on characteristics intrinsic to values' like the strong sense does.<sup>101</sup> Kekes thus concludes that the weak interpretation 'is consistent with the pluralistic view that the conflicting values are incompatible and incommensurable'.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Kekes, J., *The Morality of Pluralism* (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1993), p. 75

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*

To the extent that the resolution of these conflicts should be principled, indeed, there might be common ground between this type of monism and value-pluralism. But, this is questionable. As William Galston notes, many of the contemporary conflicts in modern politics are not conflicts between good options and bad options. They are conflicts between equally worthwhile alternatives between which the value-pluralist does not necessarily find a principled – to the extent that "principled" means "rational" – way to resolve these conflicts. Many of the decisions taken depend on contingent circumstance or contextual co-ordinates.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, practical reasoning might demand that in different circumstances different frameworks of action might be necessary instead of any repeatable and principled plan of decision-making. Thus, if principled resolution of value-conflicts is not possible, then the ranking that it implies, even by this weaker version of the 'Canonical Monism', is still contradictory to the incommensurability that is entailed in value-pluralism.

Another objection to value-pluralism with monist tendencies which is worth considering is the one advocated by Dworkin. Dworkin interrogates Berlin's value-pluralism by making use of the paradigm instance of two – only apparently and not in reality, in his view – conflicting values: liberty and equality – an example which Berlin first made use of in order to illustrate the conflicting character of values.<sup>104</sup> In a nutshell, Dworkin does not refute the fact that in choosing liberty over justice irreversible loss occurs. He refutes the claim that the conflict is deep and radical. For Dworkin, the conflict between liberty and justice is contingent or merely contextual. It ceases to be a

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<sup>103</sup> See Galston, W. A., *Liberal Pluralism: The Implications of Value-Pluralism for Political Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, UK, New York: Cambridge University Press: 2002)

<sup>104</sup> Dworkin, R., 'Do Liberal Values Conflict?' in Dworkin, R., Lilla, M & Silvers, R. B. [eds.], *The Legacy of Isaiah Berlin*; (New York, New York Review Books: 2001), pp. 73-90

conflict when it is understood that liberty is derived from justice. If the apparent conflict between the two was correctly resolved by getting the definitions of liberty and justice right, no one would be wronged.<sup>105</sup>

Bernard Williams' reply is that if, in a given situation, some people think that they were wronged because they have different conceptions of, say, liberty and justice from the ones that prevailed and on the basis of which a decision which violates their liberty in favour of justice was made, then they would advocate a different solution to the issue. These people might not necessarily think that the political decision that was taken is unfair since they are a minority in a pluralist society, but they still 'have a complaint about what came out of it: this is not a complaint of being wronged, but it certainly is not just a complaint to the effect that their interests have lost out'.<sup>106</sup> Their conception of liberty has been violated for a conception of justice that they do not share. This makes them have 'a complaint in liberty even though they do not think that they were wronged'.<sup>107</sup>

The extent to which Berlin would find himself in agreement with such a line of argument is an issue which exposes a deep tension in Berlin's system of ideas. For Berlin, for good or bad, the correct understanding of liberty is an understanding on the grounds of negative liberty. If we accept Williams' counter-argument to Dworkin, then value-pluralism would have to base its defence on the grounds that some people express a complaint about the violation of some values, as these are subjectively understood by

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<sup>105</sup> Williams, B., 'Liberalism and Loss' in Dworkin, R., Lilla, M & Silvers, R. B. [eds.], The Legacy of Isaiah Berlin; (New York, New York Review Books: 2001), pp. 91-103

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*, p. 99

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*

themselves or the group in which they belong. The acceptance of such a line of defence relativises pluralism in a manner that Berlin would be reluctant to accept.

For Berlin, ethical reality is not just an observation. If it were, value-pluralism would be identical with simple moral empiricism. The observation that there are many radically different lifestyles, cultural practices and values is an empirical one. Unless one is an extreme moral empiricist – and value-pluralists are moral empiricists to some degree – it does not logically follow from the empirical observation that one can infer an ontological truth; namely that *all* of these lifestyles, practices and values are worthwhile. Such a relativistic interpretation of value-pluralism rests on a discourse that identifies cultural relativism with scepticism regarding moral values. Value-pluralism is incompatible with such a radically sceptical conception of moral values. So, Berlin argues for one understanding of liberty despite the fact that different people seem to understand different things when they refer to it. As was noted elsewhere, this approach allows value-pluralists to deal with issues of false-consciousness and gives them the moral tools to make objective moral judgments. Value-pluralists would agree with Dworkin on this point, for it is the case for both of them that the ethical world cannot be known by mere observation. Since this is the case then, how could value-pluralism be different from monism?

Maybe the reason for this difference is a matter of degree. It might be simply the case that pluralism is more willing to allow for a greater range of conflicting values - after exhaustive interrogation has taken place - than Dworkin is. The difficulty that a pluralist finds in giving the exact number of these values is one of the reasons, as has already been noted above, for the intricate relationship between pluralism and moral

relativism. Another reason for the difference between pluralism and the specific theory that Dworkin advocates is the different position that rationality holds in the two doctrines. A pluralist holds that there are not good enough reasons to put rationalism over the perception, held by the vast majority of people, that many worthy values are incompatible and conflicting. This is the empiricist side of relativism, which comes into tension with its more objectivist side that recognizes the actual existence of some universal values, though Berlin claims these are also in some sense empirically derived. On the other hand, Dworkin's theory errs on the side of rationalism. The reason for this, Dworkin claims, is that value-pluralism is 'too often cited as a kind of excuse for not confronting the most fundamental substantive issues' since it is much more difficult 'to do the hard work of actually trying to identify the right conceptions of the values in question'.<sup>108</sup>

This approach cannot always work, for it is undisputable that there are some cases in which values conflict – such as the allocation of resources between scientific research and social justice. In this case it would be absurd to redefine scientific research in a restrictive way that would allow it to be carried out with the money that would be available in a just allocation. Dworkin would agree to the absurdity of this on the grounds that scientific research is a much easier term to define than liberty is and that its difference from social justice is much clearer than the difference between liberty and social justice. To this many post-modernist theorists and social constructivists, would vehemently disagree since for them neither science nor scientific research can be seen independently from social or sexual contingencies.<sup>109</sup> This would lead Dworkin to adopt

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<sup>108</sup> Dworkin, R., 'Discussion on Pluralism' in *ibid.*, p.124 and p.125

<sup>109</sup> For instance look at Foucault, M.; *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception* trans. by Sheringham Smith, A. M. (London: Tavistok Publications, 1973) and Fox Keller, E. & Longino, H. E. [eds.]; *Feminism and Science* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996)



an extreme rationalist position that would dictate how each and every value ought to be understood or to get consumed into virtually endless definitional endeavours. It should be clear by now that pluralism is distinct from both the above positions, the former of which is very close to monism while the latter could conceivably collapse into relativism.

To conclude, I found similarities between Berlinian value-pluralism and monism in that both are objectivist moral doctrines and in that they both accept – with the exception of Dworkin’s monistic theory – that conflicts between values occur. Furthermore, some moderate versions of monism recognize, as the pluralists also do, that losses often occur when choosing in situations of value-conflicts. Monists, nevertheless, do not share the value-pluralist view that in many instances, when choosing in situations of value-conflicts, the committal of an irreversible wrong is unavoidable. On top of this, Berlinian value-pluralism can be said to be different from at least four specific types of monism. It is different from a monism that explains value-conflicts in terms of human irrationality; it is different from a monism that substitutes for values equivalent units of some medium; and it is also different from the ‘Canonical Principle for Ranking Values’ because the latter contradicts the component of Berlinian value-pluralism which holds that values cannot be ranked. As I will discuss later on in the chapter, this latter type of monism could be compatible with the lexical variation of value-pluralism. Finally, value-pluralism does not accept the view that in a situation of value conflicts we can always redefine the conflicting values so that the conflict disappears.

Before I proceed to the next chapter, where I discuss the variations of Berlinian value pluralism and their compatibility with different liberalisms, a brief comparative analysis between Berlinian pluralism and intuitionism will further illuminate some of the

issues that have arisen thus far. They will illuminate them, because such a comparison reveals not only the similarities between Berlinian pluralism and intuitionism, but also because it points towards some the common ground between Berlin's pluralism and Aristotle's system of ideas.

## 5. Berlinian Value-Pluralism and Moral Intuitionism

While Berlinian pluralism is closer to moral relativism than other objective monist moral theories, it does make strong moral claims about the wrongness of some moral judgements and practices. When pressed hard, it was very difficult for Berlinian pluralism to come up with an immaculate philosophical defence which at the same time paid adequate tribute to both its objectivist and pluralist aspirations.

In this sense, it can be said that Berlin's value pluralism is similar to the intuitionism of Henry Sidwick, H.A. Prichard and especially W.D. Ross.<sup>110</sup> Intuitionists like Prichard think that much of moral philosophy is too abstract to make any substantial and persuasive arguments for moral behaviour. Consequently, as Philip Stratton-Lake observes, they insist that 'ordinary moral thought be taken more seriously than it often is'.<sup>111</sup>

One way to argue for such a case would be to use the Oakeshottian view that there is a lot of tacit and non-theorized moral knowledge in existing practices and traditions which is embodied in habits and common sense morality. This is a different process of

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<sup>110</sup> See Sidwick, H.; The Methods of Ethics, (London, Macmillan, 1907), Prichard, H.A. ; Moral Writings edited by MacAdam, J., (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 2002) and Ross, W.D.; The Foundations of Ethics, (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1939).

<sup>111</sup> Stratton-Lake, P.; 'Introduction' in Stratton-Lake, P. [ed.]; Ethical Intuitionism: Re-evaluations, (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 2002), p. 26

perception of moral knowledge to the one that Brad Hooker calls ‘faculty intuitionism’. The latter is a ‘special [intuitionist] faculty capable of apprehending moral truths’ which, Hooker also notes, ‘few philosophers currently accept’.<sup>112</sup> Even though Oakeshott never fully elaborates on the details of how this process actually operates, it is different from ‘faculty intuitionism’ in the sense that it does not appeal to the epistemic capacity of moral agents to grasp meta-ethical truths as the latter does. Instead, it appeals to the epistemic capacity of humans to make use of and to often – but not always – explicitly perceive knowledge that is hidden and incorporated into tradition. Similarly, Hayek’s conservative theory is different from Oakeshott’s described above because, although it adopts views that might appear common in given societies, they are the product of a social evolutionary process. Hayek’s strong sense of rationalism is an aspect of his theory that would render it incompatible with intuitionism.

Ross’ intuitionism is different from all of the above theories. Berys Gaut refers to it as one which embodies pluralist ideals in the sense that it holds that ‘there is a plurality of first-order moral principles stating what one has moral reason to do; that these principles may conflict in theory application to particular cases; and that there is no higher-order moral principle which in each case of conflict ranks one first-order principle above another’.<sup>113</sup> Ross’ appeal, however, to ‘what most men think’<sup>114</sup> is not unqualified since he claims that moral common sense should go together with critical reflection. The latter is necessary in order to unmask faults and moral misperceptions.

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<sup>112</sup> Hooker, B.; ‘Intuitions and Moral Theorizing’, in Stratton-Lake, P. [ed.]; Ethical Intuitionism: Re-evaluations, (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 2002), p. 161

<sup>113</sup> Gaut, B.; ‘Justifying Moral Pluralism’ in Stratton-Lake, P. [ed.]; Ethical Intuitionism: Re-evaluations, (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 2002), p. 138

<sup>114</sup> Ross, W.D.; The Right and the Good (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1930), p. 23

It seems to me that this aspect of Ross' theory is very similar to that of Berlin's. Both have an aversion to over-theorizing and attempt to put the human agent and the immediacy of human experience before abstract moral contemplation. Both, at the same time, recognise the fallibility of human beings which is due as much to their inherent individual fallible nature as much as it is due to the, often misguiding, influence that human beings are subject to in the context of social, political and other structures. Consequently, irrespective of whether they are true or false, the two theories are also similar insofar as they both reject simple moral empiricism.

This approach ultimately begs the question of when does one know that the combination of moral reflection and common moral sense will yield truly right principles and concepts. I find Ross' response to this issue, which is that right moral principles are self-evident, unsatisfactory. Berlin's response to questions regarding the moral behaviour of agents operating under conditions of radical moral conflict is rather similar and, also, to some extent unsatisfactory since it is not very specific and fully developed.

Moreover, Berlin's theory of pluralism and Ross' intuitionism share some more similar problems. Ross' theory is often criticised for having to ultimately appeal to another meta-ethical or higher order principle such as utility. If it does, then its appeal to self-evident moral knowledge is severely curbed.<sup>115</sup> Similarly, Berlin's theory might have to resort to some similar ultimate appeal; one may claim that the solution of Berlin's dilemma between 'boots or Pushkin' is based on an ultimate appeal to a utilitarian calculus.

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<sup>115</sup> This argument is made by Gaut in **Gaut, B.**; 'Justifying Moral Pluralism' in **Stratton-Lake, P. [ed.]**; *Ethical Intuitionism: Re-evaluations*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 2002), p. 143-145

In addition, Ross' appeal to self-evident moral principles and facts is counter-intuitive since there is no convergence between individuals or groups about what comprises a self-evident moral truth. In some degree, Berlin's account of radical conflict and untamed value pluralism does account for that. However, Berlin's theory is subject to very much the same criticism, i.e. the observation of lack of convergence on universal human goods.

To conclude, irrespective of whether moral intuitionism and radical pluralism are true ethical theories, they share a number of characteristics and, as a consequence, problems.

## **6. Berlinian Value Pluralism and Aristotelian Theory**

Pluralist sentiments found few echoes within the ancient Greek philosophical tradition. If some pluralist elements were to be found, however, one would probably find them in the works of Aristotle.

It was Aristotle who thought that the best lives that human beings could attain – which, should be noted, would always be second best to the purely philosophising lives of the Gods – are the ones which contain many goods. One of the major differences between the two theories is that, whereas for Aristotle it is possible for all these goods to be combined both in general and within a single life, for Berlin any such combination – let alone a best combination – is an impossibility. The view that all the different ideals and values that are honoured in different cultures can be fused into an all encompassing good or lifestyle is a view that has been maintained from Aristotle to the present but which for Berlin is a fiction. As he put it, 'the notion of total human fulfilment is a formal

contradiction, a metaphysical chimera...That we cannot have everything is a necessary, not a contingent, truth'.<sup>116</sup>

So, Alasdair MacIntyre observes, it is the belief about the combinability of all the valuable goods that urges Aristotle to claim, like Dworkin later did, that 'the apparent existence of a tragic dilemma must always rest upon one or more misconceptions or misunderstandings. The apparent and tragic conflict of right with right arises from the inadequacies of reason, not from the character of moral reality'.<sup>117</sup> For Aristotle, rational deliberation cannot yield moral wrong whereas for Berlin there are instances in which rational deliberation entails an irreversible wrong.

Where Aristotle's ethical system meets Berlin's is that in both cases the individual realises herself – or, in the case of Aristotle, himself – in conjunction with their social environment, the *polis*. As in Aristotle's system of ideas *The Politics* have to be seen in conjunction with his *Nicomachean Ethics*, in Berlin human beings self-realise themselves through choice-making and morally progress by discovering values which have developed, and can be understood, through historical traditions despite being objective. Moreover, Berlin develops his idea of universal intelligibility in a conception of common human needs – and consequently a conception of human nature. Like Berlin, Aristotle also has a conception – albeit a more specific, metaphysical and explicit one – of what it is to be human. This is the starting point on which he bases his subsequent assertions on ethics and, ultimately, politics.

There are some stark differences between the two doctrines as well as some impressive similarities. The crucial question, nevertheless, is whether Aristotelian theory

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<sup>116</sup> Berlin, I., : "Two Concepts of Liberty" in *The Proper Study of Mankind: an Anthology of Essays*, edited by Hardy, H. (Pimlico: 1998), p. 238 and p. 240

<sup>117</sup> MacIntyre, A., *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, (London, Duckworth: 1988), p. 142

can help resolve any of the deadlocks which pluralism presents us with. I believe that it can be of assistance in at least one of these deadlocks.

One of the main arguments that have been advanced against value-pluralism so far has been that it inevitably collapses into simple moral relativism, whether this is understood as moral empiricism, subjectivism or a general moral relativistic tendency. One of the main reasons for this has been the fact that pluralism appeared to be too elusive with respect to the course of action it prescribes in situations of conflicting values. If, as relativists argue, the conflict between two incompatible values can give rise to different solutions between different agents, different cultural domains and different times, then this is not a very different view from the moral relativist one. Although it should be clear by now that there are many aspects of the pluralist theory that differentiate it from its moral relativist counterparts, the issue yet remains; can value-pluralism give a more specific rule or prescription for action in the aforementioned situations? It is noticeable that this is another way of expressing the challenge that Ross' intuitionism faces in terms of its commitment to self-evident moral knowledge – because of its refusal to advocate a higher-order principle on the basis of which first-order conflicts could be decided. One possible way out for intuitionism would be the advocacy of an Aristotelian theory which, although it may not solve all the problems and ambiguities associated with intuitionism, does at least move the debate into more familiar ground.

The same is the case with Berlinian value pluralism. Despite the fact that it is different from Aristotle's moral theory in that the latter believes that rational deliberation through practical reasoning will give rise to rational solutions to value conflicts – an

assertion which Berlinian value pluralism rejects – Aristotle’s theory still leaves some room for the Berlinian view on moral decision making. This is because rational deliberation through practical reasoning can come up with different normative demands for the same value conflict which occurs under different circumstances. So for instance, Aristotle could make claims in favour of the concept of liberty and against equality in some instances, but in favour of equality and against liberty in others. The pluralism that is embodied in the lack of a fixed outcome in value conflicts is the same both for Berlinian as well as for Aristotelian pluralism – even though in Aristotle there is no wrong, but in Berlin’s case there is.

Moreover, as I have discussed in the chapter, the relationship between moral empiricism and objectivity is a major issue in Berlin’s theory. This also is very much so in Aristotle’s theory, not only in terms of individuals realising themselves in conjunction with their social environment but also in terms of the methodology that Aristotle uses in deriving moral objectivity. For Aristotle, the real, tangible world perceived through our sense data is the only means through which we can come to grasp objective moral facts. As a consequence, Aristotle’s objectivity is subject to critiques such that it fails strict objective criteria, very much in the same way that radical pluralism and moral intuitionism are subject to similar critiques because of their close connection to moral empiricism.

The above do not insulate the Berlinian project from the critiques that it faces. They do, however, make the point that, were Berlin’s theory to fail on the points in question, then so would Aristotle’s and Ross’. By discussing radical pluralism alongside Aristotelian and intuitionist theory, I did two things. Firstly, I highlighted some aspects of



radical pluralism, which is a theory that will be central to my argument in this thesis. Consequently, a substantial acknowledgement of the characteristics, merits and weaknesses it involves is important. Secondly, even though I cannot prove, strictly speaking, that radical pluralism can rebut the challenges advanced against it, I argue that if these challenges apply to radical pluralism, they also apply to moral intuitionism and Aristotelianism. Thus, the arguments against some specific characteristics of Berlin's theory will also face not only Berlinian, but also Aristotelian and intuitionist counterarguments.

## 7. Conclusion

What I attempted to illustrate in this chapter is not a *proof* of the truth of value-pluralism. In order to prove value-pluralism one would have to make a true ontological argument about the actual existence of objective values and a further epistemological argument of how moral agents become aware of them.<sup>118</sup> Such a project would be too grand for the scope of the present essay. Instead, for the purposes of my argument, I take value-pluralism for granted and any further elaboration on the types of value-pluralism or liberalism will assume the general truth of value pluralism.

There were two main objectives in this chapter. The first was to examine some general pluralist traits so as to have a better idea of what is entailed in the liberal commitment to pluralism. The second was to present a basis on which I can discuss on the value pluralist variations that I will use for my argument in the thesis with respect to the compatibility between liberalism and pluralism.

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<sup>118</sup> This is an issue with which I will, to some extent, deal later on in the thesis when I examine Raz's theory of parochial values.

The latter I achieved by presenting Berlin's view on value-pluralism. This exemplifies a very radical take on pluralism and its comparison with the more timid pluralist variations which I present in the next chapter will be illuminating.

In presenting Berlin's view, I delineated an area of value pluralist discourse to which I will often refer in my conclusions in the course of the thesis. I have argued that value pluralist discourse aspires to create room both for concepts such as rationalism and false consciousness, as well as for moral empiricism and radical moral conflict.

As I have already mentioned, I did not aim to prove that value pluralism does this successfully. I only aimed to highlight the subtle claim that Berlinian pluralists make by differentiating it from the claims of theories such as simple moral relativism and monism. In doing so, I paid tribute both to the challenges that Berlinian value pluralism faces as well as to its assets and its similarities with moral intuitionism and Aristotle's ethical theory. It is to the examination of alternative value pluralist positions and their compatibility with different liberalisms that I will now turn.

## VARIATIONS OF VALUE PLURALISM AND THEIR COMPATIBILITY WITH DIFFERENT LIBERALISMS

Having expanded on Berlin's view of value-pluralism and examined its relationship with relativism and monism I am now going to elaborate on some variations of this value-pluralist doctrine. After that, I will go on to investigate the compatibility between different liberalisms and these value pluralist variations.

### 1. Lexical Value-Pluralism

Lexical pluralism holds that there is a plurality of worthwhile values which can be lexically ranked. This account allows the prioritization of certain rules or kinds of considerations over others without necessarily having to concede ground to a monistic single overall Platonic principle of prioritizing values.

Traces of a hierarchical ordering within pluralism often appear in Mill's *Utilitarianism*.<sup>119</sup> Similarly to Berlin who finds only traces – instead of a developed doctrine – of value-pluralism in Vico and Herder, Mill also offers neither a systematic nor a full exploration of the possibilities of this lexical approach to ethical values. To Mill one can also add Aristotle who – as has already been mentioned in the previous chapter –

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<sup>119</sup> Mill, J.S.; *Utilitarianism* in *On Liberty and Other Essays* edited by Gray, J. (Oxford University Press: 1991, 1998)

recognizes a variety of worthwhile goods which he then, rather more systematically than Mill, classifies in a strict lexical ordering.

A lexical understanding of value-pluralism is one that shares along with the Berlinian understanding of value pluralism the universalistic and the pluralistic components of the latter, as each of these has been identified in the previous chapter. It can also be said that the lexical approach to pluralism accepts to some extent the principle of incommensurability.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, it is implicit in the elaboration of the lexical understanding of value-pluralism that it recognises - at least to some extent - the incompatibility of some worthwhile values, although the *type* of incompatibility it recognizes might vary from the type recognized by Berlin's untamed value-pluralism.

I have already referred extensively to the idea of incompatibility as a significant trait of pluralist theory. Still, a number of ambiguities regarding the exact content of this term and thus its significance for the various types of pluralism that I am about to examine remain. Claiming that two or more values or lifestyles are incompatible may mean that the more you satisfy or pursue the one, the less you can do so with the other. So, with a given amount of spare time, every minute I spend taking an enjoyable walk in Hyde Park is a minute not spent having a drink by the Thames, which I would also enjoy. However, recognition of the bare fact that some of our choices entail some kind of an opportunity cost cannot by any means fully account for the incompatible nature of worthwhile values or lifestyles which is attributed to pluralists. Another sense of incompatibility is the one according to which one value or lifestyle fully excludes another. This is a stronger conception of incompatibility from the 'opportunity cost' one

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<sup>120</sup> Look at **Rawls, J.**; *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, 1996), pp. 310-324 and **Cohen, J.**; 'For a Democratic Society' in **Freeman, S. [ed.]**, *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls* (Cambridge University Press: 2003), pp. 86-138 and especially 100-111.

mentioned before and one that most pluralists would agree with. An example of this would be the incompatibility between the lifestyles of a monk and an indulgent rock star. There is, moreover, a third different sense of incompatibility. This even stronger sense expresses the conviction that it is not just the case that one objectively good moral value might exclude another but rather that there exist objectively good values that actively oppose or condemn other objectively good values. The much quoted values of liberty and equality are a straightforward example of this type of incompatibility which can be referred to as “agonistic”. It is implicit in Berlin’s account of value pluralism that it is this agonistic incommensurability that he finds the most interesting.<sup>121</sup> The advocacy of such a strong sense of incompatibility is not a problem for Berlin; on the contrary, the argument in the thesis so far has been that this is exactly the point that Berlin wants to make with his unrestricted value-pluralism. Radical pluralism, which is the main theme that permeates his writings, is *all* about the fact of the existence of such a sense of incompatibility; this is exactly what Berlin is trying to push forward – often with great cost to the internal consistency of his system of ideas. The endorsement, for instance, of such a strong sense of incompatibility is often at odds with some other aspects of his thought, such as his preference of negative over positive liberty. A more plausible approach on the issue could be that Berlin’s project might be much more about the

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<sup>121</sup> This is evident in many scattered instances throughout Berlin’s writings. One might say that the most indicative of his essays on this issue are ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’ and especially ‘Herder and the Enlightenment’ (in **Hardy, H. and Hansheer, R. [ed.] *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays*** (London: Pimlico, 1998), pp. 191-242 and 359-437 respectively. In *Two Concepts of Liberty* there even are instances where Berlin seems to refer to the second type of incompatibility (as for example in *ibid.* p. 197 where he points out that freedom is a distinct value and should not be confused with economic and social values). However, his radical view on the incompatible nature of the plural universe is evident in the passages in *Herder and the Enlightenment* where he expresses his ‘belief not merely in the multiplicity, but in the incommensurability...in the incompatibility of equally valid ideals, together with the implied revolutionary corollary that the classical notions of an ideal man and of an ideal society are intrinsically incoherent and meaningless’ (*ibid.* p. 368). This is also especially evident in his passages about the objective nature of pluralism (*ibid.* pp.424-426) and in belief that Herder’s notion of equal validity of incommensurable cultures renders the concept of an ideal man incoherent (*ibid.* p.428).

observation of the fact of the existence of radically incompatible values and lifestyles and less about its philosophical and strict analytical value.

Another counterargument against Berlin's subscription to a deep-seated and far-reaching incompatibility is that the irredeemable moral stain that is entailed in the agonistically incompatible choices that we are often forced to make is too much to ask from moral agents. One response to this would be that the moral stain often appears to be inescapable – after all, if there is one overriding essence to Berlin's work it is the agonistic nature of the choices that we have to make in life and the moral cost that is entailed in making these choices.

The type of incompatibility and incommensurability which the lexical value pluralist endorses is of crucial importance since, as it is obvious from the above, it is going to have serious implications regarding the issue of whether a pluralist's conception of the ethical universe is more on the universalistic or the particularistic side.

Lexical value pluralism claims that there is an absolute value which should be fulfilled or a minimum standard of some kind that should be satisfied before the fulfilment of other values can take effect. So, the type of incompatibility that is recognised by lexical value pluralism is not as strong as the type of incompatibility and incommensurability that is entailed in Berlin's pluralism. In lexical pluralism some considerations have clear priority over others. Mill's tendency towards lexical value pluralism can be seen in his distinction between higher and lower pleasures.<sup>122</sup> Mill's distinction is much debated as it has often been argued that it cannot hold in light of

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<sup>122</sup> Look at **Mill, J.S.**; *Utilitarianism* in *On Liberty and Other Essays* edited by **Gray, J.** (Oxford University Press: 1991, 1998), ch.2, pp. 136-158

Berlin's pluralist view of the ethical universe.<sup>123</sup> However, irrespective of whether Mill's distinction is acceptable for Berlin, it can be said that – when approached within the context of Mill's own system of ideas – the distinction is still indicative of his tendency to prioritize some values or activities over others.

Moreover, it can be said that lexical pluralism resembles the prioritizing of values which is evident in Kekes' pluralism. For Kekes, some values are seen as primary and more important than other values which are secondary and of lesser importance. Examples of primary values are the fulfilment of basic needs of survival such as shelter, food etc., whereas examples of secondary values are things that are culturally and historically relevant. Similarly, Rawls' recognition that liberty only has priority if a number of social conditions – very similar to the ones exemplified in Kekes' primary values – are satisfied, implicitly acknowledges the primacy and the urgency of these conditions over liberty. Once these primary conditions are satisfied liberty has priority over all other considerations.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> **Gray, J.**; *Two faces of Liberalism*, (Polity Press: 2000), pp.34-69 and **Gray, J.**; 'Postscript' in his *Mill On Liberty: A Defence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1996)

<sup>124</sup> It is difficult to make a similar argument for Mill's account in *Representative Government* in which he advocates that the liberal political framework dictated from the practical application of the Principle of Liberty is applicable only to societies that have achieved a certain level of progress (**Mill, J.S.**; *Considerations on Representative Government* in *On Liberty and Other Essays* edited by **Gray, J.** (Oxford University Press: 1991, 1998), p. 258). One might observe that, like Rawls, Mill here sets a condition – even as ambiguous as that of progress - that has to be fulfilled before the fact of a plural moral universe starts to have significance for the actual political and legislative life of a society. Mill's view, however, that the Principle of Liberty as applied in the political sphere in the form of a representative constitution can only take effect after the people of the community in focus have developed a 'sufficient value' and 'an attachment' to it, otherwise 'they have next to no chance in retaining it' (*ibid.*) cannot be seen as a subscription to a value-pluralist doctrine. This he does, as we have already mentioned, through the distinction between higher and lower pleasures. Mill's view that the fulfilment of some –unspecified – material and more immanent conditions have an absolute priority over the promotion of liberty is not a recognition of the sort purported by Kekes and Rawls. It serves as an instrumental purpose, as a practical observation that if liberty is to prevail, some conditions have to be fulfilled beforehand, whereas it is implicit in Rawls' – and explicit in Kekes – that the fulfilment of primary values has an higher moral significance and should always be given priority over other values.

The point where the Berlinian and the lexical understandings of value-pluralism diverge is that the latter is committed to a different, softer type of incompatibility whereas the former is committed to a much stronger and more radical type of incommensurability. The Berlinian value-pluralist holds that because it is meaningless to commensurate between ultimate values or radically different lifestyles, conflicts that arise between and within the latter cannot be definitely resolved through rational means. Lexical value-pluralism, on the other hand, adopts a view according to which one may – indeed, one must – rank some values higher than others. As a consequence, values ranked higher in the lexical order must be necessarily fulfilled before one starts considering the fulfilment of values further down in the list.

Since lexical value-pluralism does not commit itself to the type of incompatibility that the Berlinian pluralist does, it is plausible for the former to compare and lexically rank conflicting values and virtues by means of substituting them for equivalent units of some medium. It is difficult, nevertheless, to imagine a value-pluralist, even one that ascribes to a lexical order of ranking values, who would be willing to make use of such a medium of comparison. A more common method for ranking values hierarchically is by making use of theoretical, religious or meta-ethical rationalist claims; a method which has also been used by pluralists such as Aristotle.

I have already mentioned that Aristotle exemplifies some pluralist traits in the sense that he recognises that there is a plurality of goods that a human being must possess if he is to lead a good and successful life. Nevertheless, above all these equally worthy – and for Aristotle combinable – virtues stands the virtue of philosophising, which is a divine characteristic that is unparalleled in worth by any other endeavour. Similarly,



many traditionalists and conservatives recognise the worth of free choice, modernisation etc., but only as second in priority to the value of religion, tradition and family relations.

This position resembles a monistic approach to a degree greater than a Berlinian value-pluralist would feel comfortable with. As it is the case that if a lexical value-pluralist claims that some values are always overriding values, she would have to either substitute for the values some other medium on the basis of which a comparison will take place or she would have to decide about the overriding values on rationalist grounds.<sup>125</sup> This pluralist view is much closer to monism than Berlin's pluralism, but it is important to stress that despite its monistic tendencies lexical value-pluralism is still different from the crude Platonic monism that explains value conflicts in terms of human irrationality. A lexical value-pluralist is still committed to the recognition of the inescapable committal of an irreversible wrong when choosing between two worthwhile conflicting values. Where it differs from the Berlinian value pluralism is that it holds that when the choice is between an overriding and an overridden value, there is a loss of value. A crude Platonic monist or a Benthamite utilitarian on the other hand would hold that no loss would be involved in choosing the one and only overriding value.

The monistic doctrine that most closely resembles lexical value-pluralism is 'The Canonical Principle for Ranking Values'. I have already argued that the strong sense of this type of monism collapses into either Platonic monism or meta-ethical monism, while I have also presented both the reasons for which lexical value-pluralism could collapse

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<sup>125</sup> It should be noted here that it might arguably be the case that even if there is a substitution of the values with some other medium, the decision on which should be the overriding value or values is going to be a rationalist decision. This is because the reasons for deciding on the comparison or the medium that has been chosen in order to carry out the comparison presuppose a rationalistic methodology.

into Platonic monism and the reasons that obstruct the assimilation of the two.<sup>126</sup> Meta-ethical monism can be arrived at by either substituting for values equivalent units of some medium or by making the rationalist claim that some values carry more weight than others. It has been hinted that a value-pluralist usually feels ill at ease with the first approach of going about meta-ethical monism, while the second, which is also used for arriving at meta-ethical monistic conclusions, is in fact what the lexical pluralist is more likely to make use of in order to rank values. Despite the fact that I found the relationship between Berlinian pluralism and rationalism to be an ambiguous one, it can be said that overall it is one of hostility.<sup>127</sup> Part of the reason for this is, amongst others, the Berlinian pluralist conviction that a rationalist approach to ethics and its political implications is at the root of all totalitarian or monistic doctrines. And, indeed, it appears that these Berlinian fears are vindicated with respect to the lexical pluralist doctrine when the latter is put under a more thorough scrutiny.

Pluralists like Kekes and Larmore accept that ranking values is reasonable only in some particular situations. This is because, at times, values ‘will inevitably conflict in concrete political and moral situations’ and in conflicts of this manner there cannot be *a priori* answers. So, ‘for instance, if freedom and equality conflict, then one consideration relevant to the resolution of their conflict is how much freedom and how much equality actually exist in the context in which the conflict arises’.<sup>128</sup> Similarly, ‘if the human right to the protection of legitimately acquired property conflicts with Rawlsian justice, then it is crucial to know whether the conflict occurs in the context of mass starvation or in that of a socialist policy of redistribution in a context where there is no poverty and there is an

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<sup>126</sup> See my discussion in Chapter Two.

<sup>127</sup> See my arguments in Chapter Two also.

<sup>128</sup> Kekes, J.; The Morality of Pluralism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 205

adequately high standard of living'.<sup>129</sup> However, this is a very weak type of hierarchy with which even a radical pluralist might agree.

On the contrary, a lexical understanding of value-pluralism would imply that the values earlier in the lexical ordering 'have an absolute weight...with respect to later ones, and hold *without exception*'.<sup>130</sup> That means that 'we can suppose that any principle in the order is to be maximised subject to the condition that the preceding principles are fully satisfied'.<sup>131</sup>

The first immediate problem to arise is that such a rigid hierarchical approach affects our sense of good judgment and moderation. For instance, if one always decided on the side of, let us say, liberty over equality even in a context of extreme social inequality and starvation, one could be reasonably said to have lost perspective on the situation and to be morally wrong in deciding in favour of liberty. However, this cannot be said of Rawls with respect to the specific example regarding liberty and equality. Although Rawls argues for the lexical priority of liberty over other values, under circumstances of social wretchedness or degradation liberty can give way to other welfarist considerations. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether in these cases of social degradation it is always the welfarist considerations that should take primacy or whether it is just the case that he allows for the primacy of welfarist considerations while he still leaves room for the possibility of the primacy of liberty.

The second problem with the lexical ranking of values is that when put under careful scrutiny its pluralistic component seems to be insufficient in preventing it from its eventual collapse into some form of monism. I have already mentioned that the strong

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<sup>129</sup> *ibid.* pp.205-6

<sup>130</sup> Rawls, J.; *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford University Press: 1971,1999), pp.38, *Italic is mine.*

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*

presence of rationalism in lexical value-pluralism is a trait that could weaken its pluralist outlook. Furthermore, since it ranks values in a manner in which the – even partial - fulfilment of values of lesser importance is *always* conditional upon the complete fulfilment of the most important values, it is hard to see how it can escape from collapsing into a monism even of the Platonic form. This is because the overriding perceived “worthiness” of the single value that is at the top of the lexical order must be pursued to its absolute realisation irrespective of the level of realisation of the other “less worthy” values.

To the extent that the type of pluralism in focus maintains that moral values should still be ranked but not in a lexical order, the argument is different yet, regrettably for lexical value-pluralists, it is still not insulated from moving away from pluralism and towards monism to a degree that places it closer to the latter than to the former. Such a variation of lexical value-pluralism could hold that there are a number of values which are incommensurable but nevertheless more “worthy” than others. The more weighty values are not lexically ranked with each other; instead they are incommensurable. Yet, when they conflict in practical political situations, it might be reasonable to rank them for the sake of practical convenience. So, a pluralist of this sort might hold that liberty and equality are rival but equally worthy values while, at the same time they are higher than, say, the value of tradition. Having said that, when a policy maker has to decide which value should be curtailed in the practical exemplification of this moral-political dilemma, she would have to take into account the specific contingencies of the situation; for instance whether there are people starving or whether they are affluent but with a rather limited level of freedom.

This position does not offer a better alternative to the standard lexical order variation of value-pluralism as it does not solve any of the problems that lexical pluralism set out to solve nor does it avoid lexical value-pluralism's uncomfortable similarity with monism. On the first point, as it accepts the incommensurability of a certain number of values, from the point of view of lexical pluralism it concedes too much ground to intuitionists. Indeed, once we know that some values carry more weight than others, we can then "reasonably" resolve conflicts between the higher incommensurable values through recourse to a form of practical reason. Nevertheless, as was noted in the second chapter, the political decisions that are contested are not the ones in which, for instance, equality is chosen over liberty in the context of mass starvation, but ones in which liberty is chosen over equality in a context of relative affluence and freedom. The above form of pluralism is of no aid in such situation since it falls prey to what lexical pluralists might call intuitionist disputes.

In the second case, it is questionable what should count as an adequate number of overriding values for one to be considered a pluralist and not a monist. This point might have to do more with the elusiveness of the concept of pluralism and its clear delineation but it still, nevertheless, points to the insufficient insulation that this version of pluralism offers against monism. For, is it pluralistic enough if lexical pluralism recognises, let us say, only two higher values the fulfilment of which has an absolute priority over the fulfilment of any of the other "lesser" values?

These weaknesses are also shared by the Berlinian version of value-pluralism. When expounding Berlin's conception of value-pluralism, I identified a deep tension in his approach. On the one hand, Berlin spent a great deal of effort in explicitly arguing for

the incommensurability of moral values whereas, on the other hand, it was implicit in his elaboration that he regarded negative liberty to be prior to any other principle or value whether this was liberty understood as positive liberty or equality. Recognising the danger of their view collapsing into a sort of rationalistic monism, both Berlin and the lexical value-pluralist concede that there is still room for the intuitionist approach. This may be, after all, what gives lexical pluralism its characteristic as a moral theory which respects both the plurality of values – which is also a characteristic of intuitionism – and their hierarchical nature.

## 2. Non-linearity as a Basis for Value-Pluralism

I have already shown that Berlinian value-pluralism tries to justify itself partly by referring to the idea of incommensurability. Berlin tried to show the validity of incommensurability by pointing out that our disputes over values are ‘rationally interminable’ and by exposing the agonistic nature of conflicts between clearly distinct values.

Another way of expressing incommensurability is through non-linear preference orderings. According to Raz, ‘A and B are incommensurable if it is neither true that one is better than the other nor true that they are of equal value’.<sup>132</sup> For Raz, ‘the test of incommensurability is failure of transitivity. *Two valuable options are incommensurable if (1) neither is better than the other, and (2) there is (or could be) another option which is better than one but is not better than the other.*’<sup>133</sup> So, if A is not better than B and a third value or good C is introduced such that C is better than A but not better than B, then

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<sup>132</sup> Raz, J., *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1986), p. 322

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*, p. 325; Italic is in the original.

it can be said that we have a failure of transitivity, which vindicates the idea of incommensurability and, hence, the truth of value-pluralism.

Glen Newey claims that such way of defining incommensurability and explaining value-pluralism rests on two contestable assumptions. Firstly, it must be the case that ‘the ordinal measures of value expressed by the preference-rankings above correspond to real measures of value’.<sup>134</sup> Secondly, it must also be the case that ‘the non-transitivity (if such it be) of those measures is sufficient to establish that values which they are measures of are really distinct’.<sup>135</sup> The effect of these two assumptions – contestable in Newey’s view – is that non-linearity is not an argument that guarantees pluralism since one can use it to derive monistic conclusions.

The second of the above assumptions which is disputed by Newey finds its main opponent in the writings of Dworkin whose objections have already been examined.<sup>136</sup> It is true that the clearly distinct nature of conflicting values was not found to be self-evident. Yet, the opposite claim, according to which values are not really distinct, was found to be inconclusive since it rests on assumptions which many pluralists would not accept. Furthermore, the necessary outcome of the Dworkian position would be that moral conflicts and dilemmas can be resolved by redefining the terms of the moral conflict or dilemma. The practical instantiation of this theoretical approach, however, could affect one’s good judgment and moderation. So, it is true that the non-linearity of preferences cannot – strictly speaking – be a sufficient condition for establishing the

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<sup>134</sup> Newey, G., *After Politics: The rejection of Politics in Contemporary Liberal Philosophy*, (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 83

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> For a discussion concerning the issue of the distinctiveness or otherwise of values which is posed by Dworkin see my discussion in Chapter Two.

really distinct nature of values. It could, nevertheless, still be considered a very strong indication of the above.<sup>137</sup>

With respect to the first assumption, which Raz implicitly makes use of, Newey holds that the monist can deny that the expressed preferences between the values or the goods in the non-linear matrix correspond to the real measures of these values or goods by saying that only partial – i.e. inaccurate – ordering of the values can take place since ‘the epistemic resolution required for full linearity’<sup>138</sup> is unattainable. If that were the case, then the monist could concede non-linearity for a set of rankings that can be ordered only partially and at the same time consistently hold to the claim that there is a single overriding value.

Two main points are clear from the above. Firstly, non-linear pluralism is a very open ended type of pluralism. It can insulate itself neither against monism nor against relativism, and as such it is open to various criticisms. Secondly, this ambiguity is

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<sup>137</sup> It is unclear whether the burden of proof for the distinct or otherwise nature of values should be put upon the Dworkinian position or its opponent. The argument for the burden of proof to be put on the former could be that the claim that moral values are distinct and conflict is an empirical observation. The argument for the burden of proof to be put on the other side of the debate could be that it is an empirical observation that in fact, there is, indeed, some sort of convergence of values, albeit a limited one. Christian List calls this type of agreement ‘meta-agreement’ (List, C.; ‘Two Concepts of Agreement’ in *The Good Society*, 11, no.1, 2002). Meta-agreement is agreement about what exactly a disagreement between two groups or individuals really entails. It is a condition of divergence in opinion or judgment which occurs after intense deliberation between the disagreeing parties. The fact that this is the best convergence that has been reached in many controversial topics (List, C.; ‘The Discursive Dilemma and Public Reason’ in *Ethics*, 116, no.2, 2006) is a strong indication of the Berlinian point which advocates the existence of incompatible, distinct values on the one hand and cognitive realism on the other. The former is embodied in the lack of convergence of opinion and the latter in the fact that, after deliberation has occurred, there is an understanding between agents of what is at stake. This, however, is by no means a conclusive argument since the Dworkinian point according to which a decision is possible after a level of even more intense and further improved conditions of deliberation cannot be theoretically dismissed. For the time being, however, the evidence suggests that deliberation does not destroy pluralism, it only brings about a shared way of conceptualizing issues, a point which appears to me to be very similar to the one Berlin makes. For more on this issue see Dryzek, J. S. & List, C.; ‘Social Choice Theory and Deliberative Democracy: A Reconciliation’ in *British Journal of Political Science*, 33 and Fishkin, J., List, C., Luskin, R. & McLean, I.; ‘Can Deliberation Induce Greater Preference Structuration?’, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., 2000).

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*



reminiscent of the ambiguity that Berlinian value pluralism exemplifies in terms of its own relationship with monism and moral relativism.

The acknowledgement of the first statement is very important in the sense that it delineates and puts into perspective the claims and arguments of my position on the relationship between different liberalisms and different pluralisms in the thesis. However, for the purposes of the present work, the truth of the doctrine of non-linear value-pluralism – as well as of all the value-pluralisms that I identify and examine - will be taken as given when I explore the relationship between these various forms of pluralism with different liberal theories.

The second statement above is very important for the structure and presentation of my contention in the thesis. The similarity between Berlinian and non-linear pluralism is further reinforced by their likeness in their approach to the possibility of the rational interminability of conflicts. Overall, it is safe to conclude that the Berlinian and the non-linear pluralist theories embody similar traits and, consequently, the merits and weaknesses of the one, also apply to the other. Finally, my conclusions with respect to Berlinian pluralism and its relationship with the various theoretical aspects that I examine in the thesis hold for non-linear pluralism and vice-versa.

### **3. Value-Pluralism and Reasonable Disagreement: Reasonable Pluralism**

After having examined non-linear pluralism and its relationship to Berlinian pluralism I now turn to the examination of reasonable pluralism.

Larmore correctly points out that value-pluralism – and for that matter any type of value-pluralist theory – is effectively a ‘statement about the nature of value’, and in this

sense a sort of ‘response to religious and metaphysical disenchantment’.<sup>139</sup> In the context of modernity the former attribute of pluralism, i.e. its essence about the nature of value, has given way to its latter characteristic, i.e. its essence as a response to metaphysical disillusionment. In modern times, according to Larmore, ‘pluralism is not a conception we happen to believe correct, but rather a conception about which reasonable people disagree’.<sup>140</sup>

Which agents should count as reasonable is an issue no less controversial than what – if any – is the correct quintessence of value-pluralism. The issue was partly touched upon in the discussion about Kekes in the previous chapter, where I explored the extent to which it is correct to claim that reasonable people are defined in terms of their endorsement of a certain set of moral values which is derived from a specific conception of human nature.<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, I also questioned the idea that in order for an agent to be considered reasonable she has to conform to a rationalistic and monistic account of reasonableness.

Larmore’s approach is slightly different. In his view reasonable people are ‘those who think and converse in good faith and apply, as best as they can, the general capacities of reason *that belong to every domain of enquiry*’.<sup>142</sup> Raz would be very sympathetic towards this view, especially since he is an advocate of the idea that the ability to reason is a pan-human quality.<sup>143</sup> Raz recognizes that skeptical arguments ‘can be advanced against any of the principles of reason’ but he also holds that ‘such

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<sup>139</sup> Larmore, C.; *The Morals of Modernity*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1996), p.168

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.* p.168

<sup>141</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>142</sup> Larmore, C.; *The Morals of Modernity*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1996), p.168; *italic is mine.*

<sup>143</sup> In Raz, J., *Engaging Reason: On The Theory of Value and Action*; (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.65-89

principles are historical products in the same way that languages and other systems of concepts are' and that 'they can be replaced by others which are, hopefully, free of paradox'.<sup>144</sup> It is in this context that Larmore answers Thomas Nagel's point that there is still a deadlock in the disagreement between reasonable people when they eventually reach a confrontation between incompatible points of view.<sup>145</sup> Larmore claims that this is due to the completely different backgrounds of belief that the agents have and that 'generally we have good reason to believe more than what reasonable agreement with others can secure'.<sup>146</sup> This response, on the one hand, is in line with Raz's claim that there 'cannot be skeptical arguments against *reason itself*'<sup>147</sup>; on the other hand, it goes much further than the view that sees reasonable disagreement as a form of *modus vivendi* for resolving conflicts. On an initial level, this latter aspect of Larmore's reasonable disagreement insulates it against the skepticism that haunts both reasonable disagreement - mistakenly understood as *modus vivendi* – as well as many other versions of pluralism.

For Larmore, reasonable people will disagree not because of prejudice and bias but because of the moral facts of the matter. That is, reasonable people will disagree, for instance, on whether to give priority to liberty or equality because these two values truly clash; and not because of a misconception or confusion about the values on behalf of the reasonable agents. In this sense Larmore accepts the basic framework of Berlinian value-pluralism and in this his account shares the merits as well as the weaknesses of the latter. Furthermore, if Larmore were to retract this objectivist stance from his elaboration on reasonable disagreement, then the latter ceases to be a statement about the nature of the

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<sup>144</sup> *ibid.* p. 89

<sup>145</sup> My discussion of the idea of 'meta-agreement' in List's work (n. 19) above is relevant here.

<sup>146</sup> Larmore, C.; *The Morals of Modernity*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1996), p. 170

<sup>147</sup> Raz, J., *Engaging Reason: On The Theory of Value and Action*; (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.65-89

ethical domain. If reasonable disagreement is seen only as *modus vivendi*, it only has the instrumental character of one amongst many methods of conflict resolution. If this were the case, then reasonable disagreement as *modus vivendi* could be consistent even with relativism, an ethical theory which has similarities, but which is ultimately distinct from any pluralist theory.

In any case, for Larmore, the best explanation regarding the reasons for which reasonable people disagree is given by Rawls as, in Larmore's view, when he refers to pluralism he actually refers to the idea of reasonable disagreement.

In *Political Liberalism* Rawls refers to 'the fact of reasonable pluralism' which he distinguishes from 'the fact of pluralism'.<sup>148</sup> Rawls would agree with Galston that the fact of pluralism within a democratic society 'is not surprising' not only because 'there are always many unreasonable views' but also – indeed especially - because 'there are many reasonable comprehensive doctrines affirmed by reasonable people'.<sup>149</sup> This may at first look surprising 'as we like to see reason as leading to the truth and to think of the truth as one',<sup>150</sup> but, this is exactly the point of reasonable pluralism. Reasonable disagreement, is the long-run outcome of the work of the human condition under democratic and free institutions.<sup>151</sup> In this sense, Rawls makes the move from the fact of pluralism (which for Berlin as we have seen was an essential part of his pluralist argument) to reasonable pluralism by exposing a belief on the growing capacity of human beings to develop their reason.

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<sup>148</sup> Rawls, J.; *Political Liberalism*; (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993,1996), p. 63

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.* p. 64

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> This is obvious in *ibid.* pp. xviii-xxxvi.

The relationship between reasonableness and rationality is a recurring – albeit not a central – theme in this thesis. For the Rawls of *Political Liberalism* the distinction between the reasonable and the rational – he claims that the reasonable comes before the rational – is a basic feature in Kant.<sup>152</sup> Like Kant, Berlin, Oakeshott and others – albeit for different reasons – Rawls also rejects rationalism, which he defines as the idea that ‘if the reasonable can be derived from the rational, that is, if some definite principles of justice can be derived from the preferences, or decisions, or agreements of merely rational agents in suitably specified circumstances, then the reasonable is at last put on a firm basis’.<sup>153</sup> Instead, for Rawls, the idea of rationality is complementary to the idea of reasonableness.

This is an attractive position at first sight but after more careful scrutiny it appears to be inconclusive and to some extent contradictory with Rawls’ remarks elsewhere in *Political Liberalism*. So, for instance, Rawls’ elaboration on reasonable pluralism is linked with a meliorist view of the progress of human society; or, in any case, one can start to talk in terms of reasonable pluralism once a certain level of improvement has been established. Meliorist beliefs have – at least to some extent – the stain of rationalism.<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, I find the claim in favour of the complementary nature between reasonableness and rationalism to be inconclusive. Indeed, it seems that in order for human beings to develop their reason and promote the chances of reasonable pluralism, they would have to exercise their rational capacities within a free modern

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<sup>152</sup> In *ibid.* p. 25n and in pp. 48-49n and p. 51n.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid.* pp. 51-52

<sup>154</sup> See my discussion on Mill’s liberalism, in the context of my examination of its compatibility with pluralism, in the next section of this chapter.

democracy.<sup>155</sup> This latter condition could be considered rationalistic, as a value pluralist like Raz would hold that despite the fact that the capacity of reason is pan-human<sup>156</sup> the best – but far from unique – way to exercise it is not necessarily – or even primarily – within the context of modern liberal democratic institutions.<sup>157</sup>

Rawls finds the argument about the inconclusive nature of any proof regarding the complementary claim between reasonableness and rationality to be a forceful one. Indeed, the best way to face it is ‘to show that the serious attempts (Gauthier’s is an example) to derive the reasonable from the rational do not succeed, and so far as they appear to do so, they rely at some point on conditions expressing the reasonable itself’.<sup>158</sup> However, I do not believe that this latter point is as obvious as Rawls presents it.

Rawls’ view is that a reasonable person is one who recognizes and accepts ‘that (because of the “burdens of judgment”<sup>159</sup>) other reasonable persons inevitably will affirm comprehensive doctrines different from their own’.<sup>160</sup> However, for a start, the affirmation of any such comprehensive doctrine does not constitute a definite case of the objective worth of that doctrine – after all Rawls does not claim such a thing. On the contrary, it is either a view that describes reasonable disagreement as *modus vivendi* or a view that adopts a crude moral empiricist position according to which consensus on an issue is the indication that the matter in focus is objectively worthy (or unworthy – depending on the kind of consensus). This approach has already been dealt with

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<sup>155</sup> In *ibid.* pp. 54-56

<sup>156</sup> In Raz, J., *Engaging Reason: On The Theory of Value and Action*; (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Ch. 4

<sup>157</sup> Raz, J.; *Ethics in the Public Domain: Essays in the Morality of Law and Politics* (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1995)

<sup>158</sup> Rawls, J.; *Political Liberalism*; (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993,1996), p. 53

<sup>159</sup> In *ibid.* pp. 54-58

<sup>160</sup> Freeman, S., ‘Introduction: John Rawls – An Overview’ in Freeman, S. [ed.], *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*; (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 32

elsewhere and the argument was that value-pluralism is linked with moral empiricism but also that it is clearly distinct from an extreme version of it.

Moreover, Rawls' *Political Liberalism* does not exclude the possibility that for some people pluralist aspirations are not a priority. Even more so, one could be an advocate of lexical pluralism without at the same time endorsing pluralism, since the latter might be supervened by other non-pluralist principles. To make a normative case which describes such approaches as unreasonable would be too rationalistic. Such a description is more acceptable when it is based on non-normative criteria.

In any case, for the purposes of this thesis an acknowledgement of the issues involved is sufficient, and I will proceed with no further elaboration on the issue apart from mentioning that another good reason for Rawls to distinguish reasonableness from rationality is that the former is public in the way that the latter is not.<sup>161</sup> It is noteworthy that in *A Theory of Justice* the distinction between rationality and reasonableness is still there 'but it's never made explicit and in certain passages it seems to be implicitly denied'<sup>162</sup> especially when he seems to base his argument of justice as fairness on the Original Position which was presented 'in the terminology of rational decision theory'.<sup>163</sup> It is only in *Political Liberalism* that the distinction between reasonable and rational becomes explicit.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> *ibid.* pp.53-54

<sup>162</sup> Dreben, B., 'On Rawls and Political Liberalism' in Freeman, S. [ed.], *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*; (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 321

<sup>163</sup> *ibid.* p. 322

<sup>164</sup> This explicitness in *Political Liberalism* cannot only be seen as a clarification in order to substantiate the contents of *A Theory of Justice* further. It is furthermore, a rapprochement of Rawls' stance regarding the apparent rationalistic tendency of his work in *A Theory of Justice*.

## 4. Different Pluralisms for Different Liberalisms

### 4.1. Mill's Liberalism

Mill's main argument in *On Liberty* is that no utilitarian principle can curtail liberty because the overall utility derived from the sum of utility maximizing actions does not always give maximum utility. Mill bases this on two main reasons: his conviction of fallibilism and in his belief in a Herderian romantic view of human nature and its fulfillment in terms of each individual's unique self-realization.<sup>165</sup> As a result of fallibilism this unique self-realization can only realistically come via an individual's experimentation and engagement with lifestyles and activities that one considers as most appropriate to one's talents and desires. Again, because of fallibility, the choice of experiments in living should be freely carried out by the individual. However, Mill believes that some of the choices that individuals make are more worthwhile than others. The introduction of the distinction between the higher and lower pleasures disengages Mill's liberalism from classical utilitarianism. So, 'the suggestions that Mill's moral intuitions were at variance with the implications of his moral theory and that only seriously compromising the one or the other could have brought the two into balance' may be untrue. Mill is not a direct utilitarian along the lines by which utilitarianism was developed by Bentham but an advocate of indirect utilitarianism; a specific sort of

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<sup>165</sup> Evident in Mill, J.S.; *On Liberty* in Gray, J. [ed.]; *John Stuart Mill on Liberty and Other Essays*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1998), pp. 1-128. Many works on Mill argue on a similar thread, even though the focus in terms of the most prevalent aspects of his theory varies. Most notably look at Gray, J.; *Mill on Liberty: A Defence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., (London, Routledge: 1996), Cowling, M.; *Mill and Liberalism* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Cambridge, 1990) and Skorupski, J.; *John Stuart Mill*, (London, 1990).



utilitarian moral theory that he has altered and tailored to the needs of his liberal project.<sup>166</sup>

Mill's Harm Principle contends that the liberty to choose one's own lifestyle can be restricted only when it is harmful to others. The question of what actually constitutes harm and how this is incorporated into a commonly accepted utilitarian calculus is one that poses an important obstacle for Mill's overall project. A number of solutions to these two questions have been proposed but none of them seem to be adequate in overcoming the impediment altogether.<sup>167</sup>

The above are two of the most commonly advanced criticisms against Mill's theory of Liberalism but they are by no means exhaustive since there exist a number of other criticisms advanced against Mill's liberal endeavor with a variable level of success. An attempt to list and analyze them here would be futile because this is an issue that has been covered more than adequately by existing treatises on Mill's theory. Thus, a further elaboration on this subject is beyond the scope of the present work apart from the instances where it relates to the main subject matter of my argument in the present chapter. What is within scope is the discussion regarding the compatibility between the liberal and the pluralistic aspects of Mill's system of ideas. This is so because it is by far the most important objection not only to Mill but to other liberal thinkers as well and because it is exactly this objection that I attempt, not to refute but, instead to complement in a way that will offer liberalism a way out from the apparent deadlock that it has found itself in due to the force of this objection.

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<sup>166</sup> This is one of the arguments made by John Gray in **Gray, J.**; *Mill on Liberty: A Defence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., (London, Routledge: 1996)

<sup>167</sup> For instance, look at Feinberg's attempt to define harm as a compromise of one's interests in **Feinberg, J.**; *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law, Vol. 1: Harm to Others*, (Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press: 1984)

The pluralist objection to liberalism, finds one of its most enthusiastic proponents in the writings of John Gray: ‘The absence in Mill’s writings of any compelling account of how conflicts between ingredients of human well-being that are incompatible, whether in one person’s life or in any given society, are to be resolved, prises open his ethical theory, undoes his revision of utilitarianism and amounts to a tacit admission of the truth of incommensurabilities among the elements or ingredients of human happiness’.<sup>168</sup> Gray notes that ‘this is the conclusion reached by Isaiah Berlin as the result of his magisterial restatement of the traditional criticism of Millian liberalism’.<sup>169</sup> This is an extremely important criticism but not because this is the only credible reason for which Mill’s liberalism fails – even if it is the most forceful. It might be sufficient to deem Mill’s liberalism as unsuccessful in light of a number of other more traditional criticisms, such as – amongst others – the issue of what constitutes harm. Gray’s objection against Mill’s liberalism is very important as its applicability and relevance transcends Mill’s liberalism, which is based on utilitarian grounds, and encompasses other liberal theories which are grounded on autonomy and individuality and avoid most or all the other traditional critiques of Mill’s liberalism<sup>170</sup> - such as Rawls’ or Raz’s liberalisms.

The objection raised by Gray regarding the tension between Mill’s liberal and pluralist convictions is related to the traditional objections in the sense that, because of his higher and lower pleasures distinction Mill is a hierarchical perfectionist and, partly as a consequence, cannot be a radical pluralist. The distinction between higher and lower pleasures seems to be a deep seated personal conviction of Mill’s that was most probably derived from his reaction to the intensively Benthamite educational and cultural

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<sup>168</sup> Gray, J.; *Mill on Liberty: A Defence*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 146

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> For a list of those critiques look at *ibid.*, p. 147

upbringing imposed on him by his father and from his personal experiences in overcoming his melancholic and manic depressive stretches of his life.<sup>171</sup> As a consequence, 'Mill's conception of happiness implies that individuals who have experienced the higher pleasures that go with being autonomous and developing their individuality will not trade these off for any lower pleasure: they will always prefer activities in which their generic and individual human powers of autonomy and individuality are exercised over ones in which they are not'.<sup>172</sup>

Such a conviction is difficult to square with a radical pluralist conception of the moral universe. However, Mill's romantic views on human progress and meliorism may not be as blatantly incompatible with radical value pluralism as they might initially appear. Berlin allows for the existence of moral progress, for even if after a certain point no moral progress can occur because we might have stumbled upon values that are basic and incompatible, we can say that human moral cognition advances in terms of the moral knowledge that we acquire regarding what constitutes a repugnant moral condition. It is impossible to come up with a rational answer to the question of which one of two incommensurable actions or lifestyles is better; yet, what we can know is what actions are wrong or which lifestyles are repugnant.

So, I would disagree with the claim – if such it is – that the existence in Mill's system of ideas of a theory of progress of moral knowledge as such makes it *de facto* incompatible with Berlin's untamed value pluralism. What makes Mill's system of ideals incompatible with radical value pluralism is not the subscription to a theory of progress but his subscription to the *specific* theory of progress which is advanced in *On Liberty*.

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<sup>171</sup> Look in Mill, J.S.; *Autobiography*: edited with an introduction and notes by Jack Stillinger (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), especially Chapters four and five.

<sup>172</sup> Gray, J.; *Mill on Liberty: A Defence*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 143

Mill's view is that some options are definitely bad, some are not harmful, indeed they might even be good, but there are some options which are definitely much better from all those that belong to any one of the previous two categories. So lower pleasures are better than repugnant ones, and higher pleasures are better than lower ones.

Despite the fact that Mill considers himself to be in some sense a pluralist, he is not an advocate of radical value pluralism. To this extent, if one is to judge the consistency of his liberal doctrine one would have to do it on the grounds of the pluralism that Mill really advocates. This, obviously, does not necessarily mean that this is the pluralist variation that fits best his liberal doctrine; Mill's system of ideas might be valid on different pluralist grounds from the ones that Mill had envisaged as most suitable for it. In Mill's case however, it actually looks as if the pluralist variation which Mill advocates, best serves his liberal doctrine in terms of consistency – but not necessarily truth.

Mill's preference for lexical value pluralism is evident from two points in his system of ideas. First, he confers lexical priority to 'pleasures and forms of life adopted under conditions of autonomous choice'<sup>173</sup> when he revises Bentham's classical utilitarianism for the purposes of his liberal theory. This priority which is instantiated in Mill's theory of higher and lower pleasures states 'that any amount of a higher pleasure, no matter how small, is worth more than any amount of a lower pleasure, however large, [and] cannot be squared with any utilitarian calculus'.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, as it has been mentioned earlier, one of Mill's central theses is that higher pleasures are granted 'an infinite weight, or lexical priority, as against the lower pleasures, that makes comparative

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<sup>173</sup> Gray, J. in his 'Introduction' to Mill, J.S.; *On Liberty and Other Essays* edited by Gray, J. (Oxford University Press: 1991, 1998), p. xv

<sup>174</sup> Gray, J.; *Mill on Liberty: A Defence*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 141

judgments of different bundles of higher and lower pleasures impossible except in limiting and marginal cases'.<sup>175</sup> Second, as was discussed previously, Mill's preference for lexical pluralism is evident in terms of his positivism.

In light of the above, it can be reasonably concluded that the pluralist variation that Mill had in mind when he contemplated morality was the lexical one and that his liberalism is consistent with his assumptions about morality and human nature.

If one, nevertheless, still supported – rather implausibly – the idea that the above indications of Mill's commitment to hierarchical pluralism were of minor importance and that what Mill had in mind was in fact a pluralist conviction of the sort that is espoused by Berlin, then the case for the abandonment of such a belief for the necessary adoption of a lexical pluralist view of the moral universe - if his liberal theory is to be consistent – still remains. What would not remain is the view that Mill was a consistent philosopher.

Furthermore, Mill's meliorism could result in conclusions which can be accounted for by Kekes' moral theory. Like Mill, who argues for the moral improvement of mankind in the sense that the latter will come to realize what is of moral value, Kekes also holds that his primary values are uncontested since they are recognized as important and there is consensus on their truth by rational moral agents. This position is one which is deeply at odds with Berlinian value pluralism.

The application of a reasonable pluralist position in Mill's liberalism would not be the best way to go about the issue mainly because of Mill's hierarchy of values. Whether an experienced and well informed judge's take on this hierarchy is evidential or criterial is contested.<sup>176</sup> Whichever it is, nevertheless, this hierarchy is one which does not stem

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<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 130 - 158

from the grounds of reasonableness. On the contrary, the lexical priority between higher and lower pleasures is determined by resort to criteria which might not be shared or recognized by reasonable people. If one were to equate the conception of reasonableness with the capacity to identify objective value hierarchies in the Millian sense, then it appears to me that this would make the understanding of reasonableness in question too comprehensive and rationalistic.

To conclude, it seems that Mill's liberalism is incompatible with radical value pluralism. Mill is foremost a liberal and only secondarily a pluralist and if one were to be the kind of liberal described by Mill, then one would have to abandon belief in radical value pluralism. Lexical pluralism is the pluralist variation that allows for consistency and works best with Mill's system of ideas. This does not make Mill's liberal argument necessarily true, since it might give way under the weight of more traditionalist critiques or since it is not proven that lexical pluralism is a true doctrine; it does, however, make it consistent. Reasonable pluralism is an interesting alternative that, nevertheless, is not adequately tailored to be the basis of Millian liberalism in the way that a pluralist hierarchical theory of the moral universe is. Finally, Kekes' pluralism could also be compatible with Mill's liberalism since it can account for the latter's meliorism.

#### *4.2. Rawls' Liberalism in A Theory of Justice*

In a nutshell, what I understand Rawls' project to be is this: Whereas in *Political Liberalism* there is a limit to the applicability of justice as fairness, in *A Theory of Justice* Rawls argues that justice as fairness has both a universal applicability and a primary role in the organization of society. He claims that there are some basic liberties which have

priority over other utilitarian or other considerations and which are necessary both for a range of conceptions of the good and for the development and implementation of the two moral forces that define the conception of the person, i.e. the capacity for a sense of moral justice and the capacity for a conception of the good. The priority of basic liberties is compromised only when this is for the benefit of the worse-off members of a society or a group and stems from an agreement derived amongst self-interested and rational individuals who act under the “veil of ignorance”. However, in order for the Principles of Justice to be applicable and for the argument from the original position to work, the preconditions of a well-ordered society and stability must be fulfilled.

One of the most potent critiques of Rawls’ argument in *A Theory of Justice* is that it does not account for incommensurability. This criticism, however, is not adequately put if this is the only form it takes since, as I discussed before, the concept of incommensurability can have different meanings, thus giving birth to dissimilar conceptions of value-pluralism. Yet, the above criticism does offer a general line of argument; what remains is to specify the manner in which it unravels.

Rawls claims that lifestyles can be pursued harmoniously with, and under the auspices of, justice as fairness. This is evident in Rawls’ belief that ‘there must be an agreed scheme of conduct in which the excellences and enjoyments of each are complementary to the good of all’.<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, when he makes his communitarian argument and pays tribute to the complimentary nature of the intrinsically valuable and distinct ways of life that are pursued by different people as members of a well-ordered society, he makes an assumption regarding the compatible nature of all the possible

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<sup>177</sup> Rawls, J.; *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford University Press: 1971,1999), p. 461

alternative ways of life that the citizens of the society in question might choose.<sup>178</sup> This is clear, for instance, in Rawls' claim that 'the members of a well ordered society have the common aim of cooperating together to realize their own and another's nature in ways allowed by the principles of justice'.<sup>179</sup>

Here it looks as if Rawls does not appreciate the full force of the concept of incompatibility as this is expressed by Berlinian value pluralism. Had he done so, his theory would have to account for the possibility that some intrinsically valuable ways of life are not only mutually exclusive, but agonistic in the sense that they actively oppose and run contrary to other worthwhile ways of life. A radical value pluralist would not necessarily disagree with the claim that some lifestyles and choices complement each other or that some valuable practices depend on the existence of some other valuable practices. She would not even disagree with the belief in universal intelligibility. These beliefs, however, would still allow for the possibility in which some conflicts are irreconcilable and impossible to resolve in a comprehensive rational manner. Such conflicts, for example, are the ones which result from the clashes of the basic liberties which are identified in Rawls' work by H.L.A. Hart.<sup>180</sup>

Specifically, the first and second statements of Rawls' two principles of justice – and the lexical priority of the first over the second – concede their limitation (only) when 'social circumstances do not allow the effective establishment of...[the] basic rights' that

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<sup>178</sup> In *ibid.* pp. 456–464 (§79: The Idea of Social Unity). Specifically, Rawls writes (in p. 458) that 'we need one another as partners in ways of life that are engaged in for their own sake, and the successes and enjoyments of others are necessary for and complementary to our own good'. Also, (in p. 459): 'When men are secure in the enjoyment of their exercise of others, especially when their several excellences have an agreed place in a form of life the aims of which all accept'.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.* p. 462

<sup>180</sup> See Hart, H.L.A.; *Rawls on Liberty and its Priority* in Daniels, N. [ed.]; Reading Rawls: Critical Studies on Rawls' 'A Theory of Justice' (Stanford, California, Stanford University Press: 1975)



the two principles of liberty try to safeguard.<sup>181</sup> However, ‘once the required social conditions and the level of satisfaction of needs and material wants is attained, as they are in a well-ordered society under favourable circumstances, the higher-order interests [that are promoted by the two principles of liberty] are regulative from then on’.<sup>182</sup> Furthermore, these higher order interests cannot be compromised for the sake of other conflicting considerations of absolute or relative economic notions.<sup>183</sup> The basic liberties that are projected in the two principles of liberty, once the social conditions for their effective application are fulfilled, can only be further curtailed for the sake of the more effective promotion of these basic liberties themselves (e.g. restriction to speak as we please<sup>184</sup>) or if they ‘violate some natural duty or some obligation’.<sup>185</sup> H.L.A. Hart correctly points out that Rawls is never explicit on which these basic liberties are. Furthermore, he finds Rawls’ claim ‘that liberty may be restricted to prevent violation of any such natural duties or obligations’ to be ‘an unexplained departure from the strict line so often emphasized in the case of basic liberties, that liberty may be restricted only for the sake of liberty’.<sup>186</sup> It is partly in response to such objections like the ones above that Rawls had to revise some of these views in his *Political Liberalism*. It is not certain that an advocacy of lexical pluralism will solve these problems for Rawls. What is certain, however, is that an application of lexical pluralism as deep into Rawls’ theory as the basic liberties of his Principles of Justice is more accommodating than radical value pluralism.

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<sup>181</sup> Rawls, J.; *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford University Press: 1971,1999), p. 132

<sup>182</sup> *ibid.* p. 476

<sup>183</sup> *ibid.* pp. 477-8

<sup>184</sup> *ibid.* pp.176-180

<sup>185</sup> *ibid.* p. 291

<sup>186</sup> Hart, H.L.A.; *Rawls on Liberty and its Priority* in Daniels, N. [ed.]; *Reading Rawls: Critical Studies on Rawls’ ‘A Theory of Justice’* (Stanford, California, Stanford University Press: 1975), p. 238

Rawls' argument about the way that human beings try to express their nature is derived from the agreement of the original position; a methodology so rationalistic that, given the radical value pluralist hostility towards rationalism, would find most, if not all, radical pluralists opposed to it.<sup>187</sup> It is for these two reasons – lack of appreciation of radical conflicts and moral rationalism – that Rawls' liberal project in *A Theory of Justice* is incompatible with untamed value pluralism.

Rawls' liberal theory in *A Theory of Justice*, on the other hand, would be consistent with the convictions of lexical value pluralism. The latter is pluralistic enough, on the one hand, to accept the diversity of worthwhile ways of life and values but, on the other hand, it can still recognize the existence of one or more prioritized values over inferior ones. This is compatible both with the priority that Rawls gives to the Principle of Liberty through his argument of justice as fairness, as well as with the priority he gives to the fulfillment of some basic needs before the Principle of Liberty starts to apply. It is important to stress, however, that in this situation lexical pluralism will have to apply not only between the Principles of Justice and other principles and values, but also between the different basic liberties themselves.

Nevertheless, the case remains that even lexical value pluralism cannot *completely* settle with the claim that in a well-ordered society which is run according to the principles of justice as fairness different human beings can pursue different ways of life and adopt distinct values that compliment and never contradict each other. What, however, an endorsement of lexical value pluralism can do is accommodate the claim of the harmonious co-existence of this diversity by attributing certain types of priority to

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<sup>187</sup> As a matter of fact it is these issues Rawls will revise in *Political Liberalism*, after acknowledging the force of critiques like the one that was just presented.

specific values or lifestyles. When this is done, the conflicts will remain but given the framework of justice as fairness, these conflicts will be resolvable and manageable. Of course, like in the case of Mill's liberalism, this pluralist outlook is not as pluralist as the Berlinian one, but again, this is a price that has to be paid for consistency.

Lexical pluralism is still not fully consistent with Rawls' liberalism since it does not share Rawls' certainty of a harmonious co-existence of the variable lifestyles and values under the principles of justice as fairness in a well-ordered society; it just allows for a more rational settling of the occurring value conflicts. Moreover, it is questionable whether an application of lexical value pluralism as deep into Rawls' theory as the relationship between basic liberties can guarantee the validity of justice as fairness. This is because there is an implicit recognition in the application of lexical pluralism in Rawls' liberalism of the fact that some of the basic liberties might not be guaranteed under justice as fairness – since some lower in the hierarchy might have to be trumped for the benefit of those which are ranked higher.

Even so, basic liberties cannot be guaranteed by reasonable pluralism as effectively as they can – even to the limited extent that they are – by lexical pluralism. This is because the latter is structured in a manner that, given the hierarchical conclusions of a specific theoretical framework such as Rawls' in *A Theory of Justice*, can carry out the prioritized values – in this case basic liberties – both in time and social context. In reasonable pluralism, on the other hand, reasonableness plays a central role in terms of defining political values which are dictated by public reason. This conception of reasonableness is particularistic enough so as to be able to safeguard the primacy of a value neither in time nor in social context. Hence, while it does not exclude the

possibility that basic liberties might be values which will emerge from public reason and deliberation if the context in which reasonable pluralism prevails is liberal democratic, it cannot prescribe a course of action when basic liberties conflict with each other or other equally reasonable alternatives. For, even though liberalism might be a reasonable theory at one moment in time and in a particular social context, reasonable pluralism would allow for the emergence of other reasonable views – both chronologically as well as spatially – which are different from the liberal one. This is something that is not allowed by the system of ideas in *A Theory of Justice*.

An ethical doctrine along the lines of Kekes' might be more appropriate for the kind of liberalism in focus since it assumes the priority of some values – which in this case could be Rawls' basic liberties – over others in such a manner that the overridden values are still objectively valuable but secondary, and there is consensus on the overriding values which also do not contradict each other. However, there are still reservations with respect to the truth of this theory since, Kekes' implicit claim that there is no conflict between primary values – i.e. Rawls' basic liberties in this case – can be contested. If the qualification of this observation is met, however, it is safe to assert that Rawls' liberal theory in *A Theory of Justice* is consistent with an ethical theory that exemplifies the structures of Kekes' one.

To conclude, I have presented an argument in favor of the claim that untamed value-pluralism is incompatible with Rawls' liberalism in *A Theory of Justice*. A pluralism that I have found to be a well suited pluralist variation to Rawls' project, even though it is not in as harmonious accord with it as it is with Mill's liberalism, is lexical pluralism. Reasonable pluralism is a pluralist variation that is incompatible with the

argument for the universality of freedom in *A Theory of Justice*. Finally, there seems to be some common ground between Kekes' theory and the liberalism in focus; even though, as with lexical pluralism, there are serious reservations which have to be met before the Kekesian pluralist theory is applied in Rawls' liberalism.

#### 4.3. Rawls' liberalism in *Political Liberalism*

The liberal theory of *Political Liberalism* is different from the one in *A Theory of Justice* in many respects, not least because *Political Liberalism* was partly a reformation of the liberal theory in *A Theory of Justice* in response to the critiques advanced against the latter. In *A Theory of Justice*, the agreement on a mode of interaction and decision making along the lines of the principles of justice as fairness, which results in the priority of liberalism, is based on the rationalistic argument of the original position. In *Political Liberalism*, the working agreement between the members of a society is a matter of the contingencies and the specifics of society – so that justice and the priority of liberalism do not depend upon rational choice but on the workings of the democratic society in which they exist and should be safeguarded.<sup>188</sup> This is a substantial departure from the position in *A Theory of Justice* where 'common sense precepts are at the wrong level of generality... [so that] in order to find suitable first principles one must step behind them'.<sup>189</sup> In *A Theory of Justice* the conflicts that arise after justice as fairness has been established must occur from unequal distributive shares since there is agreement among

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<sup>188</sup> This is reminiscent of what Gray identifies in Raz's *The Morality of Freedom* as functional and cultural reasons for the priority, in Raz's case, of the value of autonomy in western liberal societies. I elaborate more on this in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

<sup>189</sup> Rawls, J.; *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford University Press: 1971,1999), p. 271

different comprehensive doctrines.<sup>190</sup> In *Political Liberalism* this agreement does not exist amongst all world views but only among reasonable religious, moral and philosophical outlooks. Furthermore, as long as they meet some basic criteria of justice, comprehensive doctrines in *Political Liberalism* have a place only in people's private sphere whereas 'in the public arena citizens were expected to invoke political values, which in Rawls' understanding of politics, are completely disconnected from comprehensive doctrines'.<sup>191</sup> In this context, Roberto Alejandro has good reason for considering the distinction presented in *Political Liberalism* as a conflict between the private and the public realms.<sup>192</sup> While at first glance this might seem plausible and compatible with Rawls' anti-perfectionist aspirations, it will nevertheless become apparent that this cannot always work for it is extremely difficult – if not impossible in some instances – to distinguish or isolate the private sphere from the public. Rawls is apt to remove certain issues of contestability that arise from the fact of pluralism in order for society to gain in terms of stability and workability. It is because of this that he aspires to abandon his comprehensive liberal doctrine in *A Theory of Justice* for the sake of a political one in *Political Liberalism*. However, although the state should not impose specific conceptions of the good on its citizens, Rawls claims that the citizens have to be 'fully co-operative members of society'.<sup>193</sup> The extent to which this is possible without the citizen having to actively advocate the values of the society in which they live seems to me unclear. As a consequence the political requirement for co-operation from members of society becomes a comprehensive demand for the advocacy of certain

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<sup>190</sup> Look at Alejandro, R.; *The Limits of Rawlsian Justice* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp.115-124

<sup>191</sup> *ibid.* p. 123

<sup>192</sup> *ibid.* pp. 124-127

<sup>193</sup> *ibid.*, p. 128

(liberal) principles. Even if one only has to allow for the set of the political conceptions of justice in a modern liberal society, one would have to be educated to do so. The boundary between “being educated” to acknowledge some values and “being indoctrinated” into accepting certain values or world views is a very thin one, especially in philosophical terms.

A radical pluralist can argue against Rawls’ assertions in *Political Liberalism* in two different ways. On the one hand, she can argue against the universal application of Rawls’ liberalism on political grounds and, on the other, she can argue against its primacy in the specific context of the modern liberal democracy itself. Both seem to be very compelling criticisms.

Regarding the former of the above two criticisms, its claim is that it is wrong to make a universal claim out of a political one. To be fair to Rawls, though, he does not try to make a universal point since his theory is intended to argue for the primacy of liberalism in the already modern liberal context. This is a big departure from the implications of his argument in *A Theory of Justice* in which, to a great extent because of the comprehensive and rationalistic character of his argument, the primacy of liberty through justice as fairness was categorical and, hence, had a universal application.

Nonetheless, even if one allows for the above, two issues still loom large. One is the extent to which it is legitimate for any liberal claim to be other than universal. Between a liberalism which aspires to be universal and a liberalism which aspires to be culturally specific, it is the former that is of more interest at least to the political theorist; a culturally specific argument for the priority of liberalism would be as normatively compelling as an argument for the culturally specific application of the priority of non-

liberal principles. However, since the attempts to justify such liberalism have so far been futile, the demonstration of a liberal theory which can both successfully argue for the priority of liberalism and keep its commitment to “the fact of reasonable pluralism” even only within the context of western liberal society is of some value.

The second and most important issue has to do with the compatibility of Rawls’ liberalism in *Political Liberalism* with his recognition of the “fact of pluralism”. To begin with, the radical understanding of “the fact of pluralism” is a universal moral claim and cannot be confined to its application solely with regard to a culture specific context. Thus, it cannot be argued that it does not apply to the specific circumstances of Rawls’ *Political Liberalism* since, despite the fact that Rawls tries – often unsuccessfully – to avoid ethical and perfectionist claims, his theory would still have to meet up with the radical pluralist requirements. Indeed, it was partly for the purpose of meeting these requirements that Rawls reformulates his liberalism from what it was in *A Theory of Justice* into what it is in *Political Liberalism*. Unfortunately, however, any compatibility between radical pluralism and liberalism still remains a chimera. From an observational stance, this incompatibility is especially obvious within the context of late modern liberal society.

Even if one were to assume a society which is homogeneous in terms of its moral beliefs, there would still be irresolvable conflicts. Such conflicts can be exemplified by the debate on abortion or by the debate regarding the trade-off between civil liberty and safety, liberty and equality or between the basic liberties that H.L.A. Hart identifies in Rawls. So, assuming radical pluralism, the liberal society which Rawls presents us with cannot avoid conflicts the rational solution of which is an objective that remains



unfulfilled. It is also important to mention that to the extent to which Rawls' liberalism does not avoid making a perfectionist claim, it is as incompatible with untamed value pluralism as Mill's or the liberalism in *A Theory of Justice*.

So, despite Rawls' explicit efforts in reformulating his liberal doctrine in order to tackle the problem of harmony and stability in modern liberal societies – which is posed by “the fact of pluralism” – he fails to present a convincing case with respect to the compatibility of this reformulated liberal doctrine and pluralism understood in its raw and unrestricted radical variety.

In addition, whether the liberal doctrine of *Political Liberalism* is compatible with a hierarchical understanding of value-pluralism depends on whether the doctrine can avoid the charge of perfectionism. It is not my aim in this thesis to present a definite critique of Rawls theory or to take a definite stance on some of the critiques that are advanced either in favor of his theory or against it. This topic is vast, much covered and certainly beyond the scope of this thesis. Thus, in light of my discussion above regarding the political or comprehensive nature of Rawls' *Political Liberalism*, it will suffice to say that *if* Rawls' doctrine is a comprehensive one, it is compatible with lexical value pluralism very much in the way that Mill's liberalism or the liberalism in *A Theory of Justice* were rather compatible with a hierarchical understanding of pluralism. Again, the price to pay for internal consistency would be a withdrawal from the more radical conception of value pluralism.

Now, *if* the elaboration in *Political Liberalism* succeeds in avoiding a slide to a comprehensive or a perfectionist stance, then one might at first claim that by “the fact of pluralism” Rawls ought to refer to something else other than lexical value pluralism.

After all, when I discussed the compatibility between lexical value pluralism and Mill's liberalism or the liberalism in *A Theory of Justice* I argued that it is their comprehensive nature that fits rather well (more so in the former than in the latter) with lexical value pluralism. However, this does not necessarily mean that in order for a liberalism to advocate a hierarchical conception of the plurality of moral values, the liberalism in question has to be a comprehensive one. Rawls' exposition explicitly states that whatever the private conceptions of the good are, these will be left outside the public domain. The decision on the primacy of liberalism is political and morality has no say in this. Then, the theory in *Political Liberalism* is compatible with lexical pluralism in very much the same way that it would be compatible with monism or ethical relativism or any other moral doctrine *per se*. What is important for Rawls here is the social contingency which will give rise to the political imperative for the promotion of a liberal order.

To conclude the topic of the compatibility between lexical pluralism and the liberalism in *Political Liberalism*, it can be said that if the latter is unsuccessful in its aim in being a political doctrine and ends up sliding into rationalism, the two are compatible. To some extent, the same holds even for the case where the liberalism in focus remains a political doctrine. In this latter case, however, the significance of the compatibility is not critical since such a political liberal doctrine can also be compatible with other moral outlooks.

In the case in which *Political Liberalism* is a non-comprehensive doctrine, the application of reasonable pluralism would render the latter nothing more than mere *modus vivendi*, a pragmatic treatise on how to best achieve stability in a democratic society without any normative moral weight. Even in this situation, however, reasonable

pluralism is still compatible with Rawls' liberalism. As I have discussed already, there is good reason to doubt the success of the reasonable pluralist doctrine in carrying some of its claims on the nature of morality all the way; questions of who decides what is reasonable and what role intuitionism plays in this are never adequately answered. As far as compatibility is concerned, however, reasonable pluralism is compatible with the non-comprehensive understanding of the theory in *Political Liberalism*. This is because, even if the whole project is one which aims for stability and the avoidance of conflict, to the extent that it safeguards against the violation or the establishment of repugnant values and it allows the flourishing of the diverse pursuing of conceptions of the good, then it does not at least go against the main reasonable pluralist thrust.

To the extent that the framework of principles developed in *Political Liberalism* has also a functional reason in that it aims to educate the democratic citizen in acknowledging the worth of values – such as freedom – which are important in terms of the effective and smooth running of a diverse and pluralistic society,<sup>194</sup> then reasonable pluralism is well suited for *Political Liberalism*.

Moreover, it can be said that there are similarities between Rawls' liberal project in *Political Liberalism* and Kekes' pluralism. This is because like Rawls, who believes that reasonable individuals will interact in a manner which will lead to, and ultimately encompass, a plurality of objectively worthwhile values, Kekes thinks that all sensible moral agents will understand the universal applicability and priority of the values which he groups in the primary domain. There are many issues with regard to the validity of the epistemic (*how* can agents understand the universal applicability of these goals) and the

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<sup>194</sup> In this sense, Rawls' project in *Political Liberalism* is comprehensive since it is based on a specific conception of the good which the citizens have to acknowledge in order to behave in a way that will give rise to rights that will help them realize this good.

ontological (whether human nature is such that allows for such claims) grounds of both views. Also, the problem to which I have referred to elsewhere in the thesis with respect to the possibility of conflict between what Kekes considers primary values is relevant. This is, after all, the radical pluralist objection to Rawls' *Political Liberalism*.

Of course, if Rawls' liberalism is understood as non-comprehensive, an ethical theory like Kekes' with very strong normative implications will be inappropriate. A purely political conception of liberalism would be unable to make the normative claims which the theory of primary and secondary values demands.

Overall, it can be said that the compatibility of Rawls' project in *Political Liberalism* with variations of value pluralism depends to some extent on how one understands the project itself. When I examined its compatibility with lexical pluralism, the argument partly depended on whether the project could sustain its political nature or whether it collapsed into a comprehensive one. In the latter case I found it to be compatible with a hierarchical version of pluralism whereas in the former the compatibility was not as straight forward. Furthermore, Rawls' project in *Political Liberalism* appears to be compatible with an understanding of pluralism according to reasonableness. Moreover, an application of Kekesian theory in Rawls' project in *Political Liberalism* might not necessarily make the latter true. Nevertheless, in sharing and reflecting some of the weaknesses of Rawls's project, Kekes' theory offers a pluralist framework which compliments a number of aspects of *Political Liberalism* in the case in which the latter is deemed to be comprehensive. Finally, I found the liberalism in question to be incompatible with unrestricted value pluralism.

#### 4.4. Raz's Liberalism

##### 4.4.1. Raz's Liberalism and Lexical Value Pluralism

If Raz's conception of autonomy is considered to be objectively valuable it can be granted priority within Raz's liberal perfectionism if the latter endorses lexical pluralism, since lexical pluralism allows for such ranking of values. Despite the fact, however, that lexical pluralism allows for the prioritisation of autonomy, it does not guarantee it.

Values can be compared and ranked against each other by the use, as I have argued, of either some common means against which conflicting values are measured or on deontological grounds. One would expect that Raz's Aristotelian type of liberalism would prioritize autonomy on the grounds that it is universally valuable and that it is a necessary part of the good life for humans. However, this cannot be the case since the arguments for the promotion of autonomy in modern liberal societies are functional<sup>195</sup> and as such Raz cannot make a universally applicable normative case for the priority of autonomy. If, however, a normative case for the priority of autonomy can be made not on the grounds of universality but on the grounds of its intrinsic value, then it might be possible to prioritise autonomy in the context of lexical pluralism.<sup>196</sup> Furthermore, Raz claims elsewhere that there are worthwhile lifestyles that do not require autonomy as a necessary ingredient.<sup>197</sup> I would go even further to suggest that there are worthwhile lifestyles such that not only do they not require autonomy to be one of their ingredients, but which actually preclude the Razian conception of autonomy. Such lifestyles are those devoted to the pursuance and the fulfillment of values that are recognized by traditions

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<sup>195</sup> See Chapters Four and Five.

<sup>196</sup> For the argument that Raz makes a normative demand for the promotion of autonomy on grounds other than its universality, look at Chapters Four and Five.

<sup>197</sup> He makes this assertion in Raz, J.; *Ethics in the public Domain: Essays in the Morality of Law and Politics* (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1995), p. 124, n.30. I also discuss this issue in Chapter Six.

which are threatened by Raz's view of autonomy and which can exist as enclaves even within modern liberal democracies. If one allows for the existence of such lifestyles, then the promotion of autonomy on deontological grounds seems absurd – or, at least, unsecured. Given the above, if autonomy is to be the privileged value in such cases, it will have to be justified by means other than a deontological approach, since a normatively binding deontological approach in favour of the priority of autonomy in such circumstances is hard to produce. This leaves the weighting method as the only alternative. The details of this method, however, would be very difficult to pinpoint, since I cannot think of any philosophically valid medium one could use for the measurement of values like autonomy. If one, for example, uses as a medium for such measurement the worth that a good or a value has to one's life, then the basis of the discussion moves away from the realm of classical moral objectivity and towards the realm of historically contingent values. This is a direction that a moral objectivist, such as Raz, would wish to avoid.

#### *4.4.2. Raz's Liberalism and Kekes' Pluralism*

Now I will turn to the relationship between Raz's liberal perfectionism and Kekes' pluralist theory of primary and secondary values.

If Raz claimed that autonomy ought to be a necessary ingredient for anyone's life because our human nature is such that the undertaking of experiments in life can be truly valued only when it is done so freely, then his liberal perfectionism would indeed be compatible with Kekes' pluralism. However, as I discuss later in the thesis, the functional argument does not appear to make an argument for autonomy being a necessary

ingredient of the good life. Likewise, the cultural argument is in favour of the prioritisation of autonomy not because of some normative demand *per se*, but because an agent who operates in a modern liberal context is accustomed to valuing freedom. Moreover, since Raz holds that there are worthwhile lifestyles that do not require autonomy as a necessary ingredient, it would be impossible for Raz's liberalism to advocate an ethical outlook which holds that the status of autonomy as a primary value has to stem from a common human nature which would hold for everyone irrespectively of an agent's background or historical and social context. On top of these reasons, the extent to which Kekes' theory of primary and secondary values can make meaningful ethical claims is questionable. This is due to the fact that the convergence of opinion on primary values to which Kekes appeals is not verified by the actual patterns of observable moral behaviour. Consequently, since the epistemic test of convergence is not met, it can be concluded that the objective nature of the primary values is severely undermined. A claim to the contrary would involve a commitment to the rationalist position that moral agents who do not recognise the objectivity of primary values have misconceptions about the issue. Such a position, however, would jeopardise the role that the convergence of opinion has within Kekes' system of ideas since it would not be an active test that determines which value is a primary one, but a test on the rationality of the human agent. All these challenges must be fully appreciated when the compatibility between liberal perfectionism and the theory of primary and secondary values is examined.

#### *4.4.3. Raz's Liberalism and Reasonable Pluralism*

Before I proceed, it is noteworthy to mention that when I discussed reasonable pluralism I found that both Rawls' and Larmore's accounts of it, no matter what their differences were, flirted with both subjectivist and objectivist traits. The question of what is the exact and actual moral status of the aforementioned pluralist theories was left unanswered. The reason for this is that this is a thesis which does, on the one hand, deal with some of the more specific questions of the pluralist outlooks that are presented while, on the other hand, these questions do not constitute its main preoccupation. A full analysis and thorough presentation of these issues would require a much larger project which is beyond the scope of the present work. As such, in light of the ambiguous nature of the reasonable pluralist theory, in this section I will examine the compatibility between reasonable pluralism and liberal perfectionism by making further assumptions about the exact nature of reasonable pluralism.

If reasonable pluralism is to be deemed an objective moral doctrine, then it can be compatible with liberal perfectionism but can help little with the obstacles that the latter faces. The reason for this is the reasonable pluralist assumption that rational people will respect different views and values since they will acknowledge the impossibility of reaching an agreement on which are the most important fundamental values. As a consequence, the state should be as neutral facilitator of conditions that allow reasonable disagreement as possible. Such a view, however, is not compatible with liberal perfectionism for three reasons.

First, liberal perfectionism does not advocate neutrality. It is the responsibility of the state to promote the worthwhile options in life and to filter out repugnant ones. For



Raz, being neutral in terms of the promotion of morality in the public domain is disrespectful towards others since we all are moral agents and, as a consequence, ignoring issues of morality is anything but respectful. Whether perfectionism is actually the right (or wrong) thing to do is not significant for the argument I am making here. What is important is that the idea of neutrality which is entailed in reasonable pluralism is not consistent with Raz's liberal doctrine which focuses on autonomy. Second, reasonable pluralism holds that it will be possible for different values and convictions to coexist in the context of an environment of non-political neutrality; however, the dilemmas of modernity have shown that this is a chimera. The issue of abortion is, for example, an issue in which one agent's appreciation of the value of life conflicts with another agent's or group's advocacy for the right to choose. Situations such as the one above point towards the, often inescapable, inclusion of comprehensive conflicts in the political and social sphere; conflicts which, furthermore, appear to be irreconcilable with each other. The irreconcilable nature of these conflicts exemplifies the 'fact of pluralism', as Rawls puts it. Third, the context of modernity is again applicable here since the behaviour and level of toleration that might have been considered to be within the boundaries of reasonableness have been redefined to the extent that even invoking them might have become meaningless.

If reasonable pluralism is approached as mere *modus vivendi*, then the prioritization of autonomy in Raz's theory would be possible but only on non-normative terms. This might not be too much of a problem, nevertheless, since the two central arguments, which are identified by Gray, for the promotion of autonomy in Raz's liberal theory – the functional and cultural arguments – are only instrumental. If, however, Raz

was pressed to describe autonomy as either an objective or a subjective value, he would be inclined to go for the former, as his elucidation on the nature of parochial values – which I will discuss later in the thesis – indicates.

Raz would describe autonomy as an objective value not least because of his implicit appreciation of internal autonomy. Moreover, it seems to be Raz's view that while autonomy is not a universal value, it is an intrinsically valuable component in some lives in certain historical/cultural contexts. One might say that for Raz autonomy could be a parochial value.<sup>198</sup> Whereas for Plato and Aristotle the intrinsic is also universal, Raz's theory of parochial values allows for the distinction between the two. As a consequence, as I have already mentioned in section 4.4.1, the promotion of autonomy might not happen on universal normative grounds, but instead on intrinsically normative ones. The merits, weaknesses and the truth of parochial value theory will be discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapters. For the purposes of the argument at hand, it is only sufficient to demonstrate that Raz's claim for the promotion of autonomy is not made from the subjectivist point of view.

Furthermore, if Raz's promotion of autonomy were based on purely subjective grounds, it would mean that his theory would be a political perfectionist one. In such a case, it could under no circumstances make an argument for the adoption of a non-neutral stance regarding the promotion of certain values in response to objective moral concerns about what constitutes the good life and with the intention to respect agents *qua* their being moral agents. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that reasonable pluralism cannot be used by liberal perfectionism.

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<sup>198</sup> See my discussion in Chapters Five and Six.

Overall, in this section of the chapter I have argued that liberal perfectionism is not compatible with reasonable pluralism on two counts. If reasonable pluralism is approached as a comprehensive ethical theory, it is not compatible with liberal perfectionism because it cannot accommodate the non-neutral stance of political liberalism with regards to non-political values. The two are also not compatible because reasonable pluralism cannot withstand the criticism from modernity. If reasonable pluralism is not a comprehensive ethical theory then the priority of autonomy can be safeguarded but in a manner that does not make a strong enough normative case for its promotion.

## **5. Conclusion**

In the previous chapter I discussed in detail the idea of Berlinian radical value pluralism and examined its strengths as well as its ambiguities and weaknesses. In this chapter I delineated and discussed some more timid variations of the Berlinian value pluralist theory and examined their compatibility with different liberal theories.

I started this chapter by discussing pluralist alternatives to Berlin's radical pluralism. In doing so I highlighted the characteristics that make each one special and different from the other.

Whether these pluralist variations are true or false, no matter how important an issue it is, is not at the centre of my argument.

There is, however, the issue of how pluralist these variations of radical value pluralism really are. There are a number of reasons that give rise to this reservation. One

of them is the ambiguous relationship between most of these variations of pluralism with monism and relativism.

However, even Berlin's paradigmatic radical value pluralism has a highly ambiguous relationship with both monism and moral relativism. As such, the presence of this ambiguity can under no circumstances be considered to be a characteristic particular only to the more timid pluralist variations that I have presented. Moreover, it is not so much the case that the radical characteristics which are attributed to pluralism are misconceived by the pluralist variations that I discuss; it is more the case that their purpose is to present a more limited alternative to these radical characteristics. To the extent that Berlinian value pluralism has not been *proven* wrong, an excursion into more limited pluralist ethical theories is legitimate. In addition, it is true that lexical pluralism and Kekes' theory of primary and secondary values are much closer to pluralism than other monistic moral theories. Where the line lies between a pluralist and a non-pluralist theory can be a hotly contested topic. I see no reason, however, for dismissing a moral theory as non-pluralist when it clearly embodies pluralist tendencies and characteristics. If these characteristics are less potent than the attributes of another pluralist theory, then the theory in question is less pluralist than the other, rather than not pluralist at all.

In terms of the compatibility between different liberalisms with different pluralisms, I have argued that Mill's liberalism is incompatible with radical pluralism as well as reasonable pluralism. However, lexical value pluralism appears to be consistent with many of the ideas that Mill's theory exemplifies. Rawls' liberalism in *A Theory of Justice*, like Mill's liberalism, is also incompatible with unrestricted value pluralism as well as with reasonable pluralism. Lexical pluralism is the pluralist variation best suited

to it; although many issues with respect to the validity of the liberalism in question persist even after the application of lexical pluralism in its system of ideas. I have found Rawls' liberal theory in *Political Liberalism* to also be incompatible with Berlin's radical view of value pluralism. If Rawls' project is considered to be a comprehensive one, I argued that it can be compatible with lexical pluralism. If the liberalism in question is after all a political doctrine, this compatibility does not hold. If Rawls' project in *Political Liberalism* is examined in terms of the reasonable take on value pluralism then the two are compatible. Finally, I found that Raz's liberal perfectionism is incompatible with radical pluralism and reasonable pluralism whereas its compatibility with lexical pluralism is possible but must be qualified – lexical pluralism may allow but does not safeguard the priority of autonomy.

Furthermore, as was also the case with Kekes' pluralism and the other liberal theories which I discussed in this chapter, there seem to be some points of congruence between liberal perfectionism and Kekes' moral theory of primary and secondary values. So, in Rawls' case in *A Theory of Justice*, it can be said that if the basic liberties are considered to be primary values, Rawls' liberalism is compatible with the Kekes' pluralism. Moreover, Rawls' liberalism in *Political Liberalism* could also be compatible with Kekes' pluralism, since both Rawls and Kekes argue in favor of a consensus in terms of which values are recognized as true – by reasonable individuals in Rawls' case and by rational individuals in Kekes'. Furthermore, Mill's liberalism would also be sympathetic to Kekes' ethical approach as the meliorism in Mill's liberalism is similar to Kekes' idea that there will be congruence towards the recognition that the objective

moral values – which are part of the Kekesian primary domain of values – will in fact come to be recognized as such by rational individuals.

These compatibilities are an important observation because they are a precursor to the significance that the Kekesian theory will have for my more detailed discussion of Raz's liberalism in the subsequent chapters. Moreover, the discussion so far in terms of the potential reconciliation between liberal perfectionism and some form of pluralism needs further elaboration since I argued that the compatibility between liberal perfectionism and Kekes' pluralism or lexical pluralism needs to be qualified. During my discussion, I will also examine Raz's view of autonomy and his theory of value as these pertain to, though go beyond, the consideration of his value pluralism and liberalism.

## **RAZ'S LIBERALISM: THE ARGUMENTS AND THE PROBLEMS**

The purpose of this chapter is to present my understanding of some aspects of Raz's liberal theory and to identify the problems and challenges that it faces, which I will then discuss in the remaining chapters of the thesis.

In the first part I will present Raz's endorsement of liberal perfectionism in the form of three negative arguments which are directed against the 'neutralist' liberal critique of perfectionism. Furthermore, I will develop some of the basic notions and foundations – such as an objective theory of value – on which Raz constructs his overall argument for an autonomy-based conception of liberalism. Some aspects of Raz's arguments will be found to be problematic or unpersuasive since they point towards, what I make out to be, an illiberal take on perfectionism that contradicts Raz's object of defence, i.e. liberalism, and his overall liberal convictions. Thus, the ground for a further investigation of the more specific aspects of Raz's theory will be set so that any recommendations for improvement that will follow will have a reference point.

The second part will be dedicated to the investigation of the relationship between autonomy and pluralism in Raz's argument. I do this so as to present my take on the context in which one of the most forceful arguments against Raz's liberalism is advanced. This argument, which has been the focus of my thesis so far, doubts the consistency of the central role of autonomy in Raz's system of ideas, which is committed to value pluralism. Furthermore, in this section I will also challenge Raz's arguments for the

centrality of autonomy in his conception of perfectionism. For the time being, however, this will be of secondary importance since the main purpose of this chapter is to identify possible points of contention and to lay the ground for the discussion in the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

In the third part of this chapter I will present Raz's revised harm principle, which is a key aspect of his liberal theory.

The fourth part will investigate Raz's conception of the autonomous agent, which is as closely related to his view of perfectionism as it is to his view on the relationship between autonomy and pluralism.

## **1. Perfectionism and Neutrality**

Raz is a liberal perfectionist. He explicitly argues against both the exclusion of the promotion of ideals<sup>199</sup> and the neutrality between the ideals promoted by the state.<sup>200</sup> That is, 'Raz argues that it is legitimate for the state to seek to promote the well-being of citizens in a way that includes it in the business of judging the value of particular ways of life'.<sup>201</sup> Raz develops his argument for perfectionism first by advancing a number of negative arguments against anti-perfectionism.

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<sup>199</sup> In Raz, J., The Morality of Freedom (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1986), pp. 134 - 162

<sup>200</sup> *ibid.* pp. 110 - 133

<sup>201</sup> Mulhall, S. and Swift, A.; Liberals and Communitarians [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.], (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 310



### *1.1. Perfectionism and the Overruling of Ideals*

Raz's first argument against anti-perfectionism is that perfectionism does not necessarily overrule some ideals in favour of others. The main argument used by anti-perfectionists for the exclusion of ideals is that 'foisting one's conception of the good on people offends their dignity and does not treat them with respect'.<sup>202</sup> Raz has a two-fold response to the above anti-perfectionist claim which appears in different parts in *The Morality of Freedom*.

His first, immediate reaction to the above anti-perfectionist argument is that, on the contrary, showing respect for persons entails treating one 'in accordance with sound moral principles' whereas 'one would be showing disrespect to another if one ignored moral considerations in treating him'.<sup>203</sup>

This response, however, can make sense only alongside a commitment to an objective ethical reality. The existence of such a commitment is evident in Raz's theory of well-being. When comparing the goals and lifestyles of a gambler and a farmer, Raz holds that 'A person who spends all his time gambling has, other things being equal, a less successful life, even if he is a successful gambler, than a livestock farmer busily minding his farm. Their self-interest may be equally served by their activities, but their well-being is not'.<sup>204</sup> Even though 'the reason is that they engage in what they do because they believe it to be a valuable, worthwhile activity', they can be mistaken regarding the

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<sup>202</sup> Raz, J., *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 157

<sup>203</sup> *ibid.* p. 157

<sup>204</sup> *ibid.* p.298

valuation that they put on the lifestyle they have chosen to follow. This is because 'to the extent that their valuation is mistaken it affects the success of their life'.<sup>205</sup>

The fact that the value attached to an ideal can be a *mistaken* judgement which misrepresents the true value of that ideal is a clear statement of a persuasion in an objective theory of value. This is important not only because Raz's objectivism is at the core of his system of ideas, but also because it indicates a clear-cut intention to stand up against the simple ethical relativist conception of morality which, as I have mentioned in the second and third chapters of the thesis, is often advanced against value pluralists. Furthermore, if one takes into account Raz's further conviction that one ought not to take ideals, systems of belief and cultures at their own estimation,<sup>206</sup> one can recognise why Raz sees the importance of ideals as dependant on their actual truth value and not as dependent on one's belief in that truth value. As Raz puts it regarding one's obligation to obey the directives of the state, 'the fact that the state *considers* anything to be valuable or valueless is no reason for anything. Only its being valuable or valueless is a reason'.<sup>207</sup> Nevertheless, there is no procedure that is generally acceptable for establishing what is

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<sup>205</sup> *ibid.* p.299. Raz's comparison between the value entailed in the lifestyles of a farmer and a gambler and his argument that the former is more valuable than the latter, is one that can be criticised in a number of ways. For instance, to what extent can a successful stock broker be considered a successful gambler? Maybe an argument can be made according to which the activities of the stock broker in town do not amount to anything socially valuable. Such a claim, however, can also be advanced against the value of the activities of a farmer since many of his techniques (fertilization, operation under conditions protected from competition etc.) are harmful to developing countries. These concerns have in common their pre-occupation with issues that are primarily tangible, thus leading the argument on which lifestyle is more worthwhile than the other to issues that do not directly relate to immediate ethical concerns – even though ultimately the argument might have to refer to ethical concerns (i.e. harming people in developing countries is wrong). These concerns, albeit being imperative for an overall view on the issue, are not going to pre-occupy me any further in the thesis. My discussion on whether and how comparisons such as the ones in focus are possible, as well as the extension of this discussion into value theory issues (in Chapters Five and Six) are going to be solely of a theoretical ethical nature.

<sup>206</sup> Apart from the example above which can be found in *The Morality of Freedom* this is also evident in Raz, J., 'Multiculturalism: A Liberal Perspective' in his *Ethics in the Public Domain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1994), pp. 170 - 191, and especially pp. 182 -183.

<sup>207</sup> Raz, J., *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 412, emphasis in original.

*truly* valuable. As a consequence, this is a point which I will revisit and discuss in depth over the remainder of the thesis.

What this entails for perfectionists, in any case, is that they 'do not have to argue that it is justifiable for the beliefs of some to overrule the beliefs of others; for the perfectionist ideals may enter politics not because people believe in them but because they are valid'.<sup>208</sup> That is, Raz holds that directives for the promotion, or the safeguarding, of valuable ideals within a state do not necessarily need the consensus of the subjects of the state in order for these directives to be considered legitimate.<sup>209</sup> The claim that directives are valuable *qua* their objective value and not because of inter-subjectivist grounds is a claim that leaves many issues unanswered. It makes a clear ontological statement with regards to values, but it does not make an epistemological statement with regards to the acquisition of knowledge about the values in question. As a consequence, the question of who decides what is true and on what explicit grounds, is a pressing and serious matter which I discuss mainly in Chapters Five and Six. For the time being my purpose is not to resolve, but to identify the aspects of Raz's theory that are problematic and to lay the ground for tackling them later in the thesis. Thus, for now it suffices to acknowledge the problem and to point out that Raz's perfectionist liberal theory is very different from Rawls' liberal theory in *Political Liberalism* where the consensus of the citizenry is at the core of the effective running of society and where the

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<sup>208</sup> Mulhall, S. and Swift, A.; *Liberals and Communitarians* [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.], (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 314

<sup>209</sup> Overall it can be said that for Raz, in order for a relatively just political authority to claim effective legitimacy over its subjects it will be desirable but *not necessary* for it to enjoy their consent since: 'consent represents merely one end of the spectrum in the myriad of processes and actions that lead...to the attitude of trust in one's government' [Raz, 'Government by Consent' in Raz, J.; *Ethics in the Public Domain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 369].

promotion of values – at least at face value, for it is questionable to what extent Rawls avoids perfectionism in his theory – must not be part of the public domain.

But, even if Raz is correct in arguing that the anti-perfectionist argument with regards to the overruling of ideas does not necessarily negate perfectionism, it still remains to be seen how it might be incorporated in political practice. One could make an even stronger case and claim, with some credit, that what really ought to matter most in our evaluation of the anti-perfectionist argument, which is that perfectionism necessarily overrules one's ideals for another's, is not so much its validity but its practicality; this is essentially Rawls' point in *Political Liberalism*. To be fair, Raz does set a number of criteria that a government has to fulfil for its action to be legitimate. However, it is rather the ability of governments to perform in the manner that Raz expects them to perform that is questionable.

Because of such complications, a very brief investigation into Raz's account of the delineation of the morally legitimate bounds of the government authority, and hence the promotion of valuable ideas by the authorities, will be helpful for two reasons. First, Raz's argument regarding one's obligation to obey the directives of the state is meant to support his claim that a perfectionist doctrine does not necessarily involve anti-liberal implications; second, it is a basis which is closely related to Raz's autonomy-based doctrine of freedom and many of its features will be relevant in my forthcoming investigations.

In the first part of *The Morality of Freedom* and elsewhere<sup>210</sup>, Raz attempts to develop a set of criteria that have to be fulfilled if obedience to the authority of a state's

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<sup>210</sup> For a brief encapsulation and some further explorations of Raz's arguments on the topic look at **Raz, J.**, 'The Obligation to Obey: Revision and Tradition' in **Raz, J.**; *Ethics in the Public Domain* (Oxford:

directives is to be morally obligatory. In a nutshell, Raz argues that there is no blind obligation to obey the directives of the state *qua* their quality of being authoritative directives. An 'agreement...to accept authority is binding...only if conditions rather like those of the *normal justification thesis* obtain'.<sup>211</sup> According to the *normal justification thesis* 'a person has authority over another person ... [when] the alleged subject is likely better to comply with reasons which apply to him (other than the alleged authoritative directives) if he accepts the directives of the alleged authority as authoritatively binding and tries to follow them, rather than by trying to follow the reasons which apply to him directly'.<sup>212</sup>

Raz's *normal justification thesis* essentially claims that government action is limited by two main conditions. First, authorities 'should act only where their intervention is likely to lead to greater conformity with those reasons that it is likely that subjects will not conform to if they do not intervene. Second, they should not intervene where it is more important that their subjects should decide for themselves than that they should get the right results'.<sup>213</sup> In order for government action to be legitimate, both of these conditions must be fulfilled.

For Raz, the normal justification thesis does not express the immense power of authorities and the entailed subsequent duty to obey the laws they construct. It rather reflects their limited role since such authorities are not there to set laws, which will reinforce new and independent considerations for their subjects. Government directives

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Clarendon Press, 1994) pp. 341 - 354; Raz, J., 'Government by Consent' in *ibid.*, pp. 355 - 369; and Raz, J., 'Authority, Law and Morality' in *ibid.*, pp. 210 - 237. For a more detailed formulation of Raz's view on the issue look at Raz, J., *The Authority of Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

<sup>211</sup> Raz, J., 'Authority, Law and Morality' in Raz, J.; *Ethics in the Public Domain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 214, emphasis mine.

<sup>212</sup> Raz, J., *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 53

<sup>213</sup> Raz, J., 'Facing Up: A Reply' in *Southern California Law Review*, (1989) vol. 62, p. 1231.

and promotions of goals and ideals are there to 'mediate between ultimate reasons and the people to whom they apply'.<sup>214</sup> When the rule of government deviates considerably from representing the reasons that apply to its subjects, one does not have a moral obligation to obey its command. So, the Ciceronian tendency, which echoes the rationalistic and monistic convictions of Platonism that the state should come before all, finds no quarter in Raz's pluralist and Aristotelian account.

Raz's account is very thorough and sophisticated and for the time being my limited presentation surely does not do it full justice. However, even if one assumes the soundness of Raz's theoretical argument on the matter, the anti-perfectionist claims still carry some weight since an anti-perfectionist, like the late Rawls, will feel uneasy about the fact that governments often misjudge what is valuable and what not – this was Mill's point even though he ended up arguing for a perfectionist liberal doctrine. Raz himself acknowledges this by writing that 'if it is likely that the government will not judge...matters correctly then it has no authority to judge them at all'.<sup>215</sup> Furthermore, he does recognise that his theory on the bounds of authority 'does not disguise the dangers...of fallibility of judgement, and uncertainty of purpose' that is often inherent in governmental practices.<sup>216</sup> As a consequence, perfectionists argue that governmental intervention should be limited not 'because we cannot know which ideals are valid, but because we cannot expect governments to act on those that are'.<sup>217</sup> Raz agrees that this argument 'justifies restricting the right of governments to govern' because of a concern

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<sup>214</sup> Raz, J.; 'Authority, Law and Morality' in Raz, J.; Ethics in the Public Domain (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 215

<sup>215</sup> Raz, J.; The Morality of Freedom, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 412

<sup>216</sup> *ibid.*, p. 427

<sup>217</sup> Mulhall, S. and Swift, A.; Liberals and Communitarians [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.], (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 316

for 'individual freedom and autonomy'.<sup>218</sup> As a consequence, 'a considered view of the defects of government...will lead to much greater freedom from governmental action' than a firm commitment to the promotion of valid ideals that idealism requires.<sup>219</sup> It is because of all this that, when pressed, Raz ends up acknowledging the seriousness of 'what more neutralist theorists have always taken as one of the most important starting points of liberal political thought' which is 'that in the imperfect world that we inhabit, the dangers of perfectionist politics are so widespread that liberalism should try to resist the conceptual and political attractiveness of perfectionism'.<sup>220</sup>

There are two concerns with respect to the above. On the one hand, it can be argued that Raz's argument could collapse into the anti-perfectionism that it tries to resist. On the other hand, if it does not wish to make concessions with respect to its expected role in government, it must be prepared to take on the cost of the serious externalities that perfectionism could entail in terms of the manner in which a government might promote values and conceptions of the good life without the consent of its subjects.<sup>221</sup> Depending on the nature of these externalities, they could range from being undesirable to being dangerous and coercive since one's personal freedom can be greatly restricted due to governmental interference.

To summarise, in this section I discussed Raz's first argument against anti-perfectionism and I concluded that the argument is not as convincing as Raz deems it to be. The reason for this is the claim that perfectionism is acceptable when the values

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<sup>218</sup> Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 428

<sup>219</sup> Brink, B.; *The Tragedy of Liberalism: an Alternative Defense of a Liberal Tradition*, (Albany, NY, The University of New York Press: 2000), p. 72

<sup>220</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> The idea of consent is another one the ambiguity of which I have to acknowledge but, nevertheless, resist from developing further.

promoted are objectively worthwhile. Such an assertion, however, is far from unambiguous since, as Brian Barry puts it, ‘no conception of the good can be justifiably held with a degree of certainty that warrants its imposition on those who reject it’.<sup>222</sup> Given the above, it might be the case that political scepticism, defined by Buffacchi as the claim that ‘no degree of certainty at the epistemological level can justify its imposition on those who reject this conception of the good’<sup>223</sup> is more persuasive than perfectionism. These concerns inevitably refer the discussion of Raz’s perfectionist argument to his theory of value with which I will deal extensively later in the thesis.

For the time being it suffices to say that, apart from theoretical concerns regarding the objective nature of values and how one could grasp them, concerns about the practical workings of politics give the late Rawls and other liberal theorists good reasons for preferring scepticism about intervention and promotion of values rather than perfectionism.

### *1.2. Perfectionism and Coercive Imposition*

Raz’s second negative argument against anti-perfectionism is that perfectionism, and the discriminatory promotion of values that it involves, does not entail coercive imposition. The anti-perfectionist position that Raz attacks with this argument is two-dimensional. Anti-perfectionists argue firstly that perfectionist policies must inevitably be directed by some groups against others and secondly that perfectionism must be coercive.

The latter argument claims that the coercive nature of perfectionism is unavoidable since people will always believe in different ideals. Whether valid or invalid,

<sup>222</sup> Barry, B.; *Justice and Impartiality*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 169

<sup>223</sup> Bufacchi, V.; ‘Political Scepticism: A Reply to the Critics’ in *Politics*, issue 23 (2), 2003, pp. 137-140.



one's beliefs play a very important role in the choice of lifestyle(s) one might wish to pursue.<sup>224</sup> Thus, the active promotion of some ideals and the discouragement of others will have to involve coercion. Raz finds these concerns 'real and important'.<sup>225</sup> Nevertheless, they have to ultimately be rejected since it is not the case that all perfectionist action is a coercive imposition of a particular type of lifestyle. Thus, perfectionist actions 'could be encouraging and facilitating action of the desired kind, or discouraging undesired modes of behaviour'.<sup>226</sup> Instances of such behaviour are 'conferring honours on creative and performing artists, giving grants or loans to people who start community centres, [and] taxing one kind of leisure activity, e.g., hunting, more heavily than others.'<sup>227</sup> Raz's view is that political actions like the ones described above, and which are undertaken for the pursuit of conceptions of the good, fall 'far short of the threatening popular image of imprisoning people who follow their religion, express their views in public, grow long hair, or consume harmless drugs'.<sup>228</sup> There are a number of issues at stake with respect to the above argument.

Firstly, the promotion of an ideal via indirect means, such as taxation or subsidy, alters the costs and/or benefits of a particular action. As Steven Mulhall and Adam Swift point out, 'the obvious way to think about the concept of coercion is in terms of the deliberate attaching of a sanction or penalty to a particular action: "if you do not cut your

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<sup>224</sup> It would be a mistake to indicate that people choose to pursue only one way of life. Even if many forms of life are incompatible with each other (e.g. a life of religious contemplation and a life of an active political figure), it's a fact of life that people often choose to pursue many different lifestyles. That is, not only do they experiment with different lifestyles over a long period of time, say one's lifetime, but they also choose to pursue different – and on occasion incompatible – lifestyles at the same time.

<sup>225</sup> Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 162

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*, p. 161

<sup>227</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> *ibid.*

hair, we will send you to prison" would be a paradigm example of a coercive threat'.<sup>229</sup> When one says instead that 'if you do not stop hunting, the state will tax you heavily', to use Mulhall and Swift's example, it is not the nature of the coercion or the threat that changes but the magnitude of it. Of course, 'the penalty of non-compliance is greater in the first case than in the second, but it is not obvious that this is a difference of quality rather than quantity, that it warrants calling the one coercion and the other not'.<sup>230</sup>

What one has to also consider, is that at the end of the day, taxation or subsidies are ultimately raised by coercive means. As a last resort, the penalty attached to non-payment of taxation is imprisonment so, 'when the state decides to tax some activities and subsidise others' it is 'using its coercive power to enforce its judgements about the relative merits of different activities'.<sup>231</sup> It has to be appreciated however, that the coercive means employed for the enforcing of taxation may not be the only – or, indeed, the major – problem. This is because for many liberals it is the *reason* for the coercive imposition of taxation to which they object and not the coercive imposition in itself. This, however, is a point which refers back to the issue of the legitimacy of the perfectionist overruling of ideas in a liberal pluralist context.

But, even if it is granted that taxation is a non-coercive sanction, it still goes against the anti-perfectionists' convictions. It deliberately alters the costs and benefits of a situation, thus tampering with one's decisions and course of action, which amounts to nothing less than disrespect for one's autonomy. State subsidies for the arts, for example, while not coercive, do influence one's decision of whether she might be involved in the

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<sup>229</sup> Mulhall, S. and Swift, A.; *Liberals and Communitarians* [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.], (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 321

<sup>230</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> *ibid.*, p. 322

arts or not. If a life with art is valuable, why are not people allowed to make that choice for themselves? Because, according to Raz, art is a valuable option, and as such, the state ought to actively promote it. Two concerns arise here. The first has to do with the ability of the governmental judgement to identify which ideals are valuable in order to promote them. This concern does not have to do with the ability of governments to come up with arrangements that may improve their judgement and ability to identify objective values with a greater proximity than they would otherwise. Governments could delegate to experts – as they, indeed, do – for scientific projects, public policy issues etc. so that their policy implementation is more informed. Furthermore, it could be argued that this is not a process that occurs only with the purpose of fulfilling a goal which has already been decided to be a worthwhile one. There are many instances, this argument would go, in which experts actually determine to a great extent the values which will direct the formulation of a certain policy initiative. Even in these cases, however, there is no guarantee that the delegation process will yield values which should be promoted. Moreover, if one is a Berlinian radical pluralist, there could be many conflicting true values at any one given point in time so that any decision by any government or authority cannot make an adequate claim for the promotion of one value instead of the other – the debate on abortion and the choice between the right to life and the right to choice comes to mind as an instance of this situation. Finally, the concern that governmental judgement is often inadequate in identifying valid ideals for promotion exemplifies the reasonable worry that many liberals express towards extended authority and imposition of values. As I have mentioned in the previous section of the chapter, apart from the political concerns about the manner in which governments actually do make perfectionist claims, there are a

number of ontological and epistemic concerns that relate to this issue and which I am going to discuss in subsequent chapters.

The second concern has to do with the suggestion that even if taxation and subsidies are not downright coercive, they are certainly manipulative. Raz concedes that if taxation and subsidies are indeed manipulative, then they would distort autonomy. On the one hand it is true that 'manipulation, unlike coercion does not interfere with a person's options'<sup>232</sup> – and hence does not distort autonomy in this sense – but, on the other hand 'it perverts the way that a person reaches decisions, forms preferences or adopts goals'.<sup>233</sup> In this sense 'it too is an invasion of autonomy whose severity exceeds the importance of the distortion it causes'.<sup>234</sup>

On top of that, Raz gives a further argument as to why it is not necessarily the case that the promotion of values is a coercive action which is aimed by one group at another. According to Raz, there are practical or functional reasons that one might have to take into consideration when considering perfectionist political action. Raz holds that political action 'may be taken in support of social institutions which enjoy unanimous support in the community'.<sup>235</sup> Perfectionist action in favour of such institutions may bring legal and administrative arrangements into line with them, facilitate their use by members of the community who wish to do so, and encourage the transmission of belief in their value to future generations'.<sup>236</sup> An instance of the above is, according to Raz, 'the

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<sup>232</sup> Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 377

<sup>233</sup> *ibid*, p. 378

<sup>234</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>235</sup> *ibid.*, p.161

<sup>236</sup> *ibid*.

significance of the legal recognition of monogamous marriage and prohibition of polygamy'.<sup>237</sup>

It seems to me that this argument is either outright wrong from the start or, at the very least, that it is not applicable in modern societies. It is very hard to find values or social institutions that enjoy the society's 'unanimous support' to which Raz refers to above. This observation is not only limited in modern multicultural societies since one can, with some credibility, argue that this has been the case for most societies in most time periods and in most places. It is especially, though, in contemporary societies that the 'several ways of life that may be found' in them 'are animated by different conceptions of the good life, which may overlap enough to make compromise possible, but which have too little in common'.<sup>238</sup> Moreover, as Raz is a value pluralist, he will have to accept that many of these different lifestyles are very likely to be incompatible with each other. In this case, the assumption of homogeneity is misguided. Moreover, Raz correctly argues, one could even envisage extreme cases where the possibility that perfectionist action could 'backfire by arousing...resistance leading to civil strife'.<sup>239</sup> It seems that perfectionist measures require a large measure of social consensus. When this consensus is absent, as in modern multicultural societies, the call is usually for 'freedom of government, so that the freedom of individuals will not be restricted'.<sup>240</sup> This view, which is expressed by Bert Van Den Brink, is also shared by Raz and it does not necessarily fit his overall system of ideas in an unproblematic manner.

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<sup>237</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> **Gray, J.;** *Two faces of Liberalism*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000) pp. 18-9

<sup>239</sup> **Raz, J.;** *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 429

<sup>240</sup> **Brink, B.;** *The Tragedy of Liberalism: an Alternative Defence of a Liberal Tradition*, (Albany, NY, The University of New York Press: 2000), p. 73

Despite the fact that the analysis so far been rather critical of Raz's arguments against anti-perfectionism, it has to be acknowledged that Raz's analysis touches on problems that the anti-perfectionist approach chooses to ignore. Specifically, Raz is correct in pointing out that 'perfectionism is the natural condition'.<sup>241</sup> And, indeed, there are promotions of valuable ideals that even the most vigorous anti-perfectionists would not dare to oppose; ideals such as an affordable and efficient health system and the prohibition of the commercial transactions of children. But, since this is the case, the issue here is again the extent to which Raz gives a qualitatively different account of liberalism from the one that is proposed by the anti-perfectionists. It seems to me that the difference between the two accounts is one of degree.

To conclude this section, I have established that Raz's argument that perfectionism does not necessitate coercive imposition is not fully convincing. This is because it appears to me that Raz effectively links the argument that perfectionism does not necessarily entail coercion with the claim that this is so because perfectionism should only apply to values that are true and on which there is unanimous agreement. Firstly, a radical value pluralist would be opposed to this proposition, since for her there are situations in life in which unanimous agreement on objectively worthwhile values is impossible. I will tackle this problem when I discuss the general issue of the compatibility between Raz's liberal perfectionism with his ethical pluralism in the next two chapters. Secondly, the idea of coercion in Raz is not fully developed and, although I am not going to deal with this well-worn and complex issue in the thesis, it has to be acknowledged as a point of vagueness in Raz's theory.

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<sup>241</sup> Raz, J., 'Facing Up: A Reply' in *Southern California Law Review*, 62 (1989), p. 1232

Furthermore, Raz's reference to the unanimous support with respect to which values are to be promoted by a perfectionist liberal regime, poses two very important challenges. Firstly, Raz has to establish the existence of such values and the ability of ethical agents to grasp them. I have highlighted the importance of this issue previously in the context of Raz's argument which holds that perfectionism does not necessarily overrule the ideals of one for the ideals of another. Secondly, and just as importantly, the unanimous support to which Raz so often refers as a condition for the promotion of values is nowhere to be found. This is especially the case in the context of modernity which has accentuated and exposed differences and lack of unanimity in most aspects of public life. This is another challenge to Raz's system of ideas to which I will refer extensively later on in the thesis.

### *1.3. Perfectionism and Pluralism*

Raz's third negative argument for perfectionism asserts that permitting governments to act on reasons that arise from moral values does not assume 'a rigid moral outlook' which allows only for 'one morally approved style of life'.<sup>242</sup> Raz's reasoning for this argument overlaps with the positive articulation of the concept of autonomy that lies at the heart of his liberalism.

The centrality of autonomy in Raz's liberal theory cannot be justified regarding its value in terms of some abstract universal right nor because people just desire to be autonomous. Regarding the former, this cannot be the case since Raz's liberal theory is not rights-based; regarding the latter, it cannot be so since – partly because of Raz's

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<sup>242</sup> Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 166

theory of well-being – Raz's liberalism is not want-regarding in content.<sup>243</sup> One can, on the contrary, better understand the role of autonomy in Raz's liberal theory when considering it alongside Raz's objective theory of value. For Raz, goals and lifestyles are worthwhile only to the extent that they fulfil objective moral qualifications. Thus, an 'autonomous life is only valuable if it is spent in the pursuit of acceptable and valuable' goals.<sup>244</sup>

It is useful to first investigate what this view does not imply. It does not imply, Raz argues, that a good life consists of a single set of options. This view arises from his notion of non-linear value pluralism.<sup>245</sup>

The merits as well as the shortcomings of non-linear value pluralism were examined elsewhere in the thesis,<sup>246</sup> so nothing more will be said of the issue for the time being. It suffices to use Raz's commitment to non-linear value pluralism in order to explain the consistency between his hostility towards anti-perfectionism and his endorsement of liberalism.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> For a detailed exposition of Raz's arguments on the issue look at *ibid.* Chapters Seven and Ten, pp. 165 - 192 and 245 - 263 respectively. The term 'want-regarding' is a term introduced by Brian Barry in *Barry, B.; Political Argument*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).

<sup>244</sup> *Raz, J.; The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 417

<sup>245</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 321 - 366

<sup>246</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>247</sup> For instance, those who believe in incommensurability think that one cannot compare, say, money with friends. Would one choose one million dollars or a best friend? Such a dilemma is incommensurable and involves a tragic choice [*Raz, J.; The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 335 – 340]. But consider the case where one would have to choose between one dollar and a best friend. With no doubt, the vast majority of people would prefer a best friend. So, it might well be the case that it's not that one cannot choose between one million dollars and a friend but that the choice is just much harder than choosing between a dollar and a friend. The difference between the two examples is not a difference in the *kind* of the dilemma; it is a difference in the degree or the intensity of the dilemma. For a general account of value-pluralism look at *Chang, R. [ed.]; Incommensurability, Incomparability and Practical Reason*, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997). Also, very informative is the discussion by John Skorupski in *Skorupski, J, 'Value-Pluralism' in Archard, D. Philosophy and Pluralism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 87-100.



My aim in this part of the chapter was to present some of Raz's arguments, so as to establish the existence of a number of characteristics in these arguments, and to identify problems which I go on to discuss in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. As a consequence, I identified the presence of moral objectivism in Raz's system of ideas which, nevertheless, is not particularly developed in *The Morality of Freedom*. Furthermore, I concluded that Raz's three anti-perfectionist arguments are not wholly compelling. Finally, I identified the presence of three problems in Raz's system of ideas which I will go on to examine in detail in the rest of the thesis. The first of these problems deals with the general issue of the compatibility between Raz's perfectionism and his commitment to a value pluralism. The second problem refers to aspects of Raz's theory of value, namely the manner in which Raz could argue for the exact nature of the objectivity of moral values. The third problem refers to the validity of Raz's belief in the unanimous agreement on these moral values, which his advocacy of perfectionism demands. I should note, however, that although these three problems can be seen as distinct ones they do, in fact, sometimes overlap. As this is the case, when I examine each of them I sometimes have to also draw on some aspects of the others.

## **2. Autonomy-based Perfectionism and Value-Pluralism**

During my discussion of Raz's first anti-perfectionist argument in the previous section, I paid tribute to his attempt to indicate the presence of an objective theory of value in his system of ideas. This is important since I will refer to the success of his attempt to commit liberal perfectionism to moral objectivity when I examine the compatibility

between Raz's liberal system of ideas and his theory of parochial values.<sup>248</sup> With regards to the same argument, I have also identified practical problems that have to do with one's obligation towards authoritative political directives. I have argued that the necessary consequences of Raz's approach are such that they would make many liberals feel uncomfortable. Another aspect with which some liberals might feel uncomfortable is the strong rationalism that is present in Raz's approach to politics and morality. In Chapter Six of the thesis, I will argue that this rationalistic tendency of Raz is at odds with a more conservative, but equally plausible, interpretation of his liberal theory.

With regards to Raz's second anti-perfectionist argument I disputed his view that the overruling of some ideals and the promotion of others by 'soft' means can be considered *prima facie* uncoercive. There were two reasons for this. The first is comprised by the familiar critiques against taxation that were advanced by social positivists like Hayek. The second is that the promotion of values disadvantages the priorities of one group over those of another. Certainly, Raz's refutation of this is more convincing for homogeneous than heterogeneous societies. The former however, are increasingly hard to find in modern pluralist – especially western democratic – societies and cultures. This problem can be seen as an extension of the general challenge faced by Raz's perfectionist liberalism; that is, the extent to which it can be considered internally coherent in light of the compatibility between its pluralistic instantiation and its aspiration for an objective moral theory.

Raz's third argument against anti-perfectionism tried to argue for the compatibility between perfectionism and pluralism and in this sense it was a further

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<sup>248</sup> Raz uses the terms parochial values and parochial concepts interchangeably indicating that there is no difference between the two. For the benefit of narrative and to avoid confusion I will be using the term parochial values only.

elaboration on the issues that had arisen from his second anti-perfectionist argument. The argument is that since objectivism is compatible with value pluralism, and since perfectionism is an extension of moral objectivism, then perfectionism is compatible with value pluralism. Even though the premise that objectivism is compatible with value pluralism has been dealt with extensively in the second and third chapters of the thesis, more will inevitably be said on this issue as my discussion progresses.

As autonomy is at the centre of Raz's liberalism, it is only natural that I lay bare both my interpretation of Raz's conception of autonomy as well as my understanding of its more specific role in his overall system of ideas. Thus, first I will examine why autonomy is important for Raz and then I will elaborate on Raz's conception of the autonomous agent. Finally, I demonstrate the problem of the compatibility between an autonomy-based liberalism and pluralism.

### *2.1. The Importance of Autonomy*

The most obvious explanation for why Raz ascribes so much importance to autonomy is that as he works within the liberal tradition, personal freedom and autonomy are very dear to him as they are dear to many liberals.

The other reason for the central place that autonomy has in Raz's liberalism has to do with the implicit recognition that the sum of one's utility-maximising acts is not actually utility-maximising. Very much like J. S. Mill before him, Raz acknowledges the existence of features of the good life such that it is part of living well that humans do not maximise utility directly. There are barriers to the monistic pursuit of utility which are not due to considerations of rights, but to the recognition of the existence of needs such

as the need for special relationships. As a matter of fact, Raz often goes as far as to say that not only is it not the case that human beings do not maximise utility directly, but that there are practices with regards to which any discussion of maximising utility is absurd and meaningless.<sup>249</sup>

This case is accurately presented in Raz's theory of well-being.<sup>250</sup> In a nutshell, he argues that personal well-being is not solely agent-relative or merely want-regarding, as he sees well-being as inseparable from morality. This is another instance of his commitment to an objective theory of value that puts into perspective his first condition of well-being according to which, a person's well-being can be promoted only (at least in modern contexts) with goals that have been accepted and chosen by this person, with the exception of biological needs. Moreover, there are three other conditions of personal well-being. The goals that people adopt should be chosen because they are believed to be independently valuable while the success of the goals that are undertaken is another important determinant of well-being. Finally, and most importantly for the issue of the centrality of autonomy in Raz's theory, one can have comprehensive goals which one could pursue successfully only if the said goals are 'based on existing social forms, i.e. on forms of behaviour which are in fact widely practiced in society'.<sup>251</sup>

This latter condition has various implications for Raz's system of ideas; not all of them accommodating the consistency between the different aspects of this system. Firstly, one might comprehend the condition of well-being in terms of the pragmatic claim that it is just inconceivable that one might try to pursue goals that are very different from the ones that are available in a given society. This pragmatism can lead to two

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<sup>249</sup> Raz, J.; *Value, Respect and Attachment*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2001)

<sup>250</sup> Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 288 - 320

<sup>251</sup> *ibid.*, p. 308

further directions that can be problematic for Raz's theory. The first is that of conservatism, which will be dealt with more extensively in Chapter Six. For now it suffices to acknowledge its presence as a potential direction that Raz's theory on well-being can lead us towards. This conservatism is deeply entangled with the strong contextualism which is also present in this aspect of Raz's theory of well-being. In this sense it is a very different conservatism from Kekes' that was presented in the second chapter of the thesis and was based on a very particular normative prioritisation of needs which was in turn based on a very specific conception of human nature.<sup>252</sup>

This is problematic for Raz since contextualism and social conservatism, which is reminiscent of Oakeshott's liberal conservatism, would not be expected to be part of a system of ideas that is as outspoken about its moral objectivist underpinnings as Raz's is, and which is also strongly liberal. Moreover, as an interpretative moral theory – along the lines of the Oakeshottian tacit theory of knowledge, or even the intuitionist approach to moral knowledge – can be used to back up Raz's liberal project, the extent to which an objective theory of value is vital for Raz's system of ideas becomes unclear. As a consequence of the above, it is uncertain on what grounds and how Raz might suggest that perfectionist political and social action ought to be undertaken with regards to the theoretical framework of his revised version of Mill's harm principle.<sup>253</sup>

With regards to moral knowledge, Raz's position has similarities to that of Aristotle. They both have a claim to moral objectivity and they are both pluralistic – Aristotle's moral theory less radically so than Raz's (irrespectively of whether the fulfilment of the latter's pluralist aspirations is successful). In addition, Raz recognises

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<sup>252</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>253</sup> Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 412-424

that his account of well-being is an Aristotelian one in that it 'consists in successful pursuit of worthwhile activities in a life free from repression of important aspects of one's personality'.<sup>254</sup> For Aristotle, however, the role of the state would be to enable the individual to realise his or her potential to achieve his or her individual good, an achievement impossible unless it is carried out within the context of the state. In order for this to be the case 'the *polis*...[must have] priority over the household and over any individual among us'.<sup>255</sup> Raz, on the other hand, would find the image of a state 'playing big brother [and] forcing people to do what it considers good for them against their will' extremely undesirable and damaging.<sup>256</sup> Some involvement nevertheless, as was evident from his three arguments against anti-perfectionism as well as from his revised version of the harm principle, is not only desirable but necessary. The problem, however, of the tension between the interpretative and the rationalistic elements in Raz's moral theory, which can be exemplified in terms of its impact on social and political action, is still prevalent.

Raz places his sense of deep value pluralism (justified on grounds of non-linearity) alongside his moral objectivity and the functional and the cultural arguments for the priority of autonomy. The ascription to such a radically pluralistic view can be considered as an acknowledgement of the fact that autonomy is not a necessary ingredient in good human lives; one can lead a flourishing life without it. Raz's

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<sup>254</sup> Raz, J., 'Facing Up: A Reply' in *Southern California Law Review*, 62 (1989), p. 1227

<sup>255</sup> Aristotle; *Politics* in Ackrill, J. L. [ed.]; *A New Aristotle Reader*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 1253a1, pp. 19-20.

<sup>256</sup> It is worthwhile to note that this view of Raz's contradicts the aspect of his theory of authority that holds that in order for a relatively just political authority to claim effective legitimacy over its subjects, it does not necessarily have to enjoy their consent. It would follow that the promotion of ideals - i.e. the manipulation, hence the coercion, of subjects to pursue some goals and not others (section 1.II above) – that go against the will of the subjects of an authoritative regime should not be a reason for an authority not to act, since what matters is the promotion of ideals *qua* validity and not *qua* belief or desire.

recognition of this fact appears in various scattered remarks in his writings<sup>257</sup> and is consistent with his functional and cultural arguments which contextualise the importance of autonomous lifestyles. As he puts it:

'...there can be non-repressive societies, and ones which enable people to spend their lives in worthwhile pursuits, even though their pursuits and the options open to them are not subject to individual choice. Careers may be determined by custom, marriages arranged by parents...I do not see that the absence of choice diminishes the value of human relations or the display of technical skills...scholarship, creativity or imaginativeness, which can be all encompassed in such lives'.<sup>258</sup>

What Raz effectively claims here is that there are worthwhile lifestyles which do not require autonomy as a necessary ingredient.

It would be a mistake to infer from the above that autonomy for Raz is a subjective value which does not affect the well-being of the person except instrumentally. Even though Raz does not hold that autonomy is a universal value, he seems to hold that it could be intrinsically valuable for agents in certain historical and cultural contexts. Such an approach could account for the objective worth, and as a consequence, the normative – even in a weak sense – prioritisation of autonomy. The extent to which one can make sense of Raz's theory of value will be examined in the next two chapters of the thesis. For the time being, it suffices to present Raz's view on the issue of the priority of autonomy and to outline the points of contention.

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<sup>257</sup> Raz, J.; 'Multiculturalism a Liberal Perspective' and 'Facing Diversity: The Case of Epistemic Abstinence' in Raz, J.; *Ethics in the Public Domain*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), pp. 170-191 and 60-69 respectively as well as in Raz, J., 'Facing Up: A Reply' in *Southern California Law Review*, 62 (1989).

<sup>258</sup> Raz, J., 'Facing Up: A Reply' in *Southern California Law Review*, 62 (1989), p. 1227

This leads my discussion to Raz's assertion in *The Morality of Freedom* that in modern societies pursuing an autonomous lifestyle is necessary. Gray identifies two arguments used by Raz, but not explicitly named as such by him, to substantiate this claim.<sup>259</sup>

The first, according to Gray, 'is a *functional* argument - the argument that skills of autonomous choice are functionally indispensable to personal well-being in a society marked by mobility in occupations and abode, innovation in technology and forms of work, and more or less incessant change in beliefs and mores'.<sup>260</sup> This is evident in Raz's claim that autonomy 'is an ideal particularly suited to the conditions of the industrial age and its aftermath with their fast changing technologies and free movement of labour. They call for an ability to cope with changing technological, economic and social conditions, for an ability to adjust...to come to terms with new scientific and moral views'.<sup>261</sup>

The second argument that Gray identifies in Raz 'is a *cultural* argument - the argument that autonomous choice is indispensable to the well-being of persons whose cultural tradition has inculcated a particular self-conception'.<sup>262</sup>

The two arguments, Gray argues, do not appear independently from each other; on the contrary it is very often the case that they overlap in that 'Raz argues that even the well-being of those who lack the understanding of themselves as autonomous agents requires the skills of autonomy, if they live in a society in which most other people have

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<sup>259</sup> Here I am indebted to Gray's very insightful analysis of Raz's theory in **Gray, J.; *Two faces of Liberalism***, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000) and in **Gray, J.; *Mill on Liberty: A Defence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.**, (London: Routledge, 1996), especially pp. 96 -104 and pp. 147 - 158 respectively.

<sup>260</sup> **Gray, J.; *Mill on Liberty: A Defence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.**, (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 151

<sup>261</sup> **Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom***, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 369-370

<sup>262</sup> **Gray, J.; *Mill on Liberty: A Defence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.**, (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.151-2



that self-understanding'.<sup>263</sup> Furthermore, it is rather unclear on which argument Raz puts most weight. Gray's observation is very accurate since, indeed, on the one hand Raz claims that autonomy is particularly suited to the conditions 'in modern industrial societies', but on the other he holds that 'it would be wrong to identify the ideal with the ability to cope with the shifting dunes in modern society' for 'autonomy is an ideal of self-creation'.<sup>264</sup> The validity of Gray's observation is enhanced by Raz's endorsement of the idea that autonomy has been a feature of the good life even in non-modern contexts. Even though for Raz autonomy is not a *necessary* ingredient of the good life in non-modern societies, he still holds that it is an ingredient which *could* be found in valuable lifestyles which are situated in non-modern societies. For Raz, 'there were autonomous people in many past periods, whether or not they themselves or others around them thought of this as an ideal way of being'<sup>265</sup> while for him 'the value of autonomy is a fact of life' and it is ultimately the case that 'those who live in an autonomy-enhancing culture can prosper only by being autonomous'.<sup>266</sup> An important omission in Raz's exposition here is the fact that there are lifestyles which entail the pursuit of values which are actually incompatible with autonomy. Moreover, if one is autonomous in a non-autonomous environment, there might be repercussions against one's well-being despite Raz's claim that 'the value of autonomy is a fact of life'. All these issues add weight to Gray's previously mentioned observation both with regards to the existence of the two different arguments in favour the priority of autonomy in Raz's system of ideas, as well as with regards to the ambiguity in terms of which argument takes priority.

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<sup>263</sup> *ibid.*, p.152

<sup>264</sup> Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 370

<sup>265</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 394

It appears to me, nevertheless, that the question regarding which argument has ultimately more weight is not of major importance for Raz. Apart from the role that the substance of these arguments has in supporting Raz's liberal conclusions, the organic role they have for his overall project is of greater importance. This role is exemplified in that by arguing for the importance of autonomy in western societies, Raz contextualises his liberal theory so that its claim to universality is severely restricted.

## *2.2. The Functional Argument*

The functional argument – the claim that autonomy is a necessary instrument for leading a good life in an autonomous society – has been vehemently criticised by Bhikhu Parekh.<sup>267</sup> Parekh's main criticism is that the functional argument is empirically mistaken. He notes that many Asian countries have adapted to technological, economic and social change without embracing a lifestyle that centres on personal autonomy.<sup>268</sup> Furthermore, he points out to the successful lives that many Asians are leading and have led in the west without fully adopting western values of autonomy or a western conduct of life. Raz's arguments seem to take for granted that the minority communities whose ways of life do not prescribe to liberal values will have to assimilate to the liberal majority cultures that host them.

Here, however, one may come to Raz's defence and recognise that it is reasonable to claim that Asians living in Britain tend to live more autonomous lives than their counterparts in, say, China. Maybe they have not adopted western values of autonomy as

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<sup>267</sup> In Gray, J.; *Two Faces of Liberalism*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), pp.97-8

<sup>268</sup> In Parekh, B.; 'Superior People: The Narrowness of Liberalism from Rawls to Mill' in *Time Literary Supplement*, 25 February 1994

fully as their fellow westerners have done, but they are certainly more prone to these western values of autonomy than the Asians living in China. But, again, even if one is conciliatory enough to partly accept the above counter-argument, it is crucial to point out that the validity of this argument is dependent on complex empirical conclusions of a social nature. Raz's functional argument can still be proven indefensible under further empirical investigations.<sup>269</sup> So even if it is not plainly mistaken, as it stands, the functional argument is inadequate in substantiating Raz's claim for the importance to lead and promote an autonomous lifestyle which, in Raz's opinion, is better suited to promote well-being in modern liberal societies.

Moreover, Gray argues that it seems that 'the background idea of Raz's account of autonomy is a society in which the majority accepts its value, but in which there are minorities that do not'.<sup>270</sup> Raz pictures modern society as predominantly liberal with small enclaves of minorities. In spite of the fact that they do not honour liberal values and that the autonomy-based liberal argument that Raz advances might not apply to them at present<sup>271</sup>, he claims they will eventually have to adopt an autonomous lifestyle if they are to flourish. I think that not only is this not necessarily the case but, as has already been shown, it also seems that Raz's view on the nature of modern societies is empirically ungrounded. In fact, the diversity of modern societies is such that it refutes Raz's conception of their homogeneity. Furthermore, there is very little evidence that guarantees or even hints that they will converge on a 'liberal mono-culture'. As Gray puts

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<sup>269</sup> For a very detailed analysis on the issue look at **Visram, R.**; *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History*, (London, Pluto Press: 2002) especially Ch. 9. It is worthwhile to mention that Visram's conclusion is that Asians in Britain have been and still are an 'integrated and richly diverse community, with plural identities' which are engaged in a variety of professions and careers' (p. 299).

<sup>270</sup> **Gray, J.**; *Two Faces of Liberalism*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 98

<sup>271</sup> This is evident in Raz, J.; 'Multiculturalism: A Liberal Perspective', in his *Ethics in the Public Domain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1994), p. 181n. and p. 186n.

it, 'if history is our guide, there is no enduring connection between becoming modern and valuing personal autonomy'.<sup>272</sup> So the functional argument seems to fail in substantiating the crucial importance of autonomous lifestyles in modern societies.

If one, however, were to assume for the sake of the argument that autonomy is indeed crucial in leading successful lifestyles in modern western societies, where would this leave Raz's argument for the centrality of autonomy? At best he would have made a valid contextual point that is neither strongly normative nor universal.

The proposition according to which the functional argument might still be valid in the sense that in modern societies autonomy is essential so as to enable individuals to get along with others who are different, is a view which is subject to two mistakes. Firstly, it does not appreciate the fact that acceptance of autonomy might contradict some of the fundamental values of the individuals in question. As a consequence, a commitment to a Razian conception of autonomy would imply that some of these values would have to be abandoned. Asserting that this is inescapable is a valid explanation of this situation, but only insofar as this assertion is followed by the proposition that Raz's liberal perfectionism argues for the predominance of a specific set of values that are particular and contextual. This effectively amounts to an advocacy of *some* sort of conservatism. The exact content of this conservative tendency in Raz's thought – as well as its co-existence with a more radical trait – will be the subject matter of the sixth chapter. Secondly, I find it implausible to make a *modus vivendi* argument out of Raz's conception of autonomy. The content of the latter – which I will examine in the third section of the present chapter – is too Aristotelian and perfectionist to allow for the view that the role of Raz's conception of autonomy is to just help people get along.

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<sup>272</sup> Gray, J.; Two Faces of Liberalism, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 98

As a consequence, the functional argument which Gray identifies in Raz's liberal theory is, at best, subject to further empirical investigation and evidence. At worst, it seems that the role that Raz has ascribed to the idea of autonomy fails to meet his high expectations in terms of its significance in modern societies.

### *2.3. The Cultural Argument*

The cultural argument says, essentially, that autonomy is necessary for people whose liberal cultures have habituated them to making their own choices.<sup>273</sup>

If that were the case, the cultural argument would not apply to cultures that do not have a liberal majority. This consequence of the cultural argument is reminiscent of the last condition of Raz's theory of well-being, which pays tribute only to goals that are available within a social context. So, as a person must choose his personal goals from socially available options, and since autonomy applies only in the context of western, already liberal societies, the priority of autonomy cannot be universalised. Hence, it appears to me that Raz would have to subscribe to a prescription regarding political action according to which, if a person lived in an illiberal society and were not allowed to choose a given valuable lifestyle – even if she so desired – because it is not part of the value fabric of that society, then nothing should be done to accommodate this person's goal in terms of the promotion of the conditions of autonomy that would enable her to pursue her chosen lifestyle. An example of such a situation is the prohibition of gay marriage in many western liberal modern democracies.<sup>274</sup> For my purposes here it is of

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<sup>273</sup> Gray, J.; *Mill on Liberty: A Defence* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 155

<sup>274</sup> Here I assume that gay marriage can be a valuable lifestyle. I discuss issues of value theory in the next three chapters of the thesis. Also, here as well as in a number of previous instances, I refer and make use of

little importance whether the aforementioned description of political action is one which, in fact, closely represents the manner in which policy might be enacted in the real world. What is more important is the fact that Raz's theory is incapable of making a strong normative moral case for the advocacy of a policy which would promote conditions of autonomy under such circumstances. This implication, however, seems to not be in line with the strong normative demands made by Raz's revision of Mill's harm principle.<sup>275</sup>

Moreover, Gray argues that the cultural argument 'does not establish the value of autonomy even for such persons [ones who are habituated to a conception of themselves as authors of their own lives], since they may well be mistaken in their beliefs about the contribution made to their well-being by autonomous choice-making'.<sup>276</sup>

It must be acknowledged that this latter objection to the cultural argument is consistent with Raz's moral realism and his objective view of well-being. For Raz, as well as for other liberals, people's views are valid in virtue of their objective truth value. This latter rationalistic tendency in Raz's theory is further enhanced by his claim that cultures must not be taken at their own estimation. This must surely be 'no less true of liberal cultures whose claims about the role of autonomy in the well-being of their members we are wise not to take at their face value'.<sup>277</sup> The presence of a deep sense of rationalistic radicalism is very potent in the remarks above and it is uncertain to what extent it can be squared with the existence of the conservative thread in Raz's system of ideas.

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the idea of modern societies. The concept of modernity is a very widely and vigorously debated one and a specific clarification or definition of it is well beyond the scope of the present work. I have been using the term modern – and will continue to use it – in a common sense manner. Challenges on whether some societies meet my use of the term modern will have to be dealt with on an individual basis.

<sup>275</sup> Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 420-424

<sup>276</sup> Gray, J.; *Mill on Liberty: A Defence* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 155

<sup>277</sup> *ibid.*

One way of going about the issue is by attributing to Raz's view a positivist account of societal development and the role of autonomy in it. But, as Gray correctly points out, this would entail the acceptance of a 'Eurocentric history of philosophy, according to which modernisation entails the acceptance of western individualist values'.<sup>278</sup>

The burden placed on the cultural argument by the above issues is too strong to withstand. When pressed, it seems that Raz cannot make an adequate case for the cultural point regarding the priority of autonomy and he has to resort back to the claim that autonomy is *needed* in western liberal contexts. So, the cultural argument collapses into the functional one, which was shown to be inadequate for the fulfilment of Raz's theoretical ambitions.

In this second section of the chapter I have argued in favour of Gray's identification in Raz's liberal perfectionism of the functional and cultural arguments. Gray argues that these arguments are flawed and cannot substantiate the perfectionist essence of Raz's liberalism in terms of the promotion of autonomy. I have presented a number of defences in Raz's favour and against Gray's but to no avail since Gray's objections seem to prevail. On the one hand, Raz's argumentation relied too much on empirical observations which were either unfounded or, at the very best, subject to further investigation – and as consequence not strongly normative. On the other hand, Raz's theory of value comes into play and affects his arguments frequently. His value theory is ambiguous, not least because of his commitment to value pluralism and his

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<sup>278</sup> *ibid.*, p.156

simultaneous aspiration to moral objectivity.<sup>279</sup> This ambiguity inevitably spreads to his arguments regarding liberal perfectionism and the primacy of autonomy that it entails. Also, I referred to the existence of a conservative tendency in Raz's theory which further hinders his aim for strong normative political directives. These issues of Raz's theory of value and the conservatism of his liberal theory will be central among the issues that I will discuss in the remainder of the thesis.

So far, I have not talked of autonomy in a manner that investigates directly and in detail Raz's comprehensive theory of it. Instead, I have talked about the *position* of autonomy in Raz's more general liberal perfectionist framework. In the next section I will go on to examine the content of Raz's conception of the autonomous agent. It is true that some aspects of what autonomy is, and of when one can be said to be an autonomous agent, have been implicit in the discussion so far. However, a more systematic evaluation of the issue will delineate the underpinnings of Raz's liberalism and put in better perspective the arguments that I have presented above as well as the ones which I am going to present.

Before that, however, it will be useful to explain more clearly Raz's revision of the harm principle since it is an aspect of his theory which is both important and to which I have already referred to.

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<sup>279</sup> I have referred to the relationship between value pluralism and moral objectivity in the second chapter of the thesis.



### 3. The Revised Harm Principle

Raz's revised version of the Millian harm principle is the main exemplification of his liberal perfectionist theory. Even though aspects of it have been implicit in my discussion so far it will be useful to explicitly, if briefly, state my understanding of it.

Mill's harm principle states that the only justification for coercively interfering with a person is to prevent him from harming others. Raz thinks that this is a very narrow conception of harm. Roughly speaking one can be said to harm another when 'one's action makes the other person worse off than he was or is entitled to be in a way which affects his future well-being'.<sup>280</sup>

Obviously, Mill's harm principle makes normative demands since, if it did not, it would be a formal principle lacking specific concrete content and could not lead to policy conclusions. Consequently, if coercive interventions are justified on the grounds of the harm principle, then they are interventions used to enforce morality. But why, asks Raz, stop with the prevention of harm and not enforce the rest of morality?

Indeed, Raz's view on respectful treatment of individuals, as one which entails their treatment according to moral demands, urges Raz to argue from a perfectionist perspective. This means that he has to hold that if morality is not maintained and promoted, people are harmed. As a consequence, 'governments should promote the moral quality of the life of those whose lives and actions they can affect'.<sup>281</sup> In order for this concession not to amount to a rejection of the harm principle, since the 'common conception of the principle' is that its function is to 'curtail' the governmental enforcement

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<sup>280</sup> *ibid.*, p. 414

<sup>281</sup> *ibid.*, p. 415

of morality, the principle must be modified.<sup>282</sup> Raz suggests a principle that 'is deliverable from a morality which regards personal autonomy as an essential ingredient of the good life, and regards the principle of autonomy, *which imposes duties on people to secure for all conditions of autonomy*, as one of the most important moral principles'.<sup>283</sup>

These autonomy-based duties never justify coercion where there is no harm. Still, the above principle implies that governments have a responsibility to provide the conditions of autonomy for people who lack them. If that is the case then it is wrong to view the duties of governments only under the prism of negative freedom. Sometimes, Raz argues, 'failing to improve the situation of another is harming him'.<sup>284</sup> As a consequence, in order to promote autonomy the government is allowed via the revised harm principle to use coercion both in order to prevent harm and in order to enable the prescription of actions which are required to safeguard any one of the conditions of autonomy. Since one of the conditions of autonomy is the existence of an 'adequate range of valuable options',<sup>285</sup> the harm principle, argues Raz, permits 'and even requires' governments to create morally valuable opportunities, and to eliminate repugnant ones.

This is an ingenious revision of the harm principle, although it is hard to qualitatively differentiate it from the familiar discussions about what is entailed in the ambiguous concept of harm.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> *ibid.*, p. 415

<sup>283</sup> *ibid.*, p.415, emphasis is mine.

<sup>284</sup> *ibid.*, p.416

<sup>285</sup> I develop Raz's view of autonomy in greater detail in the fourth section of the present chapter.

<sup>286</sup> There is a plethora of work on the concept of harm, the difference between harm to oneself and harm to others, the difference between offense and harm, as well as the application of harm to morality. See, for instance, **Fitzjames Stephen, J.**; *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, **White, R.J. [ed.]**, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1967), **Feiberg, J.**; *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law, Vol. 1: Harm to Others*, (New York, Oxford University Press: 1987), **Brown, D.G.**; "Mill on Liberty and Morality", *Philosophical Review*, 81 (1972), pp. 133-158, **Rees, J.C.**; *John Stuart Mill's "On Liberty"*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press,

Ingenious though it is, it is a revision of the harm principle which is far from flawless. By espousing a rather interventionist idea of the state and supporting intervention for the sake of autonomy Raz seems to be going contrary to his liberal roots. As has been noted, he himself commented that a 'big brother' state is undesirable and potentially hazardous.<sup>287</sup> Nevertheless, he now advances an argument that undermines his initial claims on the repulsion of a strong state and thus opposes one of the most fundamental beliefs of most liberals. Furthermore, this commits Raz to a view that favours a rather strong form of paternalism – which it is unlikely he would ultimately wish to adopt.<sup>288</sup>

Finally, and most importantly, the revised version of the harm principle that Raz offers fails to meet his own specifications. The revision of the harm principle was in part the result of an attempt to construct a 'sound practical principle to guide governmental action'.<sup>289</sup> But, it is questionable whether the harm principle in its revised version is any more able to yield balanced judgements about autonomy than Mill's principle. If the revised version of the harm principle includes incommensurability, it seems that balanced judgements about the level of overall autonomy are not possible. In such a case, the revised version will be as hard to apply as Mill's version – if not harder. Apart from the actual application of the normative demands of the revised harm principle, however, the normative nature of the said demands can be disputed because of the failure of the functional and cultural arguments to make strong normative requirements. This is an

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1989), **Hart, H.L.A.**; *Law, Liberty and Morality*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1962), **Gray, J. & Smith, G.W. [eds.]**; *J.S. Mill's "On Liberty" in Focus*, (London, Routledge: 1991).

<sup>287</sup> In *ibid.*, p.412

<sup>288</sup> In *ibid.*, pp. 422-3, he refuses to adopt a general pro- or anti- paternalistic approach.

<sup>289</sup> **Raz, J.**, 'Facing Up: A Reply' in *Southern California Law Review*, 62 (1989), p. 1229n

issue, however, to which I return in my discussion of Raz's theory in Chapter Six, where I elaborate on its radical and conservative traits.

#### 4. The Autonomous Agent: The Three Conditions of Autonomy

Accounts of what it is to be free and autonomous abound. Sartre held an open view of autonomy in which the idea of the use of reason to settle dilemmas is dismissed; for Sartre, beings were essentially 'condemned to be free'.<sup>290</sup> Rawls advocates the Kantian interpretation of freedom according to which one acts freely and autonomously when one acts 'from principles that we would consent to as free and equal rational beings'<sup>291</sup>, that is, from principles that we would consent to were we to be in the 'original position'<sup>292</sup>. A close reading of Mill's *On Liberty*<sup>293</sup> reveals a much more complicated picture since one can elucidate no less than four different conceptions of freedom from his writings: 'negative freedom, rational self-direction, autarchy and autonomy'<sup>294</sup>. This is done in a way that a person enjoying the last possesses the three previous modes of freedom as well.<sup>295</sup> Like Mill, it is to Raz's credit that he realises that the issue of an agent's autonomous status is a multidimensional question of much difficulty.

For a start, if one is to be an autonomous agent, one should be able to be 'a maker or author of his own life', that is 'he must have the mental abilities to form intentions of a

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<sup>290</sup> Sartre, J. P.; *Being and Nothingness*, (London: Routledge, 1958), pp. 433 - 556, especially 504 - 509

<sup>291</sup> Rawls, J.; *A Theory of Justice* [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.], (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, [1999]), p. 453

<sup>292</sup> *ibid.*, §4: p. 15 -19

<sup>293</sup> Mill, J.S.; *On Liberty and Other Essays*, edited by Gray, J., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) pp. 62-82

<sup>294</sup> Gray, J.; *Mill on Liberty: A Defence* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 77

<sup>295</sup> For more on this look at the very insightful discussion on Mill's theory of individuality in *ibid.*, pp. 70-89

sufficiently complex kind, and plan their execution'.<sup>296</sup> The possession of mental abilities is a necessary but, of course, not a sufficient condition for fulfilling the conditions of Razian autonomy. Another condition of autonomy is freedom from coercion. Coercion prohibits autonomy in two ways. First, 'it reduces the coerced person's available range of options below adequacy' – more will be said of one's adequate range of options shortly. Furthermore, 'loss of options through coercion is deemed to be a greater loss of autonomy than a similar loss brought about by other means. That is why slaves are thought to lack autonomy even if they enjoy a range of options which, were they free, would have been deemed sufficient'.<sup>297</sup> Manipulation, for Raz, does not interfere with people's options but it 'perverts the way' a person 'reaches decisions'<sup>298</sup> and to that extent he holds that manipulation 'too is an invasion of autonomy whose severity exceeds the importance of the distortion it causes'.<sup>299</sup> Here Raz touches again on the debate regarding the issue of coercion and manipulation. The extent to which manipulation actually entails coercion as well as the extent to which manipulation is entailed in many forms of social interaction are very ambiguous issues. It may be true that one may be able to give some very general guiding principles with respect to the cases where manipulation is actually coercive or where social interaction entails manipulative elements. However, the decisions on these ambiguous and difficult cases to which I refer to above are the ones that often define and help establish social trends. As a consequence, Raz's view is subject to further clarifications since there is much more to be said about it in terms of the crucial issue of the boundaries of both of the above concepts. The clarification of these boundaries,

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<sup>296</sup> Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 372

<sup>297</sup> *ibid.*, p. 377

<sup>298</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> *ibid.*

however, is beyond the scope of the present thesis as a preoccupation with this vast topic will prevent the development of the arguments that I have set to address in this work. As a result, the acknowledgement of this issue concerning Raz's first condition of autonomy will suffice.

The possession of mental capabilities and the freedom from coercion – or manipulation – are two necessary and rather uncontroversial preconditions of autonomy. They are, nevertheless, even when they are put together, still not sufficient in spelling out a full account of what it is to be an autonomous agent.

A third, very important precondition of autonomy is that the autonomous person needs an *adequate* range of *valuable* options to choose from. It is crucial to stress that for Raz, it is not enough that a person can choose from just any adequate range of options. In order for the third condition of autonomy to be fulfilled, the available range of options has to be a *worthwhile* one. Raz is here referring to the creation of nothing less than an environment for action. He thinks that autonomy requires a choice between *good* options because he regards the choice between good and evil as no choice at all. In Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice*, Alexander, the main character of the film, is faced with the choice between abandoning all that he holds dear – his friends, family, house and normal life – and experiencing nuclear war and the subsequent death of his loved ones. Tarkovsky's take on Alexander's eventual choice for withdrawal and abandonment, may be akin to Sartre's existential take on freedom to which I have referred to at the beginning of the chapter. For Raz however, Alexander is not choosing autonomously if he chooses the option of withdrawal, for his choice is forced.

It is also worthwhile noticing that the argument for the availability of valuable options as a condition of autonomy is consistent with Raz's convictions as they are expressed elsewhere in his liberal theory – such as his commitment to an objective theory of value. Despite – or because of – the fact that he is a value pluralist, he does not embrace relativism or subjectivism. Instead, as already mentioned, he is committed to an objective theory of value which, as I have discussed in the second chapter of the thesis, he is right to insist can be compatible with value pluralism.

Moreover, Raz's claim that autonomy should include an adequate range of valuable options is consistent with his argument of plural perfectionism. The mere availability of a range of any kind of options is not sufficient to establish Raz's claim. One can envisage a situation in which a person has to choose between a range of bad options and one good option. In this situation Raz would claim that the agent is not choosing autonomously.

Raz is right in asserting that in order for a person to be autonomous, she would have to be able to choose from among a range of valuable options since one can easily envisage a situation in which one has an adequate range of options to choose from, but the majority of which are evil, immoral or unworthy. It can hardly be the case that such a person is an autonomous agent.

The question however arises of whether it should also be the case that one should make evil and repugnant actions available so that one might have an even bigger range of overall choices. There are a number of arguments in support of such view. For instance, by being able to choose between an adequate range of options, some of which are valuable while some others are not, one will have the chance to refine one's moral

judgement through choice. Furthermore, people often test and prove themselves by choosing good rather than evil. In both of the above cases, repugnant options have a worthwhile role since they develop the mental capabilities and the capacity of human beings for moral contemplation through choice and judgements between good and bad. Raz would resist such a view. His counter-argument being that if one does away with the repugnant options, the overall range of options might be curbed, but the negative significance of such a reduction in the personal autonomy of the agent would be minimal since 'autonomy requires the availability' of 'morally acceptable actions' only.<sup>300</sup>

But I think that since Raz recognises the value of autonomy, he also ought to recognise that the autonomy to choose from a range of options that include repugnant ones would contribute to the development of certain moral virtues which could not be otherwise developed. Since Raz's liberalism does not rest on utilitarian claims and since Raz is a value pluralist, he ought to recognise the desire of some persons to develop their moral stature by having the autonomy to choose between both evil and good options.

The paternalistic issue that arises from the restriction of the availability of choices to only the ones that are worthy is also addressed by the reasonable claim that Raz's objective theory of value is not radically pluralistic. This criticism touches on the question of whether an autonomy-based perfectionism is consistent with value-pluralism, an issue that I have discussed extensively in the previous chapter. Even though Raz tries to give an 'open' and not very hierarchical conception of autonomy, his endorsement of personal autonomy as the value which should be prioritised points towards a hierarchical objective theory of value. As a consequence, liberal perfectionism is compatible with restricted versions of value pluralism.

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<sup>300</sup> *ibid.*, p.381



Moreover, even if Raz's view on the availability and promotion of worthy options is consistent with his objective theory of value, this objective theory of value is, at the end of the day, never explained. Even if Raz believes in the true, objective validity of some options and in the moral repugnance of some others, he does not give us a set of criteria with the aid of which we would be able to identify worthy options from unworthy ones. How is one to identify which options are good and which not?

The answer, according to Raz, lies in the recognition that social conventions and social forms play a deciding role both in setting the value of a goal and in determining its availability. The truth of this view, to which I have also referred to previously in this chapter, will be examined in the following chapters in the context of one of the two grand problems in Raz's theory that have been evident in my discussion so far and which I summarize below.

## **5. Conclusion: The Problems**

In the first part of the chapter I examined Raz's three arguments against anti-perfectionism. In the process of doing so I identified Raz's advocacy of an objective theory of value, while I deemed that the three arguments in question are unconvincing. Even though this does signify a challenge for Raz's liberal theory, it is a challenge that relates to two deeper and interrelated problems in liberal perfectionism, which I will discuss extensively in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. These problems are, firstly, the ambiguities that arise from his theory of value and, secondly, his assumptions about unanimous moral agreement.

In the second section, I argued for the validity of Gray's identification of the functional and the cultural arguments in Raz's liberal system of ideas. Furthermore, Gray's criticism of the arguments in question was persistent and difficult to defend against. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, the truth of the functional and the cultural arguments is subject to further empirical evidence; this is an aspect to which I will refer no further. Secondly, these arguments are closely related to aspects of Raz's theory of value and as a consequence, they suffer from the ambiguities to which I have referred to in the first section of the chapter. These ambiguities are partly the result of Raz's simultaneous commitment to both moral objectivism and pluralism and to his assumptions on moral agreement. Finally, it is in this section that I also identified the possibility of the existence of a conservative trait in Raz's liberal system of ideas. Moreover, during my further discussion regarding the element of conservatism in Raz's system of ideas, I will also revisit the issue of the role and nature of the functional and cultural arguments in Raz's liberalism.

In the third section of the chapter, I presented Raz's revision of the harm principle, which is central in his argument for the obligation of the state to promote autonomous conditions.

In the fourth section of the chapter I presented Raz's theory of autonomy. This, along with the presentation in the previous three sections of my interpretation of the other aspects of Raz's ideas, was crucial since I will often refer back to them in my discussions henceforth. Furthermore, by discussing Raz's idea of autonomy I highlighted again the prevalence of the challenges that Raz's liberalism faces in terms of its ambiguous theory of value. Also, the importance of social conventions in the Razian conception of

autonomy further highlight both the ambiguity of his value theory – which seems to oscillate between universals and particulars – and the conservative tendency of his liberalism.

There are two main directions towards which Raz's theory can be improved or clarified so as to meet the challenges posed by these problems. The first has to do with the compatibility between his radical pluralist aspirations and his tendency to want to not just promote but also prioritize autonomy. The second has to do with the exact nature of his objective theory of value which is both ambiguous in terms of its content as well as, in some instances, incompatible with the aims of his liberal project.

The solution I have already proposed to the first problem is an instantiation of my general argument in the thesis regarding the possibility of compatibility between different pluralisms and different liberalisms. However, since liberal perfectionism is one of my main focuses in the thesis, I will complement my discussion in the previous chapter with a few more remarks regarding the compatibility between liberal perfectionism and pluralism. Moreover, these remarks will lead the discussion into the second problem which regards Raz's theory of value.

The solution to this problem necessitates the clarification of Raz's value theory in two different ways. Firstly, in terms of the clarification of the exact nature of the value of autonomy, as at times Raz refers to it as socially dependent while at times he refers to it as objectively valuable. Secondly, the previously mentioned ambiguities of Raz's theory of value have to be cleared up. In doing so, the problem of moral agreement will be solved, while at the same time the relation between liberal pluralism and conservatism – and at some instances radicalism – will be clarified.

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## LIBERAL PERFECTIONISM, RADICAL PLURALISM AND PAROCHIAL VALUES IN RAZ'S LIBERALISM

### 1. Weak and Strong Pluralism in Raz's Liberal Perfectionism

Raz defines 'weak moral pluralism' as 'the view that there are various forms and styles of life which exemplify different virtues and which are incompatible'<sup>301</sup> and he differentiates it from 'strong moral pluralism'.<sup>302</sup> By the term 'strong pluralism' Raz effectively refers to a pluralism that has the Berlinian radical pluralist features. In his opinion, weak pluralism can become strong pluralism if either one or all of the following characteristics are attributed to it. First, Raz thinks weak pluralism turns into strong pluralism if 'the incompatible virtues are not completely ranked relative to each individual'.<sup>303</sup> In light of my elaboration regarding lexical pluralism and its distinction from the Berlinian untamed version of value pluralism in the third chapter of the thesis, I take Raz's view here to effectively point towards the distinction between the two aforementioned pluralist variations.

Raz's second qualification for the weak understanding of moral pluralism to become a strong one is the thesis that 'the incompatible virtues are not completely ranked by some impersonal criteria of moral worth'.<sup>304</sup> In a way, this is another form of the Berlinian pluralist rejection of value hierarchy on the grounds I mentioned in the second

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<sup>301</sup> Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1986) p. 395

<sup>302</sup> *ibid.* p. 398

<sup>303</sup> *ibid.* p. 395

<sup>304</sup> *ibid.* p. 397

chapter. More specifically, I discussed the ranking of values with reference to two different methodologies in the context of my discussion of Kekes' ethical doctrine. One methodology was the substitution of the value with some numeric standard so as to make comparisons possible. The other way of going about the issue, I argued, was via a rationalistic appeal that necessitates the prioritization of one value over others (in the case of monism) or a number of primary values over other secondary ones (in the case of Kekes' ethical doctrine). Raz's second qualification states that if either one of the previous two methodologies are incorporated into strong pluralism, then the resulting pluralism has the characteristics of weak pluralism.

Thirdly, weak pluralism collapses into strong pluralism if virtues 'do not derive from a common source, or from common ultimate principles'.<sup>305</sup> It appears to me that this statement can be read as a disagreement with Dworkin's position which reduces ethical conflict into an ultimate principle that makes the solution of the conflict possible and meaningful in terms of that ultimate principle. I have, also, examined this position and the implications for value pluralism in the second chapter of the thesis.

When I elaborated on Raz's conception of value pluralism in Chapter Three I concluded that it exemplifies the traits of Berlinian value pluralism. For this reason I did not make explicit reference to Raz's argument in favour of non-linear pluralism when I examined the compatibility between different liberalisms and different pluralisms, since what was the case for Berlin's untamed value pluralism would also be the case for Raz's non-linear value pluralism. The latter is best exemplified by Raz's strong – rather than weak – understanding of moral pluralism since non-linear pluralism demonstrates the traits that in Raz's view turn a weak moral pluralist view into a radical one. There are two

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<sup>305</sup> *ibid.*

further means of revealing the similarity between Raz's non-linear pluralism and his understanding of strong moral pluralism. First, since non-linear pluralism is similar to Berlinian pluralism and since Berlinian pluralism is similar to what Raz calls the strong conception of pluralism, it follows that non-linear pluralism is similar to this strong conception of value pluralism. The other way to go about the issue is to use the conclusion of my earlier discussion of Raz's view on the incommensurability of values. The latter – in favour of which Raz argued on the grounds of non-linear preferences – is so radical that the resulting pluralist ethical doctrine is a radical one.

Raz himself acknowledges that the arguments he has presented on incommensurability are arguments that support strong pluralism since they combine all the three conditions he gives in order for weak pluralism to qualify as strong pluralism. However, he goes on to state that when he supports the idea for an autonomy based freedom in the last chapter of *The Morality of Freedom* he does so from a weak value pluralist point of view.<sup>306</sup> The fact that Raz brushes aside his argument for radical value pluralism and decides to construct the liberal perfectionist doctrine on a watered down and more timid pluralist version raises – amongst others – two issues which are of particular interest to the present thesis.

The first has to do with the methodology I have been using regarding my argument on the relationship between pluralism and liberalism. The second deals with the exact argument that Raz gives for the relationship between weak moral pluralism and liberal perfectionism.

With regards to the first issue, the methodology I have used in my argument on the subject of the relationship between pluralism and liberalism seems to have similarities

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<sup>306</sup> He argues this in *ibid.* p. 398

with the one that Raz is using in his argument for liberal perfectionism. That is, in the third chapter where I refer to the existence of pluralist variations, I argue for the consistency between some watered down variations of agonistic pluralism – i.e. forms of weak pluralism – and different liberal doctrines. Yet, there is still a difference between Raz's approach and mine and I believe this difference to be an important one.

My argument is based on the idea that no one of the pluralist variations that I presented has been yet proved to be wrong. In contrast, Raz makes an explicit argument for the truth of strong value pluralism – via his endorsement of a very radical conception of incommensurability. Even if the reasons for which he abandons this strong conception of pluralism have their merits – since perfectionist liberalism and untamed value pluralism are incompatible – the case remains that he really thinks that it is the strong pluralist outlook that best represents the ethical universe. In other words, whereas I make an agnostic point about which pluralism is the true one, Raz explicitly argues for the truth of strong pluralism. As a consequence, his subsequent attempt to ground liberal perfectionism on weak pluralism is altogether an attempt to ground his political theory on an ethical view other than the one he considers to be true.

The second point of interest regards Raz's overall project and its relation to weak and strong pluralism. Since Raz argues for the priority of autonomy, it becomes apparent that if one is to value autonomy, as Raz does, then in turn one would be committed to a weak form of pluralism. In other words, it is not the case that commitment to a weak conception of pluralism safeguards autonomy, but instead that the priority of autonomy safeguards a weak conception of pluralism. This is what I understand by Raz's claim that

‘valuing autonomy commits one to weak pluralism’.<sup>307</sup> However, as Raz has argued for the truth of strong pluralism, and as this – as I have argued – implies that weak pluralism is false, then it would necessarily be the case that if one values autonomy, then one would commit oneself to a wrong pluralist theory. Raz’s argument might have been more successful if it claimed that valuing autonomy committed one to *at least* weak pluralism. This formulation of the argument does not necessarily commit Raz to a version of pluralism other than the one which, in *The Morality of Freedom*, he argues is true.

Apart from the two points above, I find the claim that an autonomy based liberalism safeguards weak pluralism to be a crude one since the term ‘weak pluralism’ can refer to many different types of pluralism – unlike the term ‘strong pluralism’ which quite clearly refers to a radical Berlinian type of pluralism. Weak pluralism, i.e. watered down radical pluralist variations, can include Kekes’ pluralism, hierarchical pluralism, Larmore’s reasonable pluralism or even Aristotle’s theory of value. As a consequence, my argument in Chapter Three that liberal perfectionism is compatible with either lexical pluralism or with a Kekesian theory of value – rather than weak pluralism in general – makes a more subtle and accurate suggestion on the issue of the compatibility between liberal perfectionism and pluralism. I will discuss this issue in greater detail below. This is because my discussion of the priority of autonomy within liberal perfectionism in terms of Raz’s theory of parochial values inevitably touches on the issue of the compatibility between liberal perfectionism and pluralism. Moreover, as liberal perfectionism is the main focus in my thesis, further elaboration on its compatibility with pluralism will complement my previous discussion on the issue.

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<sup>307</sup> *ibid.*



## 2. Liberal Perfectionism and Berlinian Value Pluralism

The general argument so far has been that no liberal doctrine can be compatible with the Berlinian untamed version of value pluralism. This was the case for Mill's liberalism where its distinction between higher and lower pleasures as well as its advocacy of the specific meliorist Milleian theory of human progress contradicted fundamental characteristics of Berlinian pluralism. This was also the case for Rawls' liberalism in *A Theory of Justice* which was not compatible with agonistic pluralism on the grounds that the latter could not accommodate the harmony of the basic liberties that Rawls sees as fundamental to his theory – let alone other different and intrinsically valuable lifestyles which could be part of a society organized according to the principles of Justice as Fairness. In addition, Rawls' liberal doctrine in *Political Liberalism* is incompatible with untamed pluralism as, if it is a political doctrine, it suffices for it to adopt a relativistic *modus vivendi* approach to public decision making. On the other hand, if it is a normative doctrine, untamed pluralism cannot guarantee a prioritization of the public over the private sphere. The relationship between Raz's liberalism and radical pluralism seems to be on terms as difficult as those of the relationships between the previous liberalisms and untamed pluralism.

Raz's liberal perfectionism is incompatible with Berlinian pluralism for two reasons. The first reason has to do with Raz's conceptualisation of personal autonomy. The second has to do with the place that this conception of personal autonomy holds in his liberal theory.

In the previous chapter I have referred extensively to Raz's elaboration of autonomy. According to Raz, if an agent is to be considered autonomous, she has to be

free from coercion, to have the appropriate necessary mental capabilities to make informed choices on her own, and to have an adequate range of valuable options available to her so as to exercise her freedom of choice in order to use one or – when possible – some of these choices in a manner which will allow her to lead an intrinsically valuable lifestyle.

There are three issues with regards to the compatibility of *the content* of Raz's view of autonomy and radical pluralism. The first has to do with the issue of what constitutes a bad option, the second has to do with the rationalistic tendency that is present in Raz's conception of autonomy, while the third has to do with the radical pluralist claim that not all objectively good options can coexist harmoniously.

At the core of these concerns is Raz's assertion that 'since autonomy is valuable only if it is directed at the good it supplies no reason to provide, nor any reason to protect, worthless let alone bad options'.<sup>308</sup> The problem with this claim is that in the context of modernity with its local and international multicultural characteristics, what constitutes a bad option is highly contested. For a moral objectivist, of course, an option that was bad in the past is going to be as bad in the present as well as in the future. What the context of modernity presents the moral objectivist with is not something new in ontological terms, but something novel in terms of moral epistemology and the ability to grasp or find the moral truth entailed in divergent and often conflicting ontological statements. Modernity then is even more important for an objectivist who also advocates pluralism because, as I have argued in Chapter Two, phenomenology and observation are much more important for pluralists than they are for other objectivists. It is because of the special importance that observation has for radical pluralism that modernity becomes a double edged knife

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<sup>308</sup> Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1986), p. 411

for it. On the one hand, radical pluralism can re-evaluate its stance on many ethical issues and values that might have been considered culpable but can now be viewed as worthwhile. On the other hand, the fact of this intense and ongoing revision with regards to which values may be considered to be bad and which values may be considered to be good has handicapped radical value pluralism considerably in terms of being able to prescribe which options are truly bad and which options are truly good. As a consequence, Raz's view on the – if not necessarily direct, then at least subtle or indirect – elimination of bad options is problematic not so much in terms of how this aspect of his theory would work under ideal and perfect epistemological conditions – which most probably can never be achieved – but in terms of how it actually works in a modern, diverse environment.

Nevertheless, it is to Raz's credit that he takes a brave, albeit difficult to maintain, stance regarding problems which might not be new and exclusive to modernity, but which are at the very least accentuated by it. There is, for instance, a moral fact of the matter which regards the practice of arranged marriages for a pluralist society; they are either condemnable or acceptable. Then there is the question of whether arranged marriages should be allowed in a western liberal democracy or whether they should be banned or filtered out from it. The same question applies to whether they should be filtered out from non-secular religious societies. What Raz effectively proposes with his claim that bad options should not be part of the range of adequate options that one has at their disposal, is that public policy and societal affairs in general must be viewed and conducted as a necessary extension of ethical concerns. In other words, the answer for Raz to the question regarding the morality of arranged marriages determines the answer

to the question regarding the manner or the extent to which a society ought to tolerate arranged marriages.

Radical pluralists however, because of their conviction of the agonistic nature of many worthwhile values and lifestyles would be reluctant to adopt such a view with regards to the potential of philosophical contemplation and its application to politics. The nature of the radical pluralist ethical theory is such that it recognizes greater limitations to philosophy than implied by Raz's theory of the autonomous agent. One may push the argument further to allege that because of its radical incommensurability and its aversion to rationalism, the only recommendation in terms of political and social action that untamed value pluralism can give is one along the lines of *modus vivendi*. This is because for the radical value pluralist moral wrongdoing is often inescapable and, as a consequence, normative demands or guidance for the undertaking of particular actions when facing dilemmas, is very hard to produce. Furthermore, it cannot allow for decision making on the grounds that some options are truly bad because of the challenges posed by modernity. Even if an option is indeed morally culpable but, nevertheless, an agent still wrongly considers it to be a worthwhile one, making the agent dismiss this option might be too rationalistic and restrictive for a radical value pluralist.<sup>309</sup> As I have argued in Chapter Two, radical value pluralism is a theory that can allow for certain world views or assessments of one's lifestyle to be considered false; however, due to radical value pluralism's general aversion to rationalism, this does not necessarily mean that a value

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<sup>309</sup> The restrictiveness of attempts to disperse the wrong moral beliefs of certain moral agents depends both in the means employed to achieve that end as well as on the actual wrongness of the said belief. The boundary between persuasion and coercion, however, is very hazy and as such widely debated. An endeavor into the issue, albeit relevant, is impermissible for the purposes of my thesis. As a consequence, I have referred to the aforementioned only briefly in the previous chapter and I will only briefly refer to the issue subsequently.

pluralist will necessarily prescribe a practical course of action that is the direct outcome of an attempt that tries to challenge an agent's or a group's false consciousness. In this case, the only available foundation for social action will have to necessarily be that of *modus vivendi*. This is very similar to Rawls' elaboration in *Political Liberalism*, if one approaches the latter as a political – rather than a normative – doctrine.

So, Raz's elaboration of autonomy and, consequently, an autonomy based liberal perfectionism is one that sees the relationship between ethics and politics in an Aristotelian fashion whereas radical value pluralism cannot allow for such a conception of the connection between the two. As a consequence, the compatibility between liberal perfectionism and Berlinian value pluralism is undermined.

This reasoning further underlines the lack of appreciation in Raz's elaboration of autonomy of the element of radical incommensurability that is so dear to a Berlinian value pluralist. The Aristotelian relationship between ethics and politics that is adopted by Raz assumes the lack of these conflicts and implicitly accepts the harmonious coexistence between different worthwhile options. This assumption of harmony was the one on the basis of which Rawls' liberal doctrine was found to be incompatible with radical pluralism.<sup>310</sup> As a consequence, it is not only Raz's view of the relationship between the moral and the political that is Aristotelian; the assumption of harmony between different objectively valuable lifestyles is an assumption that is also characteristic of an Aristotelian ethical outlook.<sup>311</sup> Again, the Aristotelian aspects present in Raz's theory are visible in terms of Raz's perfectionism and his view about the application of morality in the political sphere. The perfectionism that Aristotle and Raz

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<sup>310</sup> I argued for this position in Chapter Three.

<sup>311</sup> See Chapter Two.

advocate is very similar, despite Raz's commitment in some parts of *The Morality of Freedom*, and in some of his other works, to a radical understating of pluralism which he eventually – and, I think, unpredictably – abandons in favour of weak pluralism.

It is important to keep in mind that Raz's theory of value is highly ambiguous. Despite the fact that he argues for radical incommensurability, he then abandons it and turns to a weak pluralist perspective without ever explaining clearly his reasons for this change of direction. In this sense, his sporadic advocacy of radical incommensurability is less compatible with the Aristotelian traits of his theory than is his advocacy of weak pluralism elsewhere in *The Morality of Freedom*. However, since in *The Morality of Freedom* there is an oscillation between strong and weak pluralism, it is safe to conclude that, at least in some instances, Raz's pluralist commitments contradict some aspects of his theory in the manner that I have discussed above.

Even if one takes the view that there are no Aristotelian traits in Raz's theory of value – a view with which I disagree – there is still not much change regarding the issue of the compatibility between Raz's doctrine and radical pluralism. The reason for this is that if rationally irresolvable value conflicts occur and, yet, society still makes a decision on which of these conflicting values to keep in the range of available valuable options, then it will have to do so either on metaphysical terms or by the substitution of some common medium by which to contrast these values. These methods however, cannot be accommodated within a radical pluralist ethical doctrine for reasons that have been discussed elsewhere.

So far, I have presented the reasons for which I find Raz's liberal perfectionism to be inconsistent with untamed value pluralism in terms of the incompatibility between

untamed value pluralism and Raz's *conception* of autonomy. The exact argument of the compatibility between Raz's liberal theory and radical pluralism in terms of the priority which is enjoyed by autonomy *within* his liberalism depends on the kind of value that autonomy really is. Before I investigate the exact nature of the value of autonomy, however, there are two important qualifications that have to be made.

First, it is true that in Chapter Three I argued that the prioritization of autonomy is consistent within liberal perfectionism only if it is done in the context of lexical pluralism or in the context of a Kekesian theory which classifies values in two categories in which the values of one override the values of the other. Moreover, I argued that the prioritization of autonomy is inconsistent with radical pluralism. In the elaboration that follows, I do not refute any of these arguments. Instead, I complement them by further specifying the reasons for which I think liberal perfectionism is inconsistent with radical pluralism. The expansion of my argument will lead my discussion to the issue of Raz's theory of parochial values, to the nature of the value of autonomy and its prioritisation and, as a consequence, to the issue of what the above entail for the compatibility between liberal perfectionism and pluralism.

Second, my discussion of theory of value issues should be approached both as setting the ground for the argument of the next chapter and, at the same time, as complementary to that argument. In the course of my discussion of some of the characteristics of Raz's theory of parochial values I at times inevitably examine whether it is true. This, however, is not the main purpose of my argument as my central object of enquiry is liberal perfectionism. As a consequence, the question of how liberal

perfectionism fails if it is committed to Raz's theory of parochial values, and not whether the particular theory of value is true or false, is my core concern.

### **3. Autonomy: What Kind of Value?**

The main question, whose answer will determine what kind of value autonomy really is, has to do with the magnitude of the exact impact in terms of value on a choice or action depending on whether this choice or action is autonomously rather than non-autonomously chosen. In other words, is it the case, as Griffin puts it, that 'loss of autonomy is the loss of an essential component of morality?'<sup>312</sup> Central in the answer to this question is the extent to which self-creation through autonomous choice, or autonomy understood as 'personhood',<sup>313</sup> is intrinsically valuable.

Thinkers such as Locke, Mill and Kant have paid tribute to the importance of self-creation through the exercise of rational choice in the conquest of true freedom; they all deemed external freedom from constraints and institutional freedom not to be sufficient conditions to reach that end. Most thinkers support the idea that true freedom needs both ingredients for it to flourish, and as a consequence present the relationship between external freedom and self-creation through reflective choice as a very intimate one. Kant's view of autonomy refers to the ability to form decisions and carry out actions that are in accordance with reason and to not to be swayed by contingencies and unreason. There are existential or even religious doctrines that hold that this type of individual emancipation is all there is to the idea of freedom. Comprehensive liberal doctrines, like

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<sup>312</sup> **Griffin, J.;** *Value Judgment - Improving Our Ethical Beliefs*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 78

<sup>313</sup> **ibid.**, p.117



the ones I examine in the thesis, propose that the personal exercise of rational choice between different options and values is only one condition of true autonomy. This is true of Mill's liberalism whose aim to develop autonomous men and women can only be realized in conditions that are uninhibited from coercive forces and in which choice is exercised in line with moral concerns. In Locke's theory the two ideas of autonomy are also interrelated since it is only those that are in accordance with Natural Law and a pre-political sense of freedom that eventually will be able to enjoy external freedom.

Similarly, for Raz, one of the three conditions of an autonomous agent is that the agent has the capacity for autonomy – the other two being that she is free from coercion and that she has an adequate range of valuable options to choose from.<sup>314</sup> Specifically, Raz holds that an agent 'must be capable of understanding how various choices will have considerable and lasting impact on his life'.<sup>315</sup> In other words, Raz holds that for a person to lead an autonomous life he would have to exercise his human mental faculties – e.g. rational deliberation, reflection etc. I believe this first condition of the Razian conception of autonomy to be very similar to autonomy as self-creation, or as Skorupski refers to it, internal autonomy.<sup>316</sup> Moreover, I will argue that, ultimately, in liberal perfectionism autonomy is an objective value not because it is universal, but because it is intrinsic for moral agents in certain cultural and historical contexts.

At first glance this should not be surprising since Raz's advocacy of some kind of moral objectivity at the expense of emotivism or relativism is expected once one takes into account two aspects of his system of ideas the bits and pieces of which are scattered throughout his work and which have to be drawn together if they are to make sense.

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<sup>314</sup> See Chapter Four.

<sup>315</sup> Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1986), p. 371

<sup>316</sup> Skorupski, J.; *Ethical Explorations*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 225

The first aspect regards Raz's *apparent* oscillation between the view that autonomy is objectively valuable and the view that it is culturally specific. One indication that Raz sees autonomy as culturally specific are the functional and cultural arguments that Gray identifies in Raz's elaborations in *The Morality of Freedom*, to which I have referred to in the previous chapter. Furthermore, in his *Ethics in the Public Domain*, and in the context of his discussion on the importance of autonomy on an individual's well-being, Raz writes that his 'argument is confined to modern industrial societies. Moreover, as it stands, it does not apply to enclaves of traditional premodern communities within our societies'.<sup>317</sup> This points to a cultural relativist direction, a view that is further supported by Raz's claim that he does not 'see that the absence of choice diminishes the value of human relations or the display of technical skills...scholarship, creativity or imaginativeness, which can be all encompassed in such [non-autonomous] lives'.<sup>318</sup> That is, it is Raz's view that people can lead non-autonomous yet intrinsically valuable lifestyles when conditions of modernity do not apply to the social context in which the agents operate or when the modern social context is too – and truly – remote from them.

In *The Morality of Freedom*, however, Raz makes remarks that point towards a direction that indicates that autonomy is objectively valuable. There Raz claims that autonomy 'cannot be valuable just because it is wanted. On the contrary, those who desire it do so because they believe that it is valuable, and only on the condition that it is valuable'.<sup>319</sup> The above remarks are essentially an exemplification of a problem that I have identified in the previous chapter, which is now time to be tackled, regarding the

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<sup>317</sup> Raz, J.; *Ethics in The Public Domain: Essays in the Morality of Law and Politics* (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1995), p. 124, n.30

<sup>318</sup> Raz, J., 'Facing Up: A Reply' in *Southern California Law Review*, 62 (1989), p. 1227.

<sup>319</sup> Raz, J.; *The Morality of Freedom*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1995), p. 390

consistency of the different aspects of Raz's system of ideas. To make remarks that point to the cultural specificity of the value of autonomy and the role that it has in an individuals' well-being and then to follow these remarks by further ones that point to the objective value of autonomy might appear to be contradictory – this was, in a nutshell, one of the problems that I identified in Raz's work in the previous chapter.

A way out might be available for Raz if one saw his theory of autonomy as one which combines elements of both an objective as well as a relativist value status; that is, as one in which the value of autonomy were neither simply objective nor a mere consequence of sentiment, whim, habituation, or social and historical contingencies. If this were the case, the answer to what appears to be a contradictory oscillation in Raz's system of ideas between universalism and particularism might, ultimately, be an attempt to award a somewhat special status to the value of autonomy.

This brings me to the second aspect of Raz's system of ideas which can be found in *Engaging Reason*<sup>320</sup> where he develops his theory of parochial values. Parochial values, according to Raz 'cannot be mastered at all, not even by everyone capable of knowledge'.<sup>321</sup> Furthermore, the possession of parochial values 'requires having particular perceptual capacities (such as colour concepts), and not merely the possession of some perceptual capacity or other'.<sup>322</sup> That is, the understanding of parochial values requires social or emotional habituation which, even if it were translatable to other cultures and languages – i.e. even if this habituation had the cognitive realist characteristics of Berlin's thought, to which I have referred to in the second chapter – its

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<sup>320</sup> Raz, J.; *Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), mainly Chapters Six and Eight.

<sup>321</sup> *ibid.*, p. 132

<sup>322</sup> *ibid.*

acquisition is a very slow and tedious process so that only a limited number of parochial concepts will ever be accessible to any given individual. Moreover, it must be stressed that Raz holds that parochial values often refer to interests which are ‘in principle impossible for us to understand’.<sup>323</sup> I believe that the theory of parochial values can be linked – indeed, *should* be linked – with the special status of the value of autonomy which pervades Raz’s arguments in *The Morality of Freedom*.

Even though an explicit reference to the link between liberal perfectionism and the theory of parochial values is hard to find in Raz, it is sensible to approach Raz’s work on the latter as an extension of the former. The reason for this is that his work on value theory tries to develop and defend a conception of value which is objective on the one hand, but which is also sensitive to contingency and cultural particularities in the other. This is the same characteristic which permeates the liberal perfectionist theory with regards to its oscillation between moral objectivism and ethical particularism. This view is further reinforced by the chronological order of the development of the two theories. The theory of parochial values, as it was mainly developed in *Engaging Reason*, came after the development of his liberal perfectionism in *The Morality of Freedom*, which is a further indication that some of the arguments it makes could be taken as responses to the shortfalls and ambiguities of liberal perfectionism.

Before I discuss the application of the theory of parochial values to Razian autonomy and its prioritization, however, it is sensible to make a few remarks about the theory of parochial values itself. This will be useful both in fleshing out the theory itself as well as in identifying ambiguities to which I will refer in the remainder of the thesis.

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<sup>323</sup> *ibid.*

#### **4. The Problems of Epistemology and Contingency in the Theory of Parochial**

##### **Values and their Importance for Liberal Perfectionism**

Raz develops his theory first by presenting his understanding of what constitutes the classical view of the ideas of objectivity and subjectivity. He writes that what is entailed in these terms is effectively a ‘distinction between classes of thoughts that can constitute knowledge and can be mistaken and those which cannot by calling the first objective, and the others subjective’.<sup>324</sup> Raz’s account of the meaning of objectivity and subjectivity is similar to the Nagel’s definition of these terms, which Nagel developed specifically with reference to values. Furthermore, and as Raz here does not only refer to the idea of value or moral objectivity but to the idea of the objective/subjective contrast in general, he goes on to give a list of the conditions that a domain will have to fulfill in order for it to be considered objective. Raz summarizes these conditions as: (1) the possibility of knowledge condition, (2) the possibility of error condition, (3) the possibility of epistemic objectivity, (4) the relevance condition, (5) the independence condition, (6) the single reality condition and (7) the possibility of irrationality condition. It appears to me, although this is not explicitly stated as such by Raz, that the central aim of these conditions is to safeguard objectivity against two criticisms, which under closer inspection, appear to be one.<sup>325</sup>

On the one hand, these conditions can be approached as an attempt to safeguard the idea of moral objectivity against the criticism that the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity is not a clear one. On the other hand, they can be seen as directed against the criticism that objectivity entails characteristics which can, ultimately, be found to be

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<sup>324</sup> *ibid.*, p. 118

<sup>325</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 119-127

incompatible with some aspects of the liberal perfectionist doctrine. However, the above two objectives are interconnected to the extent that they can be approached as unitary, since the characteristics that give rise to the second objective are inextricably related to the first one, which regards the clear distinction between objectivity and subjectivity. Even so, an examination of these two seemingly separate issues on distinct terms is still relevant once the possibility of the issue with regards to the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity collapsing into the issue of the compatibility of Raz's value theory with liberal perfectionism is accounted for and taken seriously. The value of this method will become evident during my elaboration on Raz's theory of value and the obstacles it faces in terms of what it entails for the political realm.

An instance, for example, of the latter issue which Raz aims to disperse, is the argument that objectivism is a conservative theory since it does not allow for the re-evaluation of established beliefs that have a claim to objectivity. The relationship between liberal perfectionism and conservatism has arisen up previously in my discussion with regards to the challenges faced by liberal perfectionism. As I will go on to show in the next chapter, where I will examine this question in detail, liberal perfectionist theory might be all too weak to overcome this conservative challenge. In any case, Raz's counterargument against this proposition is that due to consequences that emanate from the condition of relevance and the condition for the possibility of error, there is a guarantee that his theory of objectivity 'is not essentially a conservative one, [and] that it is open to challenges which can form revisions, or even the abandonment of, established aspects of common discourse and thought'.<sup>326</sup> With regards to the first instance, the independence condition attempts to make sure that the knowledge which has

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<sup>326</sup> *ibid.*, p.129

a claim to objectivity is not ‘too internal’<sup>327</sup>; that is, it attempts to make sure that knowledge with a claim to objectivity is clearly distinct from knowledge which belongs to a subjectivist domain of inquiry. Hence, Raz argues that his theory of value is both open to re-examination and re-evaluation.<sup>328</sup>

In terms of the issue with regards to the distinction between moral objectivity and subjectivity in the theory of parochial values, it is not my aim here to give a comprehensive account or a detailed evaluation of all the conditions of Raz’s theory of objective domains. This is because, no matter how interesting and important a topic it may be, the subject matter of the thesis is not to present a comprehensive theory of objectivity. That is an extremely large project that cannot be accommodated within this work. What can, however, be incorporated into the thesis is a discussion about Raz’s attempt to disperse the doubts that a commitment to parochial values would entail for liberal perfectionism and vice versa. This should not come as a surprise, as it is consistent with my elucidation of Raz’s system of ideas so far in the sense that I went to great lengths to try and emphasize Raz’s intention – whether successful or unsuccessful – to construct a doctrine which is based on moral objectivity. Accordingly, what also belongs to the argument I make in the thesis, is my response to the question of whether a subscription to moral objectivity will not insult deeply seated and fundamental commitments of the liberal perfectionist doctrine.

Raz himself acknowledges that his list of conditions for objectivity does not ensure the clear and undisputed distinction between objective and subjective domains of

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<sup>327</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>328</sup> I discuss this aspect of Raz’s theory in detail later on in the chapter. For the time being, my sole purpose is to highlight the main issues involved in my examination of his theory of value and its relation to liberal perfectionism and the different approaches I can adopt in addressing them.

enquiry nor the disposal of problems, such as the previously mentioned accusation of conservatism. The essence of this admission is not that it is the *specific* list that does not guarantee the clear distinction between objectivity and subjectivity, but that no feasible list can be made that would ensure the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity or the immunity of objectivity from other failings. In essence, Raz ascribes a dynamic attribute to his theory of objectivity in that it ‘deals with problems as they are encountered, and denies the feasibility of producing a definite list of necessary and sufficient conditions for objectivity, the (epistemic) possibility that factors may emerge which defeat the objectivity of domains of thought which meet the above conditions cannot be ruled out’.<sup>329</sup> Furthermore, Raz writes that ‘all we can do is to examine specific doubts regarding the objectivity of practical thought’.<sup>330</sup> In this sense, my methodology here is similar to that of Raz’s; i.e. I do not offer a comprehensive critique or discussion about the essence of what it is to belong to an objective domain of enquiry – moral or other. Instead, I examine aspects of the theory of objectivity which are relevant to my investigation at hand.

I have argued so far that liberal perfectionism entails values that alternate between moral universalism and moral particularism. The main concept in terms of which this duality is exemplified is the concept of autonomy upon which the liberal perfectionist doctrine is built. Now, if liberal perfectionism were assumed to be true, then it would mean that what would have to be defended is the claim that despite the oscillation between universalism and particularism, liberal perfectionism must support an objective theory of value. If the question is considered in these terms, it breaks down into two

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<sup>329</sup> Raz, J.; *Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 131-2

<sup>330</sup> *ibid.*



further and more specific issues. First, is the issue regarding the epistemology of moral knowledge and second is the issue of the extent to which social practices influence moral values. As a matter of fact, the challenges presented by these two issues resonate with the two instances against which, I have argued, Raz attempts to defend moral objectivity. The epistemological question relates to the question of whether it is ever possible to make a clearly objective statement which is unmistakably not subjective. The question on the relevance of social determinants in the emergence of objective values which are shared by the whole of society resonates with the issue of the extent to which an advocacy of objectivity is paired with a necessary adoption of a conservative or any other doctrine that might contradict liberal perfectionism.

Consequently, the two main issues regarding Raz's theory of value are firstly, the extent to which it can create an adequate epistemological case for an objective theory of value which can allow for the selective promotion of values such as the one of autonomy; and secondly the extent to which its proposed theory of objectivity can accommodate for the sensitivity that the liberal perfectionist doctrine aims to portray towards social and cultural contingencies.

## **5. Parochial Values and the Priority of Autonomy**

According to parochial value theory, our knowledge of the different forms of the good is limited by our perceptual capabilities since not all human beings will have the chance to familiarise themselves with all the different values. This is even more the case if one – contrary to Berlin – accepts cognitive relativism. In this state of affairs some of the values in question would not be translatable into terms that are comprehensible for everyone's

domain of understanding. This latter point is much stronger than the proposition which holds that it is difficult, but ultimately plausible, to understand the objective values that are dear to people who belong in different epistemic domains. The parochial suggestion, according to which there are objective values that might possibly *never* be accessible by some persons or groups of a certain identity, contradicts Berlin's cognitive realism and as such he would oppose it. For Raz, culture, religion and nationality are at the same time gateways as well as obstacles to one's understanding of the different forms of the good.<sup>331</sup>

Raz's parochial values do not depend on the satisfaction of human interests. Instead, they are meant to be objective and the agent's input with respect to their worth is none. The agent dependency which parochial values do recognise is exhausted on the agent being a possessor of the capacities which are necessary for the perception of the said values. For Raz, when we do something we do it not because it fulfils our interests but because it is intrinsically good. In Raz's words, 'we know what is good and conclude that that is good for people, that it is in their interest to spend time with the good'.<sup>332</sup> What Raz essentially claims here is the fulfilment of our interests is safeguarded not by trying to fulfil them directly, but by fulfilling them via acting in accordance with those values which are good. In short, Raz seems to claim that by acting in accordance with the

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<sup>331</sup> It is noteworthy that Raz gives another argument against moral convergence according to which, situations can be found where rational agents can disagree (in Raz, J.; Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 138). This however, would be a type of refutation of convergence with which Berlin would have no problem agreeing. This type of refutation is based on an untamed value pluralist conception of the ethical universe which, as I discussed in the second chapter of the thesis, finds its most forceful advocacy in the writings of Isaiah Berlin. Secondly, this lack on convergence in terms of moral judgment is one that Berlin accounts for, in the sense that the rational agents in question would both realize that the agonistic conflict of values on which they have to decide regards objectively worthwhile concepts. Thus, the fact that their judgment does not converge is reflected in Berlin's advocacy of radical value pluralism.

<sup>332</sup> *ibid.*, p. 200

good, one also fulfils one's interests. This position is consistent with Raz's concept of respect towards others – to which I referred to elsewhere in the thesis – which entailed the view that one treats another with respect not by being neutral with regards to the promotion of values but by promoting and making available worthwhile lifestyles and options since it is only through them that human beings can lead truly worthwhile and meaningful lifestyles. As a consequence, the promotion of autonomy in modern contexts is consistent with the aforementioned view in the sense that autonomy can be intrinsically valuable<sup>333</sup> while at the same time and in the specific political, cultural and social conundrum the promotion of autonomy satisfies human interests.<sup>334</sup>

The difficulty with this view is making sure that what one *considers* to be an objective good truly corresponds to what is *actually* an objective good. In other words, how do we know when we are correct about our judgements about objective goods and when not? With respect to the case of autonomy, which is at the centre of liberal perfectionism, I have indicated that Raz thinks that it is not recognised as a necessary ingredient of the good life by all people. A pluralist, however, would hold that there might even be cases in which autonomy is mutually exclusive with other values – such as those the fulfilment of which presupposes non-liberal traditional lifestyles. Is it the case then that autonomy is valuable in some cultural and special contingency but not in another? If the value of a good depends ultimately and primarily on the promotion of human interests, then the conclusion would be that, indeed, human interests – or at least some of them – in different circumstances can be said to be promoted when the fulfilment of different needs is achieved. As a consequence, something that is valuable now, might

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<sup>333</sup> Although Raz claims that autonomy cannot be valuable in itself, his idea of autonomy does, in fact, implicitly acknowledge the existence of some intrinsic value in it.

<sup>334</sup> This is the case providing that one accommodates for the critique from modernity and its consequences.

not have been valuable in the past and may not be valuable in the future, or vice versa. In a similar fashion, then liberal perfectionism would have to hold that the value of autonomy changes from context to context. It is at this point that some of Raz's critics recognise a slide to moral relativism.

These relativistic tendencies and the view – inherent in this theory – that value is created can be incorporated into both conservatism and radicalism as it can reinforce existing beliefs about what best serves human interests as much as it can re-evaluate these beliefs and, as a consequence, alter the value ascribed to given practices. This is a very vivid exemplification of the critique that liberal perfectionism oscillates between universalism and particularism. In a sense, this apparent oscillation can be considered somewhat of an asset for liberal perfectionism, as it renders it more sensitive to observation and empiricism, thus pushing it away from the strong rationalistic tendencies that liberalisms like Rawls' in *A Theory of Justice* exemplify. The complications that such an oscillation would cause for liberal perfectionism could be partly accommodated by Raz's theory of parochial values.

One reason for how parochial value theory could diminish the power of the relativistic critique of liberal perfectionism is if the worth of parochial values, such as autonomy, is not *created* but, *discovered*. This seems to be Raz's view of autonomy. It is true that parochial values can be said to be less objective than simple objective moral values and closer to relativism in the sense that their dependence on experience is greater than the dependence of simple objective values on experience. They do, however, aspire to make an objective statement about the moral universe. Whether they succeed in doing so is another matter. What has to be appreciated at this point is that parochial value

theory has characteristics which at least *prima facie* allow liberal perfectionism to make objective statements about values which are at the same time sensitive to contingency.

It appears that Raz's argument in *Engaging Reason* is that in the literature in the theory of value one can identify three different types of values: simple objective values, simple subjective values and parochial values. Raz ultimately abandons the distinction between the different categories of values and argues for the prominence of parochial values only. For Raz, this is as objective a statement about values as can be made.

He argues in favour of this by refuting Williams' thesis in *Descartes*<sup>335</sup> that non-parochial concepts should have priority over parochial ones. Williams held that 'there are possible descriptions of the world using concepts which are peculiarly ours, and not peculiarly relative to our experience'.<sup>336</sup> Such a contention, Williams argues, is the one given by Pierce who claims that scientific enquiry fits such a description. Furthermore, because it fits such a description, i.e. because it is not influenced by local contingencies or interests, it could be understood and, thus, become part of the knowledge of any agents irrespective of their background.<sup>337</sup>

This convergence cannot result in terms of parochial concepts since many of these concepts, in spite of them being objective, cannot be recognised as such by everyone. That is, 'in the nature of things if the convergence is to encompass all those capable of knowledge then it must exclude thoughts which essentially depend on parochial concepts

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<sup>335</sup> Williams, B.; *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry*, (Hassocks, Harvester Press: 1978)

<sup>336</sup> Quoted in Raz, J.; *Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 136

<sup>337</sup> It is noteworthy that this view contrasts with the views of many post-modernist constructivist theories which advocate that even scientific enquiry – let alone ethical or political enquiry – is a direct product of our cultural or other conditioning. See Kuhn, T. M.; *The structure of scientific revolutions*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 1962) and Foucault, M.; *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception* trans. by Sheringham Smith, A. M. (London: Tavistock Publications, 1973). Popper asserts that scientific enquiry is conditioned by pre-theorizing even though he is not clear how this process is initiated in the first place (Popper, K.; *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, (London, Routledge: 2002).

for their expression'.<sup>338</sup> That is, if the prioritization of a parochial value has a scope which is wide enough, there will be non-convergence with respect to the perception of the worth of such prioritization – for instance autonomy in non-liberal subcultures. On the contrary, no matter how wide the scope of the prioritization of a non-parochial objectively worthwhile value is, convergence regarding the acknowledgement of its worth amongst normal moral agents under normal conditions is guaranteed. These ideal conditions, nevertheless, are rarely – if ever – fulfilled. As a consequence, it appears to me that autonomy cannot be prioritised in the context of a value theory that recognises solely the existence of parochial values because, since it would be a parochial value, autonomy would not be recognised by everyone as a value which should be granted priority. This, in fact, is liberal perfectionism's argument for the priority of autonomy. Hence, the inability to make a universal normative claim for the promotion of autonomy can be accommodated within liberal perfectionism via the advocacy of a parochial value theory. The normative claim for the prioritisation of autonomy is now made on the grounds that autonomy is intrinsically valuable for agents in modern liberal contexts.

Raz's argument, according to which non-parochial values are not prioritised over parochial ones, serves the interests of liberal perfectionism in terms of better safeguarding the promotion of autonomy. The main thrust of this counterargument to the priority of non-parochial concepts over parochial ones is that in fact, the idea of non-parochial concepts is a chimera. In fact, this argument goes, the only form of moral knowledge that human beings can ever have is parochial knowledge. Raz endorses this view when he asserts that it is 'reasonable to conclude that abstract normative concepts

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<sup>338</sup> Raz, J.; *Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 137

too are parochial'.<sup>339</sup> As a consequence, what is at stake here is not the promotion of non-parochial concepts over parochial ones but the promotion of objectively worthwhile parochial concepts over worthless or repugnant parochial ones. Contrary to Raz's critics, because of the parochial nature of moral knowledge, one could make a normative case for the promotion of some values in one context and different values in another *without the accusation of relativism*. In such a state of affairs it would, indeed, follow that Raz's revised Harm Principle, which makes a normative demand for the priority of autonomy, is after all true. This is because, even though the prioritization of autonomy occurs only on the basis of what Gray identified as the somewhat relativistic cultural and functional arguments, its prioritization is still a normative demand as autonomy is intrinsically valuable for the agents on behalf and for the benefit of whom it is promoted.

In the context then of a parochial theory of value the claim that the functional and cultural arguments are devastating for Raz's revised harm principle does not hold. It is true that liberal perfectionism tries to make a normative case for the promotion of autonomy on the particularistic cultural and functional arguments. The problem to which I referred to in Chapter Four with respect to the above was that Raz made a categorical case for the prioritisation of autonomy – i.e. a claim that failure to promote autonomy is harmful and thus immoral – on grounds that were only applicable to modern liberal society. The claim against liberal perfectionism contends that such arguments could only support the limited applicability of the principle of the prioritisation of autonomy. That is, if the priority in the promotion of autonomy is based on arguments of this particularistic sort, only a relativistic account for the promotion of autonomy could be given. This account would be based on political, cultural, religious or other constructivist

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<sup>339</sup> *ibid.*, p.133

and equally valid criteria. Nevertheless, liberal perfectionism aspires to claim that failure to promote autonomy in a modern context is actually immoral whereas failure to promote it in contexts in which autonomy is not a necessary ingredient of the good life is not immoral.

It should be obvious from the arguments that I presented in this chapter that an advocacy of parochial value theory will arm liberal perfectionism with the characteristics to make claims like the one above. Moreover, an advocacy of parochial value theory defends liberal perfectionism against the implications of Gray's account of the functional and cultural arguments, which I discussed in the previous chapter. This is because an advocacy of parochial value theory provides liberal perfectionism with the possibility to make normative demands for the promotion of autonomy in some contexts while making the allowance that in some others – in which autonomy is not valued – failure to promote it does not constitute a moral failure.

This is, indeed, a promising approach for overcoming the oscillation between universalism and particularism. Nevertheless, it is still one which needs to be qualified even further. It appears to me that the “middle ground”, so to speak, between universalism and particularism which is offered by parochial values and the resulting refutation of Gray's objections to liberal perfectionism, would have been more plausible if Raz had adopted a fulfillment of interests approach to morality. If that were the case, then it would be straightforward that the promotion of autonomy for those who deem it important is morally worthwhile, whereas failure to promote it in these contexts would constitute a moral shortfall. Likewise, failure to promote autonomy in contexts in which the agents do not deem it as intrinsic to their well-being – as *they* perceive it – would not



be morally wrong. Such an approach to the issue, however, moves away from moral objectivism towards a more relativistic direction. It is true, on the one hand, that very often the moral worth of an action is evaluated against the common denominator of the extent to which it contributes to the fulfillment of agents' interests. On the other hand, such an account allows for a very fluid and relativistic approach to what constitutes human prosperity and ethics in general. Even though liberals, such as Mill or Berlin, would think twice before they approach a very rigid and rationalistic approach to what constitutes a human interest, as Kekes does, they would also be reluctant in advocating such a fully relativized view on this issue.

Likewise, Raz does not adopt a view of morality solely based on the fulfillment of human interests. For Raz, fulfillment of interests goes hand in hand with the fulfillment of what is intrinsically valuable. A necessary consequence of this view is that people's views about what constitutes their interests should not be taken at face value; what is in their interests is determined by what is morally worthwhile. This is a rather rationalistic approach to the issue that resembles Kekes' conservative pluralist ethics.<sup>340</sup>

This conclusion, however, is not plausible given Berlinian value pluralism. This is because Berlinian value pluralism is both objective while at the same time anti-rationalistic and radical in the sense that it recognizes that there may be many divergent moral considerations that have equal weight in the well being of a group of people or even within one individual. Prioritizing some of them over others – as liberal perfectionism does with autonomy – is not rationally possible.

This would leave liberal perfectionism in the position of arguing for the promotion of autonomy in modern liberal democracies (on the grounds on which Gray

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<sup>340</sup> As I will show in the next chapter, this is not the only similarity between Kekes' and Raz's theories.

identifies) with reference to the fulfillment of human interests. As I have shown, however, this is too relativistic a position for liberal perfectionism to accept. Consequently, it is safe to argue that liberal perfectionism and radical pluralism cannot coexist within a single system of ideas.

To conclude this section, the idea of a parochial theory of value aids the liberal perfectionist project in overcoming one major obstacle. It allows it to claim that failure to promote Razian autonomy in certain societies is morally condemnable while at the same time liberal perfectionism can also hold that failure to promote autonomy in contexts in which it is not known or valued does not necessarily constitute a moral shortfall. This, however, is not the case when liberal perfectionism operates under the assumption of radical pluralism.

## 7. Conclusion

To conclude, I started this chapter by elucidating what I considered to be a problematic ambivalence in Raz's position in *The Morality of Freedom* between radical and more tamed pluralist variations.

I then examined Raz's theory of parochial values and argued that autonomy could be considered to be a parochial value. By doing so, I argued that, *assuming* parochial value theory, the oscillation which some critics identify in Raz's liberal perfectionism between objectivity and relativism is only apparent.

My prime aim in the chapter was not to render a judgement on whether parochial value theory is true. I did nevertheless examine a number of its aspects – often in a critical light. In the course of this examination, I discussed the characteristics which make

parochial value theory suitable for liberal perfectionism. More specifically, I paid tribute to some of its assets, such as its ability to make normative demands for the prioritisation of autonomy without necessarily making a claim about its universality. However, by critically examining parochial value theory and appreciating its various shortfalls or ambiguities I highlighted a number of contentions which are reflected in liberal perfectionism and in response to which I will further develop my argument in the next chapter.

Moreover, I discussed further the application of parochial value theory on the relationship between liberal perfectionism and radical pluralism. I believe that the following three conclusions can be derived from this discussion. The implications of these conclusions are such that they render any help that the theory of parochial values might give to Raz's theory void, since they will go against the very pluralist convictions on the very basis of which his doctrine is built.

First, radical pluralism allows for conditions of false-consciousness only in a rather weak sense. It is true that in my analysis of radical pluralism<sup>341</sup> I argued that even though radical pluralism allows for the possibility of false-consciousness, it does so reluctantly and to an extent which is not clearly demarcated. In any case, the close relationship of radical pluralism with moral empiricism is such that it renders a strong conception of false-consciousness approaches to ethics unwelcome for radical pluralism. Liberal perfectionism on the contrary, allows for a very strong conception of false-consciousness according to which agents' desires can be morally irrational and false even when the agents themselves are convinced about their personal moral priorities.

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<sup>341</sup> See discussion in Chapter Two.

Second, as a consequence of this, it is hard to imagine how an ethical doctrine that is based solely on parochial values can avoid its eventual collapse into subjectivism. If this is the case, then such a view would contradict Raz's advocacy of any variation of value pluralism – not just radical pluralism – and, hence, his endorsement of an objective theory of value. Of course, as I have repeated before, I have not presented either a refutation or a definite verification of parochial value theory. To the extent, however, that some ambiguities about the theory still remain unsolved, the implications of this second consequence which I just described must be acknowledged.

The third conclusion that one may draw is evident when one is faced with a decision between two incommensurable parochial values, one of which is Razian autonomy. Often states or institutions, aside from individuals, are faced with such dilemmas in which there is no escaping from having to make a choice in favour of one of the two values. There can be two explanations for such a situation by a liberal perfectionist who advocates a parochial value theory. First, the resulting choice is not rational. This is a view with which a radical pluralist would be sympathetic with. Nevertheless, liberal perfectionism cannot endorse such a perspective as, if it did, the normative thrust of the argument behind the prioritization of autonomy would be lost. Second, the resulting choice can be rationally accounted for. In order for this to happen however, the two values will have to be, one way or another, commensurate; that is, there will have to be a refutation of the claim that they are incommensurable in the first place. However, recourse to some common medium against which the incommensurable values are being considered – even if this is something as general as the worth to one's life<sup>342</sup> –

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<sup>342</sup> This is Griffin's suggestion for an common medium of commensuration in **Griffin, J.; Value Judgment – Improving Our Ethical Beliefs**, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

is a position which is not compatible with radical pluralism since it points towards a more timid version of incommensurability.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> See discussion in Chapter Two.

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**LIBERAL PERFECTIONISM, PAROCHIAL VALUES AND LIBERAL  
PERFECTIONISM'S RELATION TO EVOLUTIONISM AND CONSERVATISM**

So far I have argued that no liberal doctrine can be rendered compatible with radical ethical pluralism. Instead, within the writings of different thinkers one can identify different watered down pluralist variations which can be consistent with different liberal theories. The inevitable conclusion of the above is that if a pluralist liberal theory is to have a claim to consistency then it ought to play down its radical pluralist aspirations. Despite the fact that this argument can stand on its own, its purpose in the thesis is to be a prelude to Raz's liberal perfectionism and to support my argument that if the latter is to be valid, it must subscribe to certain characteristics which put it at odds with radical pluralism.<sup>344</sup>

In the previous two chapters one of my observations was that a major criticism advanced against liberal perfectionism is that it vacillates between moral objectivity and ethical particularism. One response to the above is to argue that this is an inconsistency that renders the liberal perfectionist project void. This is a view that – at least in a first instance – I resisted adopting. Instead, I presented an alternative theory of value which may accommodate both moral objectivity and particularism within Raz's liberal theory by making a normative case for the promotion of autonomy on the grounds that it is intrinsic, but not universal. I have not taken a definite stance on the truth of this theory of value. Instead, I have merely presented it as an alternative with promising credentials in

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<sup>344</sup> I expand on the reasons for this in the Introduction to the thesis.

assisting Raz's system of ideas and examined its truth in an indicative, yet not conclusive, manner.

In this chapter, I will expand more on the implications that the theory of parochial values has for liberal perfectionism. These implications, I will argue, are twofold. Firstly, even if liberal perfectionism advocates a watered down pluralist variation, it might still be an indefensible liberal doctrine as it cannot accommodate the critique from modernity – which, it must be acknowledged, is a critique which applies to other liberal theories as well. Secondly, the commitment of liberal perfectionism to objectivity at some instances, and its deep appreciation for moral and cultural contingencies at others, makes its commitment to any one of the ethical pluralist theories that I have presented elsewhere in the thesis ambiguous.

Moreover, I shall also examine whether liberal perfectionism is receptive to some aspects of Popper's, Hayek's, Oakeshott's and Kekes' theories and what – if anything – these theories could offer to the liberal perfectionist system of ideas.

## **1. Parochial Values in Liberal Perfectionism**

Aspects of Raz's arguments on parochial values are similar to the arguments that have also been advanced by Scanlon who in *What We Owe to Each Other* focused mainly on the manner in which moral agents claim to perceive moral facts and make moral demands, rather than on the ontological question of whether moral facts are objective or subjective.<sup>345</sup> It is this idea that Raz points towards when he writes that 'identifying what is the good is not the same as explaining what it is which makes it good, or why it is good

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<sup>345</sup> See **Scanlon, T. M.**; *What We Owe to Each Other*, (Cambridge, Mass., London, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: 1998)

rather than bad'.<sup>346</sup> Furthermore, the argument that one can only conceive the natural and the moral world via empirical or parochial means is reminiscent at times of Kant's transcendental idealism as well as of Hegel's objective idealism. Even though the only way we can access the objective moral universe is via our already value ridden and pre-theorised conceptions, Raz's parochial value theory holds that we can still access objective facts about the moral universe. The similarities that parochial value theory has to Hegel's and Kant's theories extend to the issue of the exact nature of objectivity which is embodied in these theories. This further discussion of the nature of objectivity in parochial concepts will further illuminate the question of the truth of parochial value theory and the extent to which it in fact aids liberal perfectionism in overriding its obstacles.

Raz argues for the theory of parochial concepts partly by using Putnam's argument against Williams' claim for the priority of non-parochial concepts over parochial ones.<sup>347</sup> For Raz, the main thrust of this argument is the claim that Williams' priority condition is 'incoherent and inconsistent in its aim of establishing some limited credentials of knowledge which relies on parochial concepts'.<sup>348</sup> It seems to me that the extent to which this claim is similar to Popper's proposal, which states that it is impossible to theorize about anything in the real world and as a consequence the social, political or moral worlds, without being based on some – even instinctive and unintended

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<sup>346</sup> Raz, J.; *Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 153

<sup>347</sup> Putnam, H.; 'Bernard Williams and the Absolute Conception of the World', in *Reviewing Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass. :Harvard University Press, 1992), 80

<sup>348</sup> Raz, J.; *Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 137



– pre-theorising about the world or subject matter under investigation, is an interesting question.<sup>349</sup>

It is interesting because no matter how distinct Raz's (and as a consequence Putnam's) and Popper's theories appear to be, they have some important similarities. The consequence of Popper's theory of scientific knowledge holds that no matter how much one tries to prove a scientific statement, one is engaged in a futile effort. Statements can never be proven; they can only be verified and re-appraised in light of newer evidence because there can never be an absolute epistemic certainty about one's inquiry. Very much like Popper, Raz also argues that there are no epistemic absolutes. He writes that 'if people must diverge in their epistemic baggage then path-dependence is a necessary feature of human existence, one which cannot be overcome under any conditions, however ideal'.<sup>350</sup> As a consequence, he infers that there is 'no reason to make submission to a luck-free ideal test a condition of autonomy'.<sup>351</sup> Furthermore, similarly to Popper who thinks that scientific knowledge can be advanced, Raz also thinks that moral knowledge can also be advanced.

One of the main problems liberal perfectionism faces is its inability to give a detailed and comprehensive account of societal input into the – let us assume – *discovery* (not *creation*) of objective moral values.<sup>352</sup> If it cannot, then there will be practices which, albeit repugnant, are going to be difficult to condemn or change when there is societal agreement on their practice – such as the burning of witches in medieval Europe

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<sup>349</sup> In Popper, K.; Conjectures and Refutations, (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2002)

<sup>350</sup> Raz, J.; Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 141

<sup>351</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>352</sup> A theory of value according to which moral values are created, would relativise liberal perfectionism too much.

or the criminalisation of homosexuality. Popper's theory gives criteria on the basis of which one could distinguish science from pseudo-science but this aspect of his theory does not give anything in the way of criteria on the basis of which condemnation of socially accepted but repugnant actions could occur. The aspect of his theory, however, that refers to the advancement of scientific knowledge does have many similarities with Raz's conception of moral change. Moreover, as I show below, it will become apparent that the counter-arguments advanced against Raz's and Popper's positions also have similarities.

Raz acknowledges that one of the main obstacles that his theory of parochial values is faced with is its inability to make certain, clear and unambiguous prescriptions about objectivity. Raz finds a possible way out of this conundrum in the claim that 'our concepts can be subjected to rational evaluation, which may lead to revision'.<sup>353</sup> This proposition, Raz argues, is compatible with the denial of the claim that this evaluation 'is in the light of any absolute test, like the tests of convergence'.<sup>354</sup> The above is very similar to Popper's view regarding progress of scientific knowledge.

The similarities between Popper's idea of the progress of scientific knowledge and Raz's idea of moral change and progress, although not explicitly stated, also become evident in Raz's comparison between his view on the re-evaluation of moral beliefs to that of the re-evaluation of the means of scientific inquiry. 'The history of the practice of science', Raz argues, 'provides examples of how epistemic standards change, often in the light of rational reflection and criticism, but without any master test which is held

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<sup>353</sup> *ibid.*, p. 143

<sup>354</sup> *ibid.*

constant and governs the changes'.<sup>355</sup> This is in line with Popper's argument that the means of testing a scientific theory can be re-evaluated in light of new evidence or techniques that reappraise the previous method – these new techniques also being subject to pre-theorising and to the possibility of further revisions and refinement.<sup>356</sup>

If Raz's account of moral change were comparable and similar to Popper's account of the progress of scientific knowledge, one of the three main riddles that liberal perfectionism faces would have been solved as Raz would have a clearer account than he has at present of how moral change occurs and what is the role of contingencies in moral change. This point would also reflect on how close a parochial theory of value is to an Archimedean approach to moral objectivity and to what extent parochial value theory would be acceptable to objectivists like Nagel.

Moreover, two further issues, arise with respect to the above. The first has to do with the extent to which Popper's theory is successful in making a convincing case for the aforementioned points so that they can be used by Raz's theory. The second has to do with the extent to which Raz's theory of parochial values actually allows for moral change.

A detailed analysis of Popper's theory is beyond the scope of the present work because Popper's theory is only relevant for my purposes in the sense that it demonstrates some similarities with that of Raz's. The above two points, however, arises because there are a number of critiques both about the extent to which Popper's account of objectivity is valid, as well as about the extent to which his idea of the accumulation of scientific knowledge is actually an accurate representation of how scientific advances actually

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<sup>355</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> Look at Popper, K.; *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2002)

occur. If Raz's theory committed to such a view – I will argue that it ultimately cannot – then the discussion would move partly into a discussion of these aspects of Popperian theory. As a consequence, even if a detailed discussion of Popper's theory is beyond the scope of the present work, since it is not the main subject matter of my investigations, it is within my scope to elaborate on a few of its features since I argue that they exemplify similarities with some of the features of Raz's theory of parochial values.

With regards to the second point, i.e. the extent to which Raz's account of moral change is similar to Popper's view in terms of the accumulation of scientific knowledge, the answer will have to be an overall negative one. This is because Popper offers the master test of falsifiability with reference to which the accumulation and improvement of scientific knowledge and the means to acquire it occur. By contrast, even though Raz has a theory of moral change, this does not occur with resort to a comprehensive theory like the one that Popper offers. Notwithstanding the fact that both of them reject any comprehensive theory of objectivity, Popper still offers a fairly comprehensive account of how scientific knowledge changes whereas Raz thinks that the best one can do in terms of evaluating the emergence of new moral beliefs or in terms of the re-evaluation of already existent ones is to carry out 'fruitful enquiries into the objectivity of one area or another when specific doubts arise regarding their status'.<sup>357</sup>

This entails much more than a simple distinction between scientific enquiries and enquiries about moral knowledge. It seems to me that such a simplistic distinction cannot be made with regards to Raz's theory since he espouses, as I have mentioned previously, Putnam's criticism of Williams' argument that scientific theories are free from

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<sup>357</sup> Raz, J.; *Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 144

contingencies. The above commits Raz to a critical view of both scientific inquiry as well as the natural and moral world. Even though Popper would agree with such a view, he deals with it in a comprehensive manner that Raz does not wish to follow, as he claims that no holistic comprehensive theory can be advanced in favour of moral objectivity.

Raz gives no clear and precise criteria of how the re-evaluation of moral beliefs can take place. Of course, this is exactly what a non-comprehensive moral theory is all about; the lack of any clear and holistic normative explanation of how its predictions or claims could come about. Nevertheless, I do not think that this is sufficient explanation as it can argue convincingly neither for the certain repugnancy of some actions nor can it offer solid guidance about how a new belief or behaviour is better and should override an already existent one. Parochial value theory cannot make a definite statement on why tolerance should override homophobia since its appeal to the objective worth of tolerance is always open-ended.

It is, I believe, at this point that parochial value theory finds common ground with another trait of Popper's theory; the belief in some sort of a theory of progress. This, however, is as far as the commonality goes since, as I have indicated earlier, Raz's account of moral change does not recognise the formalistic and comprehensive account of accumulation of knowledge that Popper's account proposes. There are, nevertheless, some indications in Raz's work that designate a commitment to a theory of moral progress that is stronger than, for instance, Berlin's theory of moral progress to which I have referred in the second chapter of the thesis.

It springs from the fact that Raz seems to think that the objective content of the ethical universe cannot change. He argues that if something is objectively worthwhile it

cannot be valuable at one point in time and non-valuable or repugnant at another. It cannot, in other words, be the case that the practice of slavery was valuable up to the 1807 Abolition of the Slavery Act and repugnant thereafter or that a novel was a good novel at one point in time but not in another. It is more the case that slavery was always repugnant, that its practice always entailed a moral wrongdoing and that it was the moral perceivers that thought it as valuable that were mistaken. In this sense, one should not refer to the idea of moral change in the context of Raz's system of ideas 'in a minimal sense, according to which morality changes when a moral statement which is true at one point is no longer true'.<sup>358</sup> One should 'distinguish between a change in the rights, duties etc., which are the consequences of applying (possibly an unchanged) morality to changing circumstances, and a change in morality itself'.<sup>359</sup> If the minimal sense of moral change is maintained, Raz claims, then it would ground social relativism.<sup>360</sup> When Raz refers to moral change then, he really refers to changes in moral judgement; that is, how moral perceivers claim that they have discovered that something practiced or valued in the past or in a different context is in fact mistaken and that the belief in another value should take its place.

If this is the case, the previously mentioned non-comprehensive character of the manner in which this moral change in parochial value theory occurs makes the communication of the fact of moral change extremely difficult – if not impossible – to transmit to disagreeing moral agents unless it can be accounted for 'as an application of

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<sup>358</sup> *ibid.*, p. 166

<sup>359</sup> *ibid.*,

<sup>360</sup> However, as I will go on to discuss later, one could espouse a value theory, such as Kekes', which allows for a needs-dependent account of objectivity. As I discussed in Chapter Three, Kekes' theory is ultimately unsuccessful in fully insulating itself from the accusation that it collapses into relativism. Nevertheless, it is not as straightforwardly relativistic as Raz's view of this minimal sense of moral change.

an unchanging moral principle'.<sup>361</sup> It is for this reason, the need for unchanging principles to which one can appeal in order to make moral change intelligible to others, that radical moral change – that is moral change which occurs even with respect to these basic principles – is not plausible. I will partly refer back to this position when I examine the relationship between conservatism and liberal perfectionism. The rejection of radical moral change might jeopardise the idea of the possibility of moral change when that is needed the most, i.e. in cases where changing practices that are wrong and deeply imbedded in the social fabric would be considered radical. It is obvious that this state of affairs affects the possibility of promoting valuable options. The positive side of laying such importance on social contingencies, as parochial value theory does, is that the accusation of rationalism, which in the second chapter of the thesis I identified as a theory towards which liberal and pluralist ethical theories are usually hostile, is avoided.

Moreover, in Raz's case, rationalism would contradict his earlier claim that absolute moral convergence is impossible – due to different cultural, religious and other backgrounds. This contradiction, nevertheless, could be overcome if Raz's system of ideas held that there might be moral convergence on some basic moral principles with reference to which all other moral principles can be conceived and apprehended.

Furthermore, very much like Kekes, who would not tolerate radical moral change to the extent that it would tamper with primary values, Raz also claims that radical moral change is impossible since it would be unintelligible. Again, this goes back to the idea of the close relationship between conservatism and liberal perfectionism – with which I will deal in the third section of the chapter. For the time being, the overarching question with which Raz is faced is how exactly moral change would occur in his theory of parochial

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<sup>361</sup> *ibid.*, p. 172

values. It appears to me that Raz's answer to this question is a conception of moral progress that has both the melioristic features of Mill's theory and the deterministic features of Hayek's evolutionary theory of knowledge.

## **2. Liberal Perfectionism, Parochial Values and Moral Change**

It is to a sense of moral progress that Raz appeals to when he writes that

'as the conditions of life change we come to discover new, more abstract principles which explain the limited durability of moral verities hitherto believed to be eternal, and, at the same time, we come to believe that the previous generations were in part mistaken about morality, and that what we now see as the lapsed principles were not exactly as people then believed them to be'.<sup>362</sup>

This sense of progress is not, for the reasons that I have argued before, supplemented with a comprehensive elaboration along the Popperian lines. Instead, Raz claims that 'morality continuously and endlessly develops towards unchanging moral principles, since every change is subsumed under a principle, old or new, which is of greater scope and generality'.<sup>363</sup>

There are two interesting points with respect to the above. Firstly, it seems that if the converging moral principles of which Raz talks about become greater in scope and generality, then I cannot see why this greater generality cannot be something similar to the commitment in the advancement of human well-being – with all the problems that this entails for his system of ideas. Secondly, it appears to me that what Raz effectively

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<sup>362</sup> *ibid.*, p. 176

<sup>363</sup> *ibid.*, p. 179



says in the comments above is that in time and under rational reflection upon experience and abstract moral notions, moral knowledge will advance and tend to converge towards a certain general direction. Structurally, this is very similar to Hayek's idea of social evolutionism and the progress of history.

Hayek claims that 'institutions and morals, language and law, have evolved by a process of cumulative growth and that it is only with and within this framework that human reason has grown and can successfully operate'.<sup>364</sup> Gray describes this argument of Hayek's as an '*evolutionist turn*' and in effect it entails the claim that 'distinct traditions and social systems, each of them a bearer of information about man and the world, enter into a practical competition with each other in which there is a tendency for error to be filtered out and an approximation to truth to occur'.<sup>365</sup> In a similar vein with Hayek, and despite his initial proclamations against full convergence and strong cognitive-realism, Raz seems to hold that there is some direction – albeit abstract and general – to moral change. That is, in the long run, the truly valuable options will persist and the repugnant ones will be filtered out. This, of course, is not going to eliminate moral conflicts since some sort of lack of convergence and disagreement will persist amongst rational agents because of ethical pluralism. This type of non-convergence, however, does not threaten the application of the structure of the Hayekian evolutionary theory in Raz's theory of value. On the contrary, Hayek welcomes the convergence only in general political and theoretical terms because, if his argument of the deterministic approach to social evolutionism was much more specific than – let's say – a general commitment to market values and liberalism, he would have to put a curb on the impact

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<sup>364</sup> Hayek, F.A., *The Constitution of Liberty*; (London and New York, 1960 [1999]), p. 57

<sup>365</sup> Gray, J., *Hayek on Liberty*; (London and New York: Routledge, 1998 [3<sup>rd</sup> ed.]), p. 135

of *spontaneity* and the inherent element of disagreement and conflict that the latter entails. Similarly Raz, *qua* his commitment to moral objectivism, would wish to set a boundary within which moral non-convergence can be allowed and tolerated. It is on the basis of this wish that I argued previously that Raz's theory of value may end up resembling that of Kekes'.

Despite Hayek's explicit assertion of his commitment to evolutionism at the expense of rationalism<sup>366</sup> he does, at the end of the day, have to advocate some sort of rationalistic belief with regards to the conviction that natural selection will give rise to an outcome which is more robust and more likely to be free of error than its defeated and void counterpart. As Gray puts it, 'Hayek's evolutionist view of human social development, in imposing a naturalistic scheme of interpretation on history, may...do violence to the sheer contingency of historical events'.<sup>367</sup> In a similar manner, and in spite of Raz's attempt to accommodate social and cultural contingency, the belief in the evolutionary progress of moral change will have to presuppose a commitment similar to Mill's belief in meliorism.

For instance, I believe that Raz would argue that the imprisonment of Oscar Wilde, which was effectively - albeit not explicitly - due to his homosexuality, was wrong and that such judicial practices should not be practised let alone promoted nowadays. I have already discussed, however, that Raz's theory of parochial concepts is such that it makes the communication of any moral truth to disagreeing moral perceivers an open-ended endeavour. It seems to me that the only way for Raz to safeguard the claim to the truth of the statement that one ought not to be persecuted for their sexual

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<sup>366</sup> In Hayek, F.A., *The Constitution of Liberty*; (London and New York, 1960 [1999]), pp. 59-67.

<sup>367</sup> Gray, J., *Hayek on Liberty*; (London and New York: Routledge, 1998 [3<sup>rd</sup> ed.]), p. 138

preferences *per se*, is to appeal to a view according to which our moral beliefs have progressed enough so as to be able to consider practices, such as the persecution in question, for what they actually are, i.e. repugnant.

Such an account would not explain how, but only why – i.e. due to a belief in meliorism – and in what direction moral change would occur. Nevertheless, in the absence of an adequately clear account of *how* moral change might occur, scepticism about Raz's parochial value theory is legitimate – since moral change appears to be an integral part of it. Moreover, Raz's discussion of moral change is at the same time subject to a number of other shortfalls. The first shortfall, which refers to the tension between the rationalist and sceptical elements, is shared by both Hayek's and Raz's theories. Gray, writes with respect to Hayek's argument that

'it is after all, a rational insight of his social theory that allows Hayek to identify some components of modern morality as destabilising the market order. If the rational claims of his social theory are in this way to take precedence over important elements in the fund of tacit understanding shared by modern populations, then the evolutionist endorsement of man's random walk in historical space has been withdrawn'.<sup>368</sup>

As a consequence, Gray adds, 'the unity of Hayek's thought is endangered by the uncertainty at its very centre as to the relations of tacit knowledge with theoretical insight in political life'.<sup>369</sup> Similarly, if Raz's thought were to advocate an evolutionary theory of moral progress, then it would also be subject to the tension between rationalism and its appreciation for diversity and particularism. This tension would be even more severe if

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<sup>368</sup> *ibid.*, p. 139

<sup>369</sup> *ibid.*

his system of ideas advocated an evolutionism, such as Hayek's, which is in turn already subject to the very same problem.

Related to this is also the extent to which Raz would like to commit to an idea of moral progress similar to Hayek's evolutionary conception of it. Some of the pluralist variations discussed previously in the thesis, such as lexical pluralism and the comprehensive variant of reasonable pluralism, would allow for the adoption of such a position. Others, like Kekes' pluralism, would be less friendly to an evolutionary theory of moral change, since no matter what people think, the primary values are fixed under any milieu in time and space. The verdict on whether liberal perfectionism is consistent with an evolutionary approach to moral progress would depend on which one of these pluralist variations Raz would decide to base his doctrine on.<sup>370</sup>

Furthermore, an advocacy of such an evolutionary perspective on moral change would accentuate the oscillation of the Razian project between conservatism and radicalism – which I will fully specify in the next section – very much as it does in Hayek's case. In Hayek's theory of knowledge, its reliance upon existing social practices, its endorsement of social constructivism and the implications it has for his concept of social evolutionism were responsible for the criticism that it is a conservative theory. This is because if one subscribes to any sort of evolutionary theory, the outcome of which would be the survival of the fittest, the most righteous etc., then one would have to hold that the order of things should be allowed to proceed with no intervention, since the

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<sup>370</sup> If Raz were to insist that his moral doctrine develop on the basis of an untamed version of pluralism, apart from the fact that it would be inconsistent, it would also have to limit itself to the advocacy of a theory of moral progress similar to Berlin's. This approach is positivistic in a sense, since it entails the belief that, ultimately, all human beings will have access to the moral knowledge regarding which actions are repugnant. It is, nevertheless, much more subtle and limited in its aspirations from what one would expect from a positivist theory of progress.

outcome of the evolutionary process is self-emerging and self-defined. The consequence of this would be an over reliance on existing social practices in the shaping of future outcomes.

Hayek denies this attribution of conservatism in the sense that ‘though the position [he has] tried to define is also often described as “conservative”, it is very different from that to which this name has been traditionally attached’.<sup>371</sup> This, in Hayek’s view, ought to be evident because the traditional understanding of conservatism ‘may succeed in its resistance to current tendencies in slowing down undesirable developments, but, since it does not indicate another direction, it cannot prevent their continuance’.<sup>372</sup> Another reason for the above criticism, Hayek believes, is due to the prevailing conception in the history of ideas with regards to the meaning of the terms “conservatism” and “liberalism”.<sup>373</sup> The response of Hayek’s system of ideas to the above is to underline within it the presence of a very strong radical element which can be affiliated with rationalism. Gray recognises instances in his work<sup>374</sup> in which Hayek ‘does not view the free society as a necessary or inevitable terminus of cultural evolution...and acknowledges that the trend to liberty may always be defeated’.<sup>375</sup> In this sense, one could argue for the active involvement in the evolutionary process of trial and error in a manner that would rest on the rationalistic appreciation of the value of liberty.

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<sup>371</sup> Hayek, F.A., The Constitution of Liberty; (London and New York, 1960 [1999]), p. 397

<sup>372</sup> *ibid.*, p. 398

<sup>373</sup> I have implicitly and frequently referred to issues of the history of ideas with regards to the theories of “conservatism” and especially “liberalism” in this thesis, and I will continue to do so until the end of my thesis. I have approached the projection of a number of similarities between different moral and political theories as a secondary purpose of my discussions and I have used the conclusions derived from the said discussion to formulate my main arguments. However, an explicit elaboration on these issues is a vast and complicated task which falls outside the main purposes of my arguments in the thesis.

<sup>374</sup> In Hayek, F.A., Law, Legislation and Liberty: A New Statement of the Liberal Principles of Justice and Political Economy, Vol. 2: The Mirage of Social Justice; (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), referred to in Gray, J., Hayek on Liberty; (London and New York: Routledge, 1998 [3<sup>rd</sup> ed.]), Chapter six.

<sup>375</sup> Gray, J., Hayek on Liberty; (London and New York: Routledge, 1998 [3<sup>rd</sup> ed.]), p. 122

This involvement, for Gray, might at times necessitate the breakage of linkages with practices and habits of the past. At times, however, it might entail the tolerance – if not the promotion – of primordial natural instincts and morals that would oppose the Rousseauesque ideal of a society guided by rationalistic principles. Moreover, one can surely envisage instances in which the liberal commitment to individuality and the value of tradition could come into conflict. In these instances, it is far from clear which side of the argument Hayek would endorse. This is a problem which extends to liberal perfectionism.

Ultimately, it may be that liberal perfectionism fails to address the problems of moral objectivity, moral change and modernity because it finds itself trapped between the Scylla of radicalism and moral rationalism and the Charybdis of particularism and conservatism. Liberal perfectionism along with other liberal doctrines, as I argued in the first part of the thesis, must account for the incompatibility between radical value pluralism and liberalism by playing down their expectations on how pluralist, and at the same time consistently liberal, they can be. Again, on the altar of consistency and the unitary character of its system of ideas, liberal perfectionism will have to choose between the cost of either being radical or conservative. It cannot be both and at the same time overcome the obstacles it faces. The question then turns into the issue of which cost liberal perfectionism should bear – the cost of radicalism or that of conservatism?

### 3. Radicalism or Conservatism?

My argument in this section will be directed specifically at the proposal that liberal perfectionism must side with conservatism rather than radicalism. I will support this assertion both on the grounds that liberal perfectionism cannot give a clear account of moral objectivity as well as on the grounds that it cannot accommodate the idea of moral change in a parochial value theory unless it commits itself to an Oakeshottian underpinning.

Previously in the thesis, and with respect to the critique of modernity, I referred to the liberal perfectionist claim that it is the moral obligation of a state to filter out the bad options and promote the good ones. Whereas many would agree on the fact that the occurrence of utter poverty in some parts of the population is wrong and thus should be eliminated,<sup>376</sup> there is widespread disagreement about the wrongness or value of a great number of other options. Even more so, and despite the functional and cultural arguments, the promotion of autonomy even in a liberal democratic context has become a practice that lacks consensus. To the extent, however, that the values which are entailed within a social domain are accessible only via parochial means, there can be no guarantee that the values which are perceived as true are *actually* true. Furthermore, as Raz is a value pluralist, he will have to acknowledge – at least to some extent – the possibility of irresolvable clashes of different worthwhile values. In a modern multicultural context, these clashes are much more frequent and immediate.<sup>377</sup> In these cases, although the value of a practice is an ontological matter, with epistemological concerns coming into

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<sup>376</sup> Although, even in this case, one can find extreme economic neo-liberals who would hold that the endurance of extreme poverty on behalf of some parts of the population should be tolerated.

<sup>377</sup> The same can be the case an international level where the clash of incommensurable values embodied by different cultures is more obvious than ever. This is not to say that it has not been there in the past. This is only a point about the immediateness of the conflict.

play only in terms of demarcating the limits of one's ability to access this value, the decision on which practice has to be advanced and which has to be curtailed will be ultimately based on epistemology. That is, it is the value the worth of which is *perceived* via parochial means to be higher or more relevant in a context – i.e. autonomy in liberal democracies for liberal perfectionism – that will be prioritised either directly or indirectly. And since, as Raz puts it, 'the old is the source of the new',<sup>378</sup> a value and its parochial understanding is largely conditioned by already existent political, social, religious, ethnic and other contingencies. As a consequence, it becomes greatly attached and affiliated to already established practices in society. When the society in focus is the liberal democratic one and it is faced with the input of different values and beliefs that contradict its basic premises, then a decision in favour of these basic premises – for instance, promotion of autonomy – coincides with established practices and is in this sense conservative.

This characterization is further supported by Raz's view that there may be contexts in which autonomy is not a necessary ingredient of the good life and as such it need not be promoted.<sup>379</sup> This constitutes an exemplification of the fact that liberal perfectionism is based on a theory the prescriptions of which are the outcome of the specific liberal perfectionist locale. Theories whose locale is a different one, the liberal perfectionist holds, can very well prioritize values other than that of autonomy. Moreover, this conservative behaviour is consistent with that of an ethical pluralist who, despite the fact that she cannot insulate herself completely from rationalistic and more

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<sup>378</sup> Raz, J.; *Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 193

<sup>379</sup> I have discussed this in Chapter Five.



radical accounts of morality, such as Platonic morality, values moral empiricism and particularism.<sup>380</sup>

In effect, I argue that the reason liberal perfectionism cannot face the critique from modernity is due to the fact that it does not openly endorse the strong element of conservatism that permeates it. This is not to say that it ought to give up on the radical and more rationalistic aspect of its thought. Instead, it goes on to say that when the two conflict, if it still wants to make the normative prescriptions that it aspires to make, conservatism must prevail.

Obviously, this is a choice that entails all the costs associated with a conservative moral and political outlook. However, an acceptance of conservatism will at least make liberal perfectionism workable in the context of modernity.

In addition, the existence of a radical tendency does not have to be suppressed altogether; it will just have to allow itself to be supervened by the conservative one when the two conflict. This latter proposition is supported by Raz's claim that radical moral change is unintelligible and that there have to be a set of values which remain fixed in order for any moral change to become intelligible. I will discuss this point in further detail very shortly, but for the time being it is important to note two things. Firstly, that Raz's theory of parochial values is one that, at least *prima facie*, accommodates my argument on the conservative characteristics of liberal perfectionism. Secondly, the relationship between conservatism and radicalism within liberal perfectionism, could allow the latter to make assessments both in terms of false consciousness and at the same time present a more radical approach to moral change than the merely simple conservative one.

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<sup>380</sup> See my discussion in Chapter Two.

Raz is right in saying that the impossibility of radical moral change does not necessarily entail the existence of only one principle which remains unchanged in the face of all other changing principles. This is only the case 'if one believes in a monolithic ethic', and is not the case for pluralists. For the latter, Raz claims, 'the message is that *many* principles must persist through any moral change, however far reaching'.<sup>381</sup> This is a rationalistic statement that stands against moral empiricism in the sense that even if everyone changes their view about a (necessarily parochial) value which had been considered worthwhile in the past, the suppression of this value or the undesirability to promote it ought to not be tolerated. This rationalist trend, however, is certainly not strong enough to characterise Raz as an adamant rationalist. On the contrary, Raz's resistance to vast, sudden and all encompassing moral changes would demarcate him as an opponent of rationalism. In this sense, and taking into account that even in the instances where moral change is gradual rather than abrupt and sudden Raz still holds that radical moral change is impossible,<sup>382</sup> Raz's system of ideas exemplifies a conservatism similar to Oakeshott's.

Oakeshott's respect for tradition stems from his specific theory of knowledge which vehemently attacks and rejects the abstract and rationalistic method of acquiring different types of knowledge – including moral – in favour of a tacit understanding of knowledge in general, and moral knowledge in particular.<sup>383</sup> Oakeshott claims that

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<sup>381</sup> Raz, J.; *Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 180. Italic is mine.

<sup>382</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 179-181

<sup>383</sup> He argues this in his essays 'Rationalism in Politics' and 'Rational Conduct' in Oakeshott, M., *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991).

‘the morality of the Rationalist is the morality of the self-conscious pursuit of moral ideals and the appropriate form of moral education is by precept, by the presentation and explanation of moral principles. This is presented as a higher morality (the morality of the free man: there is no end to the clap-trap) than that of habit, the unselfconscious following of tradition of moral behaviour. In morality, as in everything else, the Rationalist aims to begin by getting rid of inherited nescience and to fill the blank nothingness of an open mind with the items of certain knowledge which he abstracts from his personal experience, and which he believes to be approved by the common ‘reason’ of mankind’.<sup>384</sup>

Oakeshott’s dislike for rationalism is so intense that even Raz’s claim to moral objectivity in the context of a parochial value theory might have appeared suspect. Nevertheless, the above statement against ‘getting rid of inherited nescience’ is in line with Raz’s rejection of radical moral change. In Oakeshott’s case the rejection of rationalistic radicalism takes place on the grounds that the practice of what Popper would call canvas-cleaning fails to appreciate the graveness of the loss of tacit knowledge that is inherent in already existing traditions and institutions and of which nearly everyone makes unconscious use. Similarly, as I have already mentioned, Raz thinks that *radical* moral change – even when it is gradual – cannot occur because it will be unintelligible. It has to be said, however, that this can by no means be regarded as a definitely valid and conclusive claim since it might be disproved in light of new evidence. For some it might have even been disproved already if one accounts for radical changes in the value

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<sup>384</sup> ‘Rationalism in Politics’ in **Oakeshott, M.**, Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991), p. 40.

domains of non-Christian communities after their contact with Christian values.<sup>385</sup>

Whether this change happened due to an imposition or due to the active and willing endorsement of the values in question is of no significance for the argument here. What is important is that, in consequence, radical moral change – if such it were – became intelligible.

Yet, there is an important difference between Oakeshott's conservatism and Raz's argument against radical change which, nevertheless, I believe can ultimately be overcome. Oakeshott seems to claim that radical change *should not* occur because it entails great loss of tacit knowledge. This knowledge cannot be retrieved after the occurrence of radical social or moral change, since it cannot be theorised and can be found only imbedded within existing institutions. When the latter perish, the knowledge that they involve will also be lost. Raz, in contrast, seems to suggest that radical moral change is not something which is undesirable; for him, it would be meaningless to think such a proposition. Instead, Raz seems to suggest that radical moral change is, actually, impossible.

In fact, though, this is a position to which Oakeshott would be very sympathetic. Oakeshott's conviction stems from his appreciation of tacit knowledge and in his conviction of the wide – often unconscious and not actively intended – use that is made of it. As a consequence, when Oakeshott refers to moral knowledge and its influence and importance to moral behaviour, he rejects the claim that moral behaviour can be based on

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<sup>385</sup> See for instance **Mullins, M., Susumum S. & Swanson, P. L. [eds.]**; Religion and Society in Modern Japan, (Berkeley, Asian Humanities Press: 1993) for essays on the encounter between Shinto, Buddhism and Christianity in Japan. Also, see **Collins, W.J.H.**; 'Common Ground in Christianity and Buddhism', *Japanese Religions*, 7(3): 1972, pp. 29-41 for an argument that the change of the moral code introduced by Christianity was not completely alien and radical to the local one rooted in Buddhism – which in this context would verify Oakeshott's argument.

moral knowledge that springs up from a *tabula rasa* position. Moral behaviour will have to make use of what moral knowledge has been provided by the past. Thus, Oakeshott thinks that,

‘the notion that a knowledge of how to behave can be permanently replaced by something else just as good, and the notion that the patient must be allowed (or even encouraged) to die in order that he may start life again on new and firmer foundations, will be entertained only by those who are wholly ignorant of the nature of moral activity’.<sup>386</sup>

As a consequence, in the same essay, ‘Rational Conduct’, Oakeshott proposes that the remedy for a disrupted moral activity which is attributed to either some sort of natural disaster or ‘to mechanical intervention’, is the transfusion of ‘ideals, principles, etc...[which] are themselves drawn from the ailing moral tradition’.<sup>387</sup> The above are a very strong indication that in Oakeshott’s theory of moral knowledge, extreme radicalism is not only undesirable but, also, impossible. Raz, like Oakeshott, holds that ‘values are an acquired taste’ and an ‘acculturation’ to these values ‘presupposes social practices into which one grows, or which one acquires later by habituation’.<sup>388</sup> As a consequence, it is safe to conclude that both theories pay tribute to the importance of the tacit and the local elements in the understanding of morality for similar reasons.

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<sup>386</sup> ‘Rational Conduct’ in Oakeshott, M., *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991), p. 128

<sup>387</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>388</sup> Raz, J.; *Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 193. Raz is not alone in this view since amongst others it is advocated by McDowell with regards to the translatability and intelligibility of moral values in Gadamer’s work in McDowell, J., ‘Gadamer and Davidson on Understanding and Relativism’, in Malpas, J., Answald, U. and Kertscher, J. [eds.], *Gadamer’s Century, Essays in Honor of Hans-Georg Gadamer*; (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), pp. 173-193

Furthermore, it is worth noting here that the two theories are similar in their limitations as well. For instance, neither the Oakeshottian theory of tacit knowledge nor the Razian theory of parochial values explain how moral values come into being. In addition, none of the above theories offer any very explicit or clear idea of how moral change occurs. To the extent that they do, Oakeshott's theory seems to offer a more explicit, albeit far from neat, explanation than Raz's theory does. Oakeshott maintains that there are two different ways to incorporate the moral knowledge passed on by tradition into moral behaviour. The first is to do so dogmatically and unreflectively. The second is to contemplate on the knowledge of the said moral propositions *and* to try to embody them successfully into actual moral behaviour; a task which is by no means easy.

So far I have argued that even though liberal perfectionism oscillates between conservatism and radicalism, when it does have to choose only one of the two, the overall outlook of its system of ideas best fits that of conservatism. In this respect, the conservatism that the Razian system of ideas exemplifies is very similar to that of Oakeshott's.

One crucial difference between the two, however, is that in spite of the high importance that Raz places on the claim that 'values are creatures of culture', and as such it is through culture that we approach them, he also claims that there are 'basic values' which 'have roots in human nature (as do basic human vices)'.<sup>389</sup> There is no such account of basic human values that are derived from a specific conception of human nature in Oakeshott. The closest thing to such a claim that Oakeshott's theory might have would be the – far from unproblematic – argument that some such values have been

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<sup>389</sup> **Raz, J.**; Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 193

carried on and are embodied in the existing institutions of liberal democracies. An account of values which have roots in human nature, however, can be found in the theory of another conservative thinker, that of John Kekes. In Chapter Two I referred extensively to Kekes' theory of primary and secondary values and the manner in which this theory categorised the importance of values according to the importance of the human needs which they fulfilled. Raz here seems to point in a similar direction.

However, a dilemma, according to which Raz's system of ideas must choose to side either with Oakeshott's or Kekes' theory, is inappropriate. In fact, it seems to me that the two can complement each other expertly in the context of parochial value theory and its application to liberal perfectionism. Specifically, Raz can hold a parochial value theory which is underpinned by an Oakeshottian theory of moral knowledge on the basis of which he can then go on to argue for a pluralist ethical theory of primary and secondary values which in turn can be used as a basis for the construction of his liberal perfectionist doctrine. That is, the liberal perfectionist argument for the promotion of autonomy can be made on the grounds that through tradition, long established practices and habits in the modern liberal context, we have found that if one is to flourish as a human being, one can do so – in the context of the particular milieu – only when one operates under conditions of the Razian autonomy. That is, by using a combination of Oakeshottian conservatism and a Kekesian pluralist structure in terms of the classification of values, a liberal perfectionist can make a case for the inclusion of autonomy in the domain of primary values in certain cultural contexts. As a consequence, the promotion of autonomy in this context is normatively obligatory and failure to promote it constitutes wrongdoing.

Of course, this thesis is subject to the critique from modernity. In the argument above, however, Raz can brush this critique aside as the point he makes is in essence a parochial one that has affinities to an Oakeshottian conservative theory and, as a consequence, does have solid claims to the objectivity of the value of autonomy. Even so, he is still able to present a liberal perfectionism which characterises the failure to promote autonomy in modern liberal democracies as moral failure.

There is a cost in such an approach. Liberal perfectionism does not face head on, and does not argue its way out from, the critique of modernity. It just accepts and learns to live with the costs that this critique entails. The critique of modernity is not dispersed by the stance that I propose liberal perfectionism should adopt. What I have proposed, nevertheless, offers a manner of accommodating the critique in question, which is consistent with Raz's overall system of ideas. This is because the view that autonomy ought not to be promoted on the grounds that it is not a necessary ingredient of the good life would be considered a radical moral change from the already established moral code of a liberal society, and as such it could not be made intelligible to those raised and acculturated in a modern liberal context.

Earlier, I effectively argued that given that for Raz values are necessarily parochial ones, there can be no case made according to which primary values are derived by appeal to human nature alone. Parochial value theory demands that it is derived by appeal to human nature with the simultaneous realisation that the latter is conceived *via* parochial means. This means that a Kekesian view about values may have either one – but not more than one at the same time – of the following three statuses. First, Kekes – or any other theory using the basic framework of his primary/secondary value distinction



but not necessarily the exact content of the primary and secondary value domains that Kekes uses – is right about what constitutes our human nature and his account of it is the only true one. Second, such an account is wrong about human nature and, hence, about primary values. Third, the Kekesian view is right about what constitutes our human nature, but is not unique in its rightness. Human nature can have many instantiations some of which are accounted for by theories with which the Kekesian moral outlook is not acculturated with and whose views with regards to human nature are equally valid to those of the Kekesian moral theory.

One of the problems with the Razian account of parochial morality and the similarities that I have argued it bears to the Popperian theory of knowledge is that, strictly speaking, it can never rule out the possibility of the occurrence of the second status. That is, it can never make an irrefutable argument for the objectivity of any moral view. Furthermore, irrespectively of whether it is actually possible or not to present such an objective theory of value, the fact remains that *if* it is not, then many of the important and basic values advocated by a group of moral agents – no matter how this is defined – will never be intelligible and successfully communicated to different groups. This is because it is both the case that some of these different groups lack the epistemic means to access some of these values and also because – even if the mastering of the epistemic means were possible in theory – the long process of acculturation and familiarization with different world views about morality would be a practical impossibility. As Michael Stocker puts it in his discussion on the intelligibility of bad acts in Raz's thought, 'what is good in the present sense...does not make the act good at all in any way whatsoever; or,

not to beg the question, in any other way whatsoever'.<sup>390</sup> What Stocker points at here is Raz's claim that the fact that the appreciation of a value on a local level does not imply that it is valuable only in a socially relativistic manner,<sup>391</sup> under no circumstances safeguards the attribution of objectivity to any kind of moral judgement. In this sense, Gray's critique of Raz's thought with respect to the particularistic character of the functional and cultural arguments is still relevant.

I partly discussed the validity of the third status of Kekes' approach to values in my discussion of his theory of primary and secondary values.<sup>392</sup> There, I referred to the likelihood of the existence of incommensurable and competing values within the primary domain. On the contrary, Kekes – wrongly, I argued – acknowledges the existence of such values only within the secondary domain. The problems which I identified from my discussion of this issue and the problems that this third status of the Kekesian moral claim can cause for Raz's system of ideas are very similar. Furthermore, they are very similar to the problems that were presented in the situation where the second status of the Kekesian moral claim was given. That is, there is no improvable or indisputable claim to simple moral objectivity which can be made by liberal perfectionism on behalf of the values that it considers to be part of the primary domain. This is exemplified in two distinct manners.

On the one hand, one could be presented with competing incommensurable primary values between which there is no rational way to decide. On the other hand, one

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<sup>390</sup> Stocker, M., 'Raz on the Intelligibility of Bad Acts' in Wallace, R., J., Pettit, P., Scheffler, S., Smith, M. [eds.], *Reason and Value: Themes from the Philosophy of Joseph Raz*; (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 331

<sup>391</sup> I have previously discussed this argument with relevance to Gray's critique of Raz's thought with respect to the particularistic character of the functional and cultural arguments.

<sup>392</sup> See Chapter Two.

may be presented with different primary values in one context from the ones that would be presented in another.

Moreover, in the context of modernity, the divergent opinions on the content of the primary value domain can exist within the same social and political context. When none of these divergent views is mistaken, i.e. when they both conform to objectively valuable moral truths, the value-pluralist situation of competing and incommensurable values within the primary domain will occur, thus posing an obstacle for the liberal perfectionist claim for the promotion of autonomy. This stalemate, however, can be overcome by advocating a conservative outlook similar to the Oakeshottian one that was discussed previously in the chapter. What this implies, effectively, is an advocacy of a less radical pluralist outlook which would allow the overriding of one value for the sake of another. As I have argued in the first part of the thesis, this can be done in many ways – some of them being more rationalistic than others. An advocacy of Oakeshottian conservatism will accommodate liberal perfectionist values in a costly, yet more satisfactory manner to all other possible alternatives (monism, radicalism etc.), which are unsuccessful in supporting a valid liberal perfectionist theory.

The occurrence of the first status, i.e. the situation in which a moral claim that recognizes the structure of the primary/secondary distinction makes a statement that is true – and no other statement on the issue in focus can have a claim to truth – is in fact the one whose truth Raz is most likely to recognize. This is because, as I have discussed elsewhere in the chapter, Raz holds that there are some general principles towards which morality tends to converge in the long run via a process of moral clashes and continuous re-evaluations between and within different moral outlooks. I have also claimed,

however, that evidence so far does not support the view on the convergence towards some abstract – *but not necessarily commensurable and harmonious* – principles. On the contrary, modernity and multiculturalism make an argument for the ever escalating divergence of moral beliefs. Furthermore, the arguments for this eventual convergence which Raz seems to advocate are very unclear within his writings, whereas the arguments of *how exactly* this convergence will come about are non-existent. Again, the conclusion here is that what Raz exemplifies through his belief in the emancipation of moral progress in the form of convergence in general moral principles, is a melioristic belief similar to the one espoused by Mill.

In addition, the meliorist element in Raz's theory is crucial for the working of his liberal perfectionist system of ideas in terms of moral change, as its absence would signify the crossing over from a conservative ethical and political doctrine that can be suspicious to moral change and reactionary to radical moral change into a stagnant and rigid doctrine in the context of which, moral change, and thus ultimate convergence of moral beliefs, would be scarce. Raz asserts that 'some moral philosophers regard ethics as limited by tradition, with the conversation of the deaf being conducted across the boundaries of traditions.'<sup>393</sup> A necessary consequence of that, he goes on to say, would be that 'multiculturalism imports the existence of a moral chasm between different traditions and communities in society'.<sup>394</sup> As indicated elsewhere in the chapter, however, Raz had argued against this position since he believes that 'there is a morality which applies to all the traditions and the cultures, a morality which bridges the divide between them'.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>393</sup> Raz, J.; *Engaging Reason: On the Theory of Value and Action*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 181

<sup>394</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>395</sup> *ibid.*

Without this qualification, Raz's political doctrine would be virtually identical to the conservative one espoused by Oakeshott, since moral and political practice – both in the international and increasingly in the national societal arena – indicate that the convergence is but a figment of the imagination.

Moreover, an ethical pluralist is very likely to hold that people with divergent views on morality base their beliefs on equally rational approaches. Of course, a moral pluralist does allow for both simple and ephemeral, as well as for deep and fundamental, epistemic wrongness but then, as I have argued before, the transmutability of such a position to the party which is in the wrong is often impossible.<sup>396</sup> As a consequence, any normative recommendation given by liberal perfectionism, such as the priority of the promotion of autonomy, would be particular to the group that generates the said recommendation. This will be either because autonomy is promoted *only* because it is objective from an – unattainable according to parochial value theory – Archimedean point of view, or because it is particular – or *also happens to be* particular – to the western liberal context. If the former is the case, the ethical pluralist would have to dive too deep into her rationalistic inclinations in order to claim that it is her belief – and not the opposing one – which is actually morally true. In the context of a parochial theory of value which Raz advocates, however, making such a proposal is near impossible due to the parochial nature of all moral knowledge. On the contrary, if she acknowledges that this is an impossible thesis to hold, she effectively subscribes to a conservative moral

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<sup>396</sup> Here I assume that if the other party were to accept the thesis that it is wrong about a moral view, it would mean that the moral view in focus is, indeed, wrong. Of course, this is not always the case since two or more dissenting parties could agree on a false moral view. So it is worth stressing here that I am actually referring to rational individuals who, when they form a group, that group is rational as well. As a consequence, their consent on the view that their epistemology is wrong would make it wrong. The same holds that two agreeing rational parties could not agree on a wrong moral view.

theory along the Oakeshottian line. The Oakeshottian line also offers a rather elaborate theory of moral knowledge which pays tribute to the close relationship between ethical pluralism and empiricism<sup>397</sup> but fails to address the Razian belief in some sort of – even loose – convergence on pan-human general moral principles. This is why it needs to be also complemented by Raz's theory of parochial values.

Liberal perfectionism must advocate a non-rational – albeit not necessarily irrational – sense of optimism about the prospects of the convergence of moral beliefs. This will result into the shaping of Raz's basic framework of ethical values into one that recognizes the Kekesian-style dichotomy between primary and secondary values, in the context of which autonomy would belong to the primary domain.

In a nutshell, Raz has to inject the element of meliorism in his theory of moral progress, and in doing so share all the criticisms which can be directed against Mill's commitment to meliorism. By doing so, his conservatism acquires the tools to tolerate within it some variety of moral beliefs and is open to gradual re-evaluation within the limits of an already existent morality, which is understood in terms of parochial value theory.

#### **4. Conclusion**

A great deal of my investigation in this chapter had to do with my attempt to establish the presence of a theory of moral progress within Raz's theory of parochial values. Moreover, I discussed the issue of how one grasps objectively worthwhile values according to Raz's parochial value theory. In this respect I found parochial value theory

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<sup>397</sup> See my discussion in Chapter Two.

to be not as convincing as Raz would have hoped. The main reason for this was the inability of parochial value theory to make a case which could be insulated from the danger of an eventual collapse into moral subjectivism. Moreover, if the objectivist traits in Raz's theory were reinforced, the resulting doctrine would be too strongly objectivist and rationalistic for it to pay adequate tribute to the sensitivity that liberal perfectionism and parochial value theory aim to show towards the contingencies surrounding and influencing moral agents.

Furthermore, an application of parochial value theory in liberal perfectionism further intensifies the oscillation between radicalism and conservatism. I argued that for the sake of the coherence of the liberal perfectionist system of ideas, this oscillation must be resolved. This can happen by liberal perfectionism endorsing either radicalism or conservatism. Liberal perfectionism cannot feasibly be based on the former because of Raz's refutation to the effect that radical moral change is impossible. On the contrary, after I examined a number of similarities between liberal perfectionism and Popper's and Hayek's theories, I concluded that if liberal perfectionism is to be a valid theory it will have to necessarily advocate a conservatism which resembles aspects of both the Oakeshottian and Kekesian conservatisms as well as an advocacy of some kind of meliorism in the context of parochial value theory.

The latter cannot result from a process according to which moral knowledge accumulates like scientific knowledge accumulates in Popper's theory, because Raz would resist the adoption of an approach which tends to equate scientific and moral knowledge. Similarly, Raz's system of ideas could not allow for a Hayekian evolutionist view about the advancement of moral knowledge either. The exact mechanism of such

advancement would be very hard to exemplify while Hayekian evolutionist theory has implications with which liberal perfectionism would be ill at ease.

Of course, by advocating the amalgamation of variable theoretical inputs, liberal perfectionism will share the merits as well as the weaknesses and ambiguities of these theories. But this is a price that needs to be paid.



## CONCLUSION

### 1. A Brief Overview of the Argument

The main aim of the thesis, which was prompted by Raz's attempt to reconcile pluralism and liberal perfectionism, was to deal with the pluralist critique of liberalism which claims that pluralism and liberalism are incompatible. There have been many responses to the above critique all of which overlook the fact that Berlin's discussion of value pluralism, though important, does not exhaust the terrain. Without turning the thesis into a discussion of meta-ethics and the proof or disproof of value pluralism, in the first part of the thesis I investigated a variety of candidate pluralist theories other than the Berlinian one and their relation to different liberal theories. I did this as a prelude to examining Raz's own peculiar approach to pluralism and liberalism and their potential reconciliation. My discussion of Raz's attempt to reconcile pluralism and liberalism extends to the discussion of this view of autonomy and his theory of value as these are relevant.

It is important to stress that, even though the argument which I present in the second part of the thesis follows from that in the first part, some aspects of the argument in either one of the two parts can also stand independently. Such aspects of my argument are, for instance, my discussion of Raz's theory of parochial values in the second part, or my argument that different value pluralisms are compatible with different liberalisms in the first part.

My argument in the thesis developed as follows. First, I discussed Berlin's idea of value pluralism and identified some of its strengths and weaknesses. Amongst other things, I elaborated on the relationship between Berlinian value pluralism with relativism and monism. More importantly, though, I delineated an area of pluralist discourse in the context of which my elaboration and evaluation of other pluralist doctrines took place.

Then I presented pluralist variations which were less radical than the untamed Berlinian view on pluralism and I went on to examine the compatibility of these pluralist variations with different liberal theories. I argued that Mill's liberalism is compatible with a Kekesian pluralist morality or with lexical value pluralism, an argument which I also made for Rawls' liberalism in *A Theory of Justice*. Moreover, if it is to be considered a comprehensive doctrine, I found Rawls' liberal theory in *Political Liberalism*, to be compatible with lexical pluralism and reasonable pluralism – or even with some aspects of Kekes' pluralism. If it is to be considered a political doctrine, Rawls' theory in *Political Liberalism* can be compatible with a *modus vivendi* understanding of reasonableness. I also examined the compatibility of Raz's liberal perfectionism with different pluralist positions. Like the previous liberalisms that I examined, the liberal perfectionist system of ideas exemplified similarities with Kekes' pluralism. This is an important observation as the above similarity becomes apparent again in my more detailed examination of liberal perfectionism in the second part of the thesis where I examine in greater detail the reasons for the incompatibility between liberal perfectionism and radical pluralism.

This concluded the first part of the thesis. At the beginning of the second part I presented my understanding of Raz's liberal perfectionism and I identified three main

problems with it. The first had to do with the compatibility between his perfectionist aspirations and his commitment to non-linear pluralism. The second problem had to do with the exact role of autonomy in the liberal perfectionist system of ideas. The third problem had to do with the exact nature of the value of autonomy; an issue which extended into the more general issue of the theory of objectivity which is advocated by liberal perfectionism.

The issue of the compatibility between liberal perfectionism and radical pluralism had a straightforward negative answer. The second issue refers to whether Raz attaches an intrinsic, a universal, or an instrumental value to autonomy. I argued that at the very least Raz hints implicitly that autonomy is valued not universally, but intrinsically. However, one cannot dismiss some explicit references in his work which state that autonomy is valuable instrumentally. This discussion led my argument to the third issue which regards the ambiguities within parochial value theory – since it appears that the characteristics that Raz attributed to the value of autonomy are those of a parochial value. As a consequence, the ambiguities of parochial value theory also affect liberal perfectionism and, hence, its reconciliation with pluralism.

My conclusion that parochial value theory is not fully compelling was not followed by a comprehensive solution regarding the challenges that parochial value theory and, as a consequence, liberal perfectionism face. After all, even if some of these challenges are indicative of philosophical shortfalls, the very same shortfalls can also be approached as strengths in the sense that they attempt to combine moral objectivity with a respect for the moral deliberation of agents under non-ideal conditions.

My final argument in the thesis is that the ambiguities in Raz's theory exemplified themselves as a wavering between radicalism and conservatism which can only be settled by the admission that, if Raz's theory is to be coherent, it will have to commit itself to either radicalism or conservatism. My conclusion on this issue was that it is a version of the latter that liberal perfectionism should ultimately advocate.

## **2. Some Challenges**

The argument I presented in the thesis, a summary of which I stated above, is not immune from challenges. Some of these have come up during the development of my argument while others are stated and defended here for the first time. This is not to say that what follows is an exhaustive list of all the potential criticisms. It is, nevertheless, a list of issues which I deem must be acknowledged explicitly and answered directly.

Some early challenges to the argument in the thesis might appear as early as my elaborations on Berlinian value pluralism. One could claim that by not taking a stance on the truth or falsity of the theory of radical pluralism I undermine my assertion that different liberalisms are compatible with different pluralisms. This is because the truth or falsity of Berlinian pluralism would affect the truth or falsity of any one of the other pluralist variations which I presented, as if pluralism is to make any credible claims to objectivity, it could not be the case that more than one pluralist theory is true at the same time. Similarly, this challenge goes on, even if it is assumed that Berlinian value pluralism is not true, it would still be wrong to present as credible alternatives to radical pluralism all the pluralist variations together the way I did. This would be due to the fact that, again, if pluralism is to make a serious claim to objectivity, then only one of these

pluralist variations – if any – ought to be true. As a consequence, my argument might be based on premises which, at least in some cases, are wrong. So, for instance, if lexical pluralism is a true ethical theory, then the compatibility between a form of liberalism and another pluralist variation ought to be uninteresting since the compatibility in question would be one between a liberal theory and an already false ethical pluralist theory.

By no means do I take this challenge lightly in the thesis. To my knowledge, however, there has been no final proof or disproof of either Berlinian, lexical, or reasonable pluralism, as there has also been no proof or disproof of Kekes' pluralist theory of primary and secondary values. Should an argument of this sort ever present itself, then parts of my assertions in the thesis can be considered void or in need of revision in light of the philosophical evidence in question. Nonetheless, in the absence of such compelling arguments, it is legitimate for me to examine the compatibility between different liberalisms and all the different pluralist variations that I have discussed, since any one of the latter might be true.

Another challenge that can be advanced against my arguments in the thesis deals with the use I make of my elaboration of Berlinian value pluralism in Chapter Two. In order to make this challenge intelligible it is necessary to offer a brief overview of my intended use of the ideas presented in that chapter. My discussion of Berlinian value pluralism served four purposes. First, it examined the most widespread conception of value pluralism which, I then argued, is not unique. Second, I argued that Berlinian pluralism is incompatible with any type of liberalism. Third, I used radical value pluralism as a basis for my expansion on Kekes' pluralism and on the pluralist variations I presented in Chapter Three of the thesis. Fourth, through my discussion of radical value

pluralism I came up with a minimal general area of value pluralist discourse from which no liberal theory that aims to have pluralist allusions should fall outside.

The critique I am referring to here has to do with the fourth use of my elaboration on Berlinian value pluralism. This is because I do not actually come up with a specific set of criteria that a pluralist theory should fulfill in order for it to be considered pluralist. For instance, although I discuss the issue of the relation between radical pluralism and rationalism, I do not come up with a specific proposal as to how much rationalism a theory can withstand for it to still be considered pluralist. Furthermore, when I discuss the relation between radical pluralism and moral relativism, I do not make precise claims about how relativistic a pluralist theory could be – given that a pluralist theory is objective yet more relativistic than a Platonic monistic one. Since, the critique in question claims, I do not make such precise and explicit remarks about the relation between radical pluralism and other ethical theories and since, as a consequence, I do not delineate a *clear* domain of value pluralist criteria, the issue of how I can make use of my elaborations in order to delineate an area of pluralist discourse arises.

The answer to this is that I do so with approximation and on a case by case basis. So, for instance, my assertion that lexical pluralism is much closer to monism than Berlinian pluralism is not quantifiable in terms of the exact extent to which the two pluralist positions differ with regards to their relation with monism. Instead, I make a claim which is approximate on the one hand, but also indicative of the characteristics and the implications of the two theories, on the other. As a consequence, a case by case approach on the issue of which theory qualifies as pluralism is defensible.

Another challenge which could be advanced against my assertions in the thesis is the one which claims that I do not offer a definite assessment on the truth or falsity of parochial value theory. Again, this challenge can be rebutted in the same way I rejected the challenge regarding my elaborations on the theory of value pluralism. That is, I have appreciated the strengths and weaknesses of parochial value theory and discussed both the difficulties that it faces as well as what it has to offer to the liberal perfectionist theory. An actual rendering of judgment on the truth or falsity of parochial value theory would be an extremely large project which would go well beyond the scope of the present thesis. My discussion of parochial value theory took place because it was relevant to the nature of the value of autonomy, which was in its turn relevant to the priority of autonomy within liberalism, and as a consequence, to the reconciliation between liberal perfectionism and some form of pluralism.

In this section of the conclusion I have presented and defended my arguments in the thesis against some challenges that I deemed might be advanced against them. Moreover, as I have mentioned at the beginning of the section, this is by no means an exhaustive account of the possible – nor, maybe, the most forceful – criticisms that can be proposed against the arguments in question.

### **3. The Contributions**

My aim in this section is to outline some of the contributions that the argument in the present thesis offers both in terms of the pluralist critique of liberalism as well as in terms of the other issues which are discussed in the thesis and which pertain to Raz's value pluralism and liberalism.

First, I presented in a very explicit manner alternative pluralist theories which have on the one hand been very much prevalent in the writings of pluralist liberal thinkers but which, on the other, apart from very few instances,<sup>398</sup> have not been explicitly referred to or had their significance recognized. In this way I argued that Berlin's view of pluralism, though important, is not unique.

Also, by applying this observation to the pluralist critique of liberalism, I argued that different liberal theories are compatible with different pluralisms. In doing so I offered a way out of the deadlock which appears in the debates on the compatibility between radical pluralism (which is the version of pluralism to which the debates in question implicitly refer to) and liberalism. I claimed that no liberal theory – including Berlin's – can be compatible with Berlin's radical version of pluralism and that attempts to disprove this position are bound to fail – because of the deeply radical and untamed character of Berlin's ethical theory. Instead, I proposed that a more constructive way of going about the issue is to argue for the compatibility between different liberalisms with different versions of pluralism in the sense that different liberal theories must commit themselves to pluralisms which are less radical than the Berlinian one and whose individual characteristics also differ from those of other pluralist variations. This compatibility comes at a cost, for in the situation that I describe liberal theories must play down their pluralist allusions – different liberal theories to different degrees, depending on the pluralist variation to which they are compatible.

More importantly, even if one disagrees with the specific compatibilities between liberalisms and pluralisms that I propose, the originality and validity of the contribution

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<sup>398</sup> Newey in Newey, G., *After Politics: The rejection of Politics in Contemporary Liberal Philosophy*; (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave, 2001), Chapter Four, is such an instance.



which I presented above is, I believe, still compelling. This is because, even if one assumes an error in the specific arguments that I make with regard to the compatibility between different liberalisms and different pluralisms, the overall thrust of the argument can still be retained despite its exemplification in different specific terms with regards to the compatibility in question.

In addition, the arguments in the second part of the thesis make specific contributions to the debate on Raz's system of ideas. In Chapter Five I argued that Raz's simultaneous commitment, on the one hand, to non-linear pluralism and the use of what he calls 'weak pluralism' as a basis for his liberal perfectionism, on the other, is problematic. It has to be noted, nevertheless, that I found this position to be problematic insofar as Raz argued for the truth of one ethical theory (non-linear pluralism) but based his liberalism on another (weak pluralism). The claim that liberal perfectionism is compatible with weak pluralism is in itself to some extent consistent with the argument I proposed in the first part of the thesis.

With reference to this claim, I further refined Raz's assertion that liberal perfectionism is compatible with what he calls weak pluralism, by specifying the exact pluralist variations with which liberal perfectionism is compatible. Also, even if one disagrees with the actual conclusion of my analysis of the compatibility in question, my assessment, according to which Raz's view on this compatibility is in need of further refinement along the general framework that I proposed, is still valid.

Furthermore, my assessment that if Raz's theory of liberal perfectionism is to be coherent, it will have to resolve its wavering between radicalism and conservatism is another contribution to the liberal perfectionist debate. After a comparative analysis of

Raz's theory to those of Popper, Hayek, Oakeshott and Kekes I concluded that liberal perfectionism is permeated by a strong conservative thread.

#### **4. Directions for Further Research**

As is evident from the above, and as it might have been evident in some parts in the main body of the thesis, there have been a number of topics which were scarcely touched upon, briefly mentioned, brushed aside altogether or not discussed to their full potential. This was either because those issues were beyond the scope of the essay (i.e. the truth or falsity of value pluralism) or because due to space constraints they could not be covered in the present work.

As a consequence, there are a number of issues related to the ones covered in the thesis which have the propensity to be further investigated, either because this could not be done here or because the arguments in thesis have provided the fertile background with reference to which these issues can be expanded.

In a number of instances I have referred, whether implicitly or explicitly, to the issue of the application of Raz's liberal perfectionist theory to an international domain. I have scarcely made a distinction between the national and the international or the consequences that this may have for Raz's overall system of ideas. This is a very interesting topic which is worthy of further research.

It must also be obvious from some of my other remarks in this conclusion that, even though there has been a lot of work on the topic of pluralism, a definite philosophical proof of its truth or falsity is still lacking. Such a proof might be an unattainable objective but, to the extent that its unassailability – or lack thereof – are also

uncertain, and by taking into consideration the fact that the production of arguments which further enlighten the theory of value pluralism might alter the arguments that I make in the thesis, any work in the direction that I just described is valuable and welcome.

Moreover, the same holds for the theory of parochial values, since what I offered in the thesis in terms of the discussion of its truth was problems and challenges without a definite conclusion on their success. More research that would focus on an attempt to defend parochial values against the criticisms that I discussed, if successful, will do Raz's liberal perfectionism, and liberal theory in general, a great service.

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