

Liberalism and Value Pluralism about the Good

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One of the main themes of Isaiah Berlin's "Two Concepts of Liberty" is that the political practices most consonant certain facts about the ethical life—that values are objective, multiple, conflicting, and incommensurate—protect negative liberty and tolerate or even foster diversity. Berlin thought that "value pluralism" is true and supports liberalism. The claim that value pluralism supports liberalism admits of multiple readings. On a strong one, only liberal regimes are legitimate, nonliberal regimes never are, and appealing to value pluralism is not just one way but the best or even the only good way to defend liberal practices. On a weak reading of it, only a liberal regime is legitimate "for societies like ours," but non-liberal regimes can be legitimate for different societies with very different cultures or circumstances; further, appealing to value pluralism is only one possible way to defend the unique legitimacy of the liberal state for us, not necessarily the best or only good way. Berlin did not think that only regimes that offer extensive rights to negative liberty can be just—"to offer political rights, or safeguards against intervention by the state, to men who are half-naked, illiterate, underfed, and diseased is to mock their condition."¹ So he himself rejected the strongest version of the claim that value pluralism supports liberalism.

In this paper I critique three ways of defending Berlin's thesis: the argument from the value of diversity, an argument that value pluralism supports liberal practices by undermining the justification for non-liberal ones (e.g. bans on irreligion, fornication, homosexual sodomy, and the like), and an argument that conjoins value pluralism with values like integrity or autonomy in an effort to show that non-liberal restrictions of liberty are wrong because they harm us. All three of the arguments are present in Galston's *Liberal Pluralism*, so much of my discussion will focus on his presentation of them. Galston seems to support a strong version of Berlin's thesis: he accepts the universalist claim, and he argues that a value pluralist justification of liberalism is superior to others, especially a Millian one grounded on the value of autonomy.²

The first two sections of this paper provide a definition of value pluralism and identify some of its more striking and questionable implications. Section III criticizes the diversity argument, section IV the second of the three arguments mentioned above, and section V the third. The final section of the paper notes that value pluralism, if true, makes it more difficult to justify liberal practices and institutions, because it rules out the best, most straightforward justification of them, namely, that most people are *better off* under a liberal than a nonliberal regime. I shall not be arguing in this paper that value pluralism is false. Whether it is true is a question mainly for moral rather than political philosophy, and it turns on a number of difficult issues, such as whether it alone allows for the possibility of “rational regret” in cases requiring a choice between conflicting values or duties.³ I also do not intend to address the universalism issue (under what circumstances, if any, are non-liberal practices justifiable?). Instead, I argue *contra* Berlin, Galston, and Joseph Raz that value pluralism does not underwrite a viable defense of liberal practices even just “for us.” None of the three arguments aimed at proving Berlin’s thesis is successful, so it is unlikely that there is an interesting and persuasive argument for the unique legitimacy of liberal policies for our society in which value pluralism figures as a key premise. If anything, value pluralism undercuts the most promising line of defense of those policies.

I

All forms of value pluralism—about the right, prudential value, aesthetic value, or any other domain of value—make three claims: first, objective values are irreducibly many; second, there are conflicts (some contingent, some necessary) among them; and third, there is no best or uniquely correct trade-off among them because they are “incommensurate.” The third claim implies that where different value bearers embody

different combinations of the conflicting values, they cannot be ranked, and thus, none is best. This is the central, defining claim of value pluralism. Assuming that the pluralism/monism distinction is exclusive and exhaustive, the philosopher who holds that there are multiple conflicting values but there is always a best trade-off among them is a monist rather than a pluralist. This makes the term “monism” a misnomer.⁴

The Beatles and Led Zeppelin are incommensurate if the first exceeds the second on some dimension of rock band excellence, the second exceeds the first on some different dimension, and the two dimensions (e.g. great guitar riffs and engaging melodies) are incommensurate. The fact that the two bands are incomparable (assuming it is a fact) is consistent with their both being superior to other bands (e.g. The Monkees) not plausibly thought to exceed either of them on any significant dimension of rock excellence.⁵ To believe that there are no rational grounds for ranking *any* value bearer over any other is to be a skeptic or subjectivist about value, not a value pluralist.

Some defenders of value pluralism, including Galston, claim that the heart of their view is the denial that there are any *priority rules* or algorithms that allow us to rank different trade-offs between the conflicting values.⁶ But while value pluralism does reject all priority rules, a rejection of such rules does not distinguish the value pluralist from the monist, who can reject them too. The monist holds that even where values conflict there is always a correct ranking of the individual value bearers that embody different combinations of values. But she needn't claim that we can always know what the ranking is (maybe that requires omniscient, God-like powers), or, if we can know it, that we obtain this knowledge *via* the simple and precise discursive procedure that priority rules provide. The monist can accept a moral epistemology based on *phronesis* or intuition. The essence of value pluralism is not the epistemological claim that Galston and others advance but the metaphysical claim that wherever there are conflicting and

incommensurate values there is no fact of a best value bearer to be known—by anyone using any means whatsoever. The facts about values are (to that extent) simply indeterminate.

Value pluralism specifically about prudential value or the good life (VPG) is a species of what Derek Parfit called “objective list” theories.⁷ Such theories say that a number of different goods—such as solidarity, friendship, knowledge, autonomy, happiness, moral virtues, and skills or nonmoral excellences of various kinds—have intrinsic prudential value (contribute to how well off one is) regardless of whether they are desired or enjoyed. VPG is the view that many of the goods on the correct list conflict with each other and there is no best or uniquely correct trade-off among them. From their incommensurability both Galston and Gray infer that no one conception of the good is valid or identifies the *summum bonum* for all of us. Instead, many different conceptions of the good specifying different paths to flourishing are all equally legitimate. As Gray expresses this idea, “The human good harbours rival perfections.”⁸

VPG does not hold that all prudential values are incommensurate. On analogy with the Beatles/Led Zeppelin/Monkees example, it implies that the value of a solitary, skeptical philosopher’s life (high autonomy, no solidarity with others) is incommensurate with the value of a devout Amish farmer’s life (low autonomy, much solidarity), but both the philosopher and farmer are better off than a starved and abused slave. VPG presupposes a distinction between “higher” goods not needed for a “minimally decent common life” and “basic” goods necessary for such a life—having enough to eat, not being a slave, not being in constant fear of violent death, etc.⁹ Its incommensurability thesis applies only to the “higher” goods. This means that we may judge an individual better off in one state of affairs than another in two (and only two) sorts of cases: i) where she has “basic” goods in the one that she lacks in the other, and ii) where she has more of some higher goods and no less of any other such goods. Of course ii) would be

a case in which the higher goods are not in conflict, and VPG says that such cases are at best rare.

One more point: though VPG does not rule out that the satisfaction of one's preferences about the shape of one's life is a prudential good (no objective list theory has that implication), it certainly rules out its being either the only good or a good that trumps all others. If it is a good, then there will be many different situations requiring trade-offs between it and such goods as friendship, knowledge, and autonomy, and VPG implies that there is no way to rank the trade-offs. Hence, suppose that highly autonomous people tend on average to experience more frustration and less contentment throughout their lives than low autonomy people do. VPG denies Mill's claim that it is (prudentially) better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. It holds that their lives are incomparable.

II

The Fundamentalist Christian believes that she leads a better life as someone who accepts scriptural inerrancy and rejects evolution than she would as a Darwinian atheist. She also believes that Darwinian atheists like Richard Dawkins would be better off if they converted to Christianity. Dawkins believes just the reverse (about himself and others). The "conceptions of the good" that each holds imply comparative well-being judgments about both self and others, and those judgments rank not just very good lives over bad lives (like The Beatles over The Monkees) but good lives over other good lives (like The Beatles over Led Zeppelin). Because they do the latter, VPG implies that they are not true. The conceptions of the good held by Fundamentalist Christians and secular humanists are examples of monistic *summa bona* whose value judgments are false. They may be "valid" in the sense that lives lived according to them achieve

genuine human flourishing, but they are not “valid” in the sense that the judgments they make about the good life are true.

Some conceptions of the good imply that a very short life with higher goods A, B, and C is to be preferred to a very long life without them. Consider, for example, the idea that death is preferable to a life without “liberty” where the liberty in question includes not just the kind that the slave lacks but the freedom to pass out pamphlets critical of government policy. Another example is the conception of the good of Islamist fanatics, according to which it is better to die in a jihad against infidel systems of belief than to live along side them in peace. These conceptions deny what we saw in the previous section is one implication of VPG: the priority of the “basic” goods needed for a minimally decent life over the “higher” goods. Defenders of VPG must say these conceptions too are false *summa bona*.

In claiming that all of these conceptions are false, VPG doesn’t say anything about them that they don’t say about each other or about VPG. All are rival competitors in the same contest or debate, and each provides its own explanation of why there is disagreement rather than universal acceptance of what it says is the one, true view (itself). In claiming that Fundamentalist Christianity and secular humanism are false, the defender of VPG isn’t committed to the further claim that anyone who accepts such views and rejects VPG is either morally or epistemically unreasonable. Generally speaking, whether or not a judgment is true and whether or not it is epistemically reasonable to make it are two separate questions. But while VPG doesn’t imply that defenders of such views are unreasonable, it also does not imply that they are reasonable. In this respect it differs from the “burdens of judgment” doctrine of Rawls’ “political liberalism,” which takes no stand on whether such views are true or false but says that those who hold them are “reasonable” (not just morally) to do so.¹⁰ This

difference between the two views turns out to be significant for the second argument for Berlin's thesis that we'll consider.

Another implication of the incommensurability thesis is that there is no way to rank radically different ways of living for specific individuals. Hence, not only is the judgment that the respectable philosophy professor way of life is better than the bohemian artist way of life incorrect, but so is the judgment that Pablo Picasso led a better life as a bohemian artist than he would have, had he chosen as a young man to pursue the career of a G.E. Moore. Clearly these are different, logically independent types of judgment. One can consistently hold that the best life for Picasso, given his talents and interests, was as a bohemian artist, without holding that that's the best life for everyone. The idea that anyone leads a flourishing life only if it is centered on some fairly specific activity—religious devotion, philosophical contemplation, political activism, artistic creativity, etc.—is the essence of a “narrow *summum bonum*.” So the fact that one can consistently affirm the one type of judgment while denying the other means that one can reject all narrow, sectarian *summa bona* without accepting VPG's incommensurability thesis.¹¹

Another way to see this last point is by considering hedonistic and preference satisfaction theories of the good. These theories say that all prudential values are commensurate on the scales of intensity of pleasure/pain or strength of desire/aversion. But they do not support a narrow *summum bonum*. Given the wide range of differences in people's talents, tastes, and temperaments, both imply that the best life for one person is likely to differ greatly from the best life for another.

John Gray appears to deny that VPG's incommensurability thesis rules out all intrapersonal welfare judgments (except the two noted at the very end of section I). He holds that it undermines only the intrapersonal judgments made by “universalist faiths” like Fundamentalist Christianity, secular humanism, and Enlightenment liberalism, not

those made by “particularist faiths” like Hinduism, Shintoism, and Orthodox Judaism. What’s distinctive about a “particularist” faith is that it does not address its judgments about how to rank conflicting goods to “outsiders” who reject it and the way of life that it upholds.¹²

But Gray misunderstands VPG. Though the Shinto priest may not say to the Westerner “you would be better off if you cared more about your dead ancestors and less about consumer comforts,” he addresses admonitions of this sort to his compatriots or even himself during moments of backsliding. In doing so, he runs afoul of VPG’s incommensurability thesis. VPG implies that there is no correct way to resolve conflicts among disparate values like piety/spirituality and physical comfort. The priest’s admonition simply is not true—*whether it is addressed to the whole world, to a small, local audience, or to himself only*. The fact that the priest’s “particularist faith” does not say to Westerners who reject it that they would be better off if they accepted it is not enough to render it consistent with VPG.

Finally, as well as ruling out most intrapersonal welfare judgments, VPG also rules out most interpersonal ones. Value pluralists condemn utilitarianism for its commitment to another *summum bonum*, namely, the maximization of social utility. Notice that if this too is a “*summum bonum*,” then the term is ambiguous, because the maximization of everyone’s pleasure or preference satisfaction is not an unduly narrow conception of what is a flourishing life for individuals, like the Aristotelian or Thomistic *summum bonum*. It is supposed to be the good for society as a whole, consisting in the aggregation of the good of each of its members. Yet VPG’s incommensurability thesis rules out this sort of *summum bonum* for the same reason it rules out the Thomist’s. The aggregation of heterogeneous harms and benefits—whether they accrue to one person or several persons—is impossible in the absence of a common value yardstick.¹³

III

I now turn to the three arguments for Berlin's thesis, beginning with the "diversity argument." It says that social diversity is valuable, value pluralism provides the best explanation of why it's valuable, and liberal practices are justified by their superior ability to protect or foster this value. I'll distinguish two versions of this argument and try to show that neither succeeds in establishing Berlin's thesis.

Social diversity comes in many types: religious, ethnic, cultural, etc. It also comes in different degrees: the degree to which a society is religiously diverse depends upon how many different religious groups, sects, or churches it harbors. The claim that religious and other diversities are valuable presumably requires the implicit proviso that the groups in question are "morally reasonable." That means that each is committed to a way of life that can coexist peacefully with that of other groups; none requires the exploitation or domination of other groups. Hence, the claim is that a society with Mormons, Unitarians, atheists, and Hindus is better than one with only Mormons, not that a society that with Vikings or the Taliban is better than one without.

Galston holds that a liberal society that seeks "maximal feasible accommodation" for the civic associations and cultural communities within it will protect and promote diversity better than a non-liberal society. Because he thinks that value pluralism implies the value of diversity, Galston infers that it supports a liberalism based on "maximal feasible accommodation." Galston isn't too clear about what exactly "maximal feasible accommodation" entails, but it appears to require Supreme Court decisions like *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (the Amish don't have to provide their children formal schooling past the eighth grade) and to preclude decisions like *Oregon v. Smith* (no exemption from anti-drug laws for Native Americans who wish to use peyote in religious rituals).¹⁴ Hence, VPG supports a liberalism that would leave the Amish alone, allow them to rear

their children into a way of life low in and hostile to the value of individual autonomy. By contrast, a liberalism grounded on the Millian *summum bonum* supports enforcing the state's requirement of formal schooling for Amish children, since such schooling fosters autonomy. (William O. Douglas, in his dissenting opinion in *Yoder*, complained that the majority view failed to protect the Amish child who might some day wish to become "a pianist or an astronaut or an oceanographer"). Galston thinks it is a defect of Millian liberalism that it gives priority to autonomy over diversity when the two values clash.

Galston is not the only writer to defend a link between value pluralism and the good of diversity among groups and individuals committed to different types of flourishing lives. John Gray also thinks that value pluralism upholds the value of such diversity. Only he denies the link that Galston affirms between liberalism and diversity. According to Gray, "the range of forms of genuine human flourishing is considerably larger than can be accommodated within liberal forms of life." Liberal societies "tend to drive out non-liberal forms of life, to ghettoize or marginalize them, or to trivialize them."¹⁵ Since liberal regimes everywhere would reduce the diversity of the world's cultures and forms of life, Gray infers that value pluralism undermines liberal universalism.¹⁶ Another writer to defend a link between value pluralism and diversity is Bernard Williams. Williams asserts (rather cryptically), "if there are many and competing genuine values, then the greater the extent to which a society tends to be single-valued, the more genuine values it neglects or suppresses. More, to this extent, must mean better."¹⁷ Galston, Gray, and Williams all agree that value pluralism implies that diversity in the sense of a multiplicity of cultures, sects, lifestyles, and civic associations is valuable.

What kind of value might social diversity possess? The first version of the diversity argument assumes that it is "intrinsically" valuable in the same sense in which some environmentalists hold that biodiversity is intrinsically valuable—namely, valuable

whether or not it contributes to human welfare in any way. Since this value is not prudential, this version of the argument has to appeal to a broader value pluralist thesis that covers all values, aesthetic and deontic as well as prudential.

The claim that social diversity has some kind of intrinsic nonprudential value is certainly intelligible. It is consistent with the broader value pluralist thesis and may even have some merit. Perhaps the value in question is aesthetic. But there are two decisive objections to Galston's argument if it is this one. The first is that moral considerations surely ought to trump aesthetic ones in judgments about whether or not any political practices are justified. The fact that certain practices promote social diversity better than others is an argument in their favor only insofar as more diverse societies are likely to contain fewer rights violations or more welfare.¹⁸

The other, more important objection is that the "intrinsic value" of diversity cannot by itself explain why we should support a policy of "maximal feasible accommodation" or even a right to the free exercise of religion, because these policies are not the most effective means of promoting diversity. The laissez-faire policy of "let a thousand flowers bloom" is not the most effective way to maximize floral diversity in one's garden. Such a policy would permit the crabgrass and dandelions to crowd out the orchids and roses. Many observers of contemporary American society have noted that churches whose theology has become too "liberal" (e.g. rejecting homosexuality as a sin) have suffered declining membership, while churches that make the most onerous and arbitrary demands on their members are thriving. Mormonism, the many varieties of fundamentalist Protestantism, and a conservative, pre-Vatican II Roman Catholicism are gaining followers at the expense of Unitarianism and the like. A state whose goal is to maximize religious diversity ought to protect fragile liberal religions from the belligerent and faster growing conservative ones. Perhaps it could impose restrictions on proselytizing by churches whose membership exceeds a certain percentage of the

community's population. At the very least it could provide public subsidies to religions in danger of dying out.

Of course neither Galston nor any other liberal would support these measures—even if they were the most effective means of fostering religious diversity. That shows that fostering diversity is not a value that by itself can explain Galston's commitment to accommodations for cultural and religious minorities.¹⁹ Galston might respond that he doesn't want the state to maximize diversity, only to avoid acting in ways that would reduce it. The problem with that reply is that if diversity is a good of some sort, then the state ought to try to prevent decreases of it by the actions of non-state entities as well as avoid decreasing it by its own actions.

A better reply to the objection is that even if the state should try to prevent any decrease in religious diversity, and restricting Mormon proselytizing would do that, such an action would sacrifice other values more weighty than diversity. By contrast, failures to provide feasible accommodations to cultural and religious minorities (e.g. enforcing a blanket ban on drug use against Native Americans who want to use peyote in their religious rituals) may advance certain other intrinsic values, but it wouldn't advance them very much and/or those other values aren't especially important. So all things considered, the gain from promoting those values is outweighed by the loss from reduced diversity.

This reply is unobjectionable as far as it goes. Diversity can be an intrinsic value without being the only intrinsic value. The problem is that it assumes commensurability between diversity and whatever other values we are trading it off for when we allow Mormon proselytizing. Thus, it is not a reply available to someone who supports the broader value pluralist thesis. Galston's appeal to the intrinsic value of diversity cannot explain, in a way consistent with that thesis, why we should accommodate Native

American peyote use and leave the Amish alone but we should not restrict Mormon proselytizing.

For the remainder of this paper I intend to ignore the suggestion that Berlin's thesis is properly understood in terms of the broader value pluralist thesis rather than VPG. Far from supporting a liberal theory of justice, the broader VP thesis seems to me clearly inconsistent with it. Even if we reject liberal universalism and hold the more modest view that liberal practices are the best ones for societies "like ours" in certain respects, we will still as liberals have to defend judgments about the relative weight of different values that the broader thesis disallows—such as that the right to free exercise of religion overrides the will of an intolerant majority to suppress religions it judges false.

The second version of the diversity argument says that social diversity is valuable only on account of its contribution to the well being or flourishing of individuals. It claims that more people will lead flourishing lives in a diverse society than in a homogenous one. Since there is more diversity in a liberal than a non-liberal society, it follows that there is more flourishing in it as well. What justifies liberalism is that it makes a flourishing life possible for more people.

Galston notes a couple of ways in which social diversity might contribute to the welfare of society's members. The first is that people are more likely to think for themselves and avoid timid, knee jerk conformity in a society where there's a smorgasbord of different "experiments in living" being conducted. According to the Millian liberal social diversity is good for us, but good only as a *means* to increasing autonomy or individuality, which is necessary for flourishing. The second way in which it might be valuable is by providing a check on the totalistic or tyrannical tendencies of some states. Galston calls this the "Madisonian" argument for the value of diversity. He finds both the Millian and Madisonian explanations of diversity's value to be incomplete

because the only value they attribute to it is instrumental. They overlook its “intrinsic” value.²⁰

But if the value of diversity lies in its contribution to human flourishing, it is difficult to make sense of the claim that it has “intrinsic” value. There is a kind of diversity that it is possible for individuals to exhibit to greater or lesser degrees within their lives. One might be a Muslim for 5 years then a Christian for 5 years, and then renounce all revealed religion and embrace Spinozistic pantheism for one’s last 5 years—as opposed to being a Muslim for all 15 years. The claim that diversity of this sort is an intrinsic prudential good like friendship, autonomy, or knowledge is surely false, but at least it’s coherent. By contrast, the claim that *social* diversity is such a good seems—like the claim that a low rate of monetary inflation is one—to involve a category mistake.

Galston’s focus on social diversity and his claim that it is intrinsically valuable are a red herring. What he really wants to say is that leaving cultural communities like the Amish alone is what’s best for them. If the state does that it will be increasing social diversity. But Galston doesn’t really think that it should leave groups like the Amish alone *in order to* increase social diversity. Increasing social diversity is neither the goal of good liberal policies nor the means to pursue whatever their proper goal is. It is simply a side effect. VPG enters the picture not by supporting the value of social diversity, which is irrelevant to the argument in any case, but by undermining the Millian rationale for not leaving the Amish alone. According to VPG autonomy is indeed one of the objective, “higher” goods, but it is a good that conflicts with and is incommensurate with other objective, “higher” goods. So even if state interference could increase the autonomy of the Amish, that increase would come at the expense of some of those other goods (perhaps the solidarity provided by a shared commitment to certain religious ideals and a simple, agrarian way of living). The Millian view that the Amish would be

better off with more autonomy even if it comes at the expense of these goods rests on a *summum bonum* inconsistent with VPG.

Though the Millian view is indeed inconsistent with VPG, it does not follow that according to VPG the Amish are better off if they are left alone. In fact, VPG rules out that judgment about the Amish every bit as much as the Millian's. If there is a trade-off between autonomy and other "higher" goods, then VPG must deny that one is better off with more of those goods and less autonomy, just as it must deny the Millian's claim that one is better off with more autonomy and less of those goods. (We'll return to this issue later when we take up the third argument for Berlin's thesis). The more important point at this juncture is that VPG cannot be used to show that liberal policies allow more people to lead flourishing lives *via* the value of social diversity. VPG does *not* imply that there is likely to be more flourishing in a diverse society than a homogeneous one. How could it? A society in which ten people are each engaged in a different type of flourishing life may be more diverse than one in which all ten are engaged in the same type, but the two contain exactly the same "amount" of flourishing.²¹ The second version of the diversity argument is no more successful than the first in establishing Berlin's thesis.

IV

I turn now to a second argument that is supposed to derive liberal principles from value pluralism, which Galston states as follows:

Because there is no single uniquely rational ordering or combination of such values, no one can provide a generally valid reason, binding on all individuals, for a particular ranking or combination. There is, therefore, no rational basis for restrictive policies whose justification includes the assertion that there is a unique rational ordering of value. If value pluralism is correct, then as Steven Lukes puts it, "For the state to impose any single solution on some of its citizens is thus (not only from their standpoint) unreasonable...." The value pluralist argument

for negative liberty rests on the insufficiency of the reasons typically invoked in favor of restricting it.²²

Suppose that a state restricts “expressive liberty” by enacting a ban on “irreligion.”²³ According to the liberal principle of political legitimacy (LPPL), state coercion must be justifiable to everyone subject to it. In particular, it is wrong if anyone subject to it can “reasonably” object to it. If VPG is true, then someone (call him “Dawkins”) whose desire to lead an Irreligious (“I”) life is frustrated by the ban can reasonably object to the comparative judgment about the superiority of the religious to the I way of life that the ban presupposes. Hence, from VPG and LPPL together, it follows that a ban on I ways of living is wrong.

Robert Talisse objects that this argument fails because the state’s justification for its ban needn’t run afoul of the incommensurability thesis. All the state need claim is that the religious (“R”) way of living is good; it needn’t claim that it is better than the I way.²⁴ Talisse’s point seems to me incorrect if the ban is paternalistic. In that case the state would have to claim more than just that R is good. After all, if it were to claim that R is good but admit that I is even better, then the ban on I for the good of those who wish to live such a life would be manifestly irrational. Maybe it needn’t claim that R is better than I, but it has to claim at the very least that it is no worse than I. The incommensurability thesis rules out that weaker comparative judgment no less than the stronger one. So VPG if true does undermine a hard paternalist justification for a ban on I ways of living.²⁵

Still, Talisse’s objection to the argument seems to me sound, since the justification for the ban needn’t be paternalistic at all. There are “prevention of harm to others” justifications of a ban on I some of which presuppose a narrow *summum bonum* but others of which don’t. It might be claimed that Dawkins’ publicly blasphemous criticism of R harms the devout by shocking, outraging, or offending them, by exposing

them to temptations they prefer not to face, or by contributing to a moral environment that makes it more difficult for them to impart their values to their children. It might be claimed, further, that since there are many more of them than people like Dawkins (at least in the community we're imagining), the harm they suffer if Dawkins' way of living is tolerated "outweighs" the harm the Dawkins-types suffer if it isn't. This defense of the ban does not assume that the conception of the good held by the devout is correct while the conception of the good held by Dawkins is not. It does not presuppose a narrow, sectarian *summum bonum* whose validity VPG impugns. It is based on numbers and a "neutral" conception of benefits and harms.

Of course, this defense does rely on another kind of "*summum bonum*." As we noted in section II, VPG's incommensurability thesis rules out any conception of the public good according to which it is some simple function of the good of society's members. The problem with this implication of the thesis is that there are cases in which liberals find a "prevention of greater harm to others" justification for public policies to be unobjectionable. Examples include a ban on the use of cell phones while driving, speed limits of 15 mph in school zones when school is letting out, and the requirement that only new cars equipped with seat belts and air bags may be sold to the public. While liberals must reject any "prevention of greater harm to others" justification for a ban on public blasphemy, they don't reject it because they think that the aggregation of harms and benefits across different persons is *never* possible.

The first objection to the argument, then, is that VPG does not necessarily undercut the justification on which illiberal policies depend. Just as it is possible to oppose toleration for all religions on grounds that don't assume the privileged status of any one (hence, John Locke was able to defend a ban on atheism and on religions whose followers swear allegiance to a foreign prince on neutral grounds), so too it is

possible to defend restrictions on liberty (condemned by liberals) on grounds that do not presuppose a narrow *summum bonum*.

Talisse has two more objections to the argument, the first of which seems to me unfair, the other not. The first alleges that the argument is question-begging as a defense of a right to expressive liberty because only those who already support such a right (i.e. liberals) will accept one of its premises, LPPL. To avoid begging the question and to establish Berlin's thesis, Galston needs to show that value pluralism *by itself* entails the right.

Talisse's demand, I think, is not quite fair. Liberalism claims that certain principles of justice or the right are true. If by "value pluralism" we mean VPG, then it could not possibly entail that a ban on blasphemy is wrong simply because *no* theory about the good could by itself entail any claims about the right. Moreover, Berlin's thesis is not that value pluralism by itself entails liberalism but only that it is one key premise in the best argument for it. So if Galston could show that VPG supports a right to expressive liberty not by itself but in conjunction with LPPL, that would be enough to establish Berlin's thesis.

Talisse's other objection to the argument is that even if VPG does undercut the justification on which illiberal policies depend, it doesn't follow that the policies are wrong. To assume that a restriction on liberty is wrong in the absence of a good justification of it is to assume that it is the defenders rather than the opponents of coercive measures who bear the "burden of proof." But it is arbitrary to suppose that either side bears a heavier justificatory burden than the other.

This objection seems to me to be right. If VPG is true and Dawkins knows it, then he can reasonably reject the state's *justification* for its paternalistic ban on his way of living. But that does *not* mean that if VPG is true, then he can reasonably object to the *ban itself*. If the ban is supposed to be paternalistic yet Dawkins reasonably believes

that it harms him, then he can reasonably object to the ban itself (since it is always a good objection to a paternalistic law that it in fact harms those whom it is intended to benefit). Rawls' "burdens of judgment" doctrine (BJ) implies that whether or not Dawkins' belief that an I life is better than R life is true, he is reasonable in maintaining it. Hence, BJ in conjunction with LPPL implies that the paternalism itself is wrong.

But that's not the argument for the wrongness of illiberal measures that we're now considering. That argument retains LPPL as one premise but replaces BJ with VPG. The problem is that the two are not interchangeable. VPG implies that Dawkins' belief that he is better off living an I life is false. As we noted earlier, from the fact that that belief is false it doesn't follow that Dawkins is unreasonable in holding it. But neither does VPG imply that his belief is reasonable, and that's what the argument we're now considering needs to reach its conclusion.

Galston must claim that if Dawkins can reasonably object to the state's justification for its ban, then it *does* follow that he can reasonably object to the ban itself. The fact that the incommensurability thesis undermines the state's justification for the ban (i.e. its judgment that the R life is at least as good as the I life) is sufficient to make the ban wrong, because coercion is wrong in the absence of a good justification of it. Galston has to assume that the "burden" properly falls on the state to defend its coercion in way that's consistent with the incommensurability thesis rather than on Dawkins to defend his objection to it in a way consistent with the thesis. I can see no warrant for that assumption, and so, conclude that the attempt to establish Berlin's thesis via an argument that conjoins VPG and LPPL also fails.²⁶

I turn now to a third argument for Berlin's thesis, one that appeals to the value of goods like integrity and autonomy. Galston maintains that illiberal policies are objectionable because they deprive many people of integrity, which is necessary for a flourishing life. One leads a life of integrity (for Galston) if the way one chooses to live is consistent with one's deepest commitments and values. Integrity involves a congruence between the "inner" and "outer" parts of one's life, something that just about everyone—whether their conception of the good is individualistic or communal, rationalistic or faith-based—values. Galston's claim that one cannot lead a flourishing life without integrity is close if not equivalent to Ronald Dworkin's and Will Kymlicka's view that an improvement in my life can benefit me only if I endorse it as valuable.²⁷ Galston seems to treat integrity and endorsement as the same thing, and I shall do likewise.

Galston presents the argument for the wrongness of illiberal restrictions, based on this view about the value of integrity or endorsement, in his reply to Talisse's "burden shifting" objection to the last argument. He says:

Imagine a dialogue between rulers and ruled. The rulers say, in effect, we will establish way of life T as binding on all citizens. Some of the ruled object and ask why. *Ex hypothesi*, the rulers cannot respond that T is preferable (to U, V, W) for all citizens. Presumably, Talissian rulers will say instead that T exceeds the value pluralist threshold for goodness, they need no further justification. But the ruled can respond that the fact that they endorse (U, V, W.... N) instead makes these ways of life preferable, not *simpliciter*, but for them.... The rulers must then offer a sufficiently compelling reason to overcome the weight of endorsement.²⁸

The argument here can be construed in a couple of different ways. Both rely on LPPL, and both differ from the argument discussed in the previous section insofar as they imply that there is something wrong with the ban itself and not just with certain justifications of it. (It is the ban and not its justification that prevents those who value an I life from holding on to their integrity). According to the first way of construing the

argument, the reason why Dawkins can reasonably judge that the ban harms him is either: i) integrity trumps all other goods, so that *any* endorsed X life is better than *any* non-endorsed Y life (at least if X and Y are both good lives), or more weakly, ii) an endorsed I life is better than a non-endorsed R life because whatever goods are present in the latter and missing from the former (say, goods A, B, and C) are outweighed by the value of endorsement. It needn't be that integrity always has lexical priority over A, B, and C, but only that there isn't enough of A, B, and C in a coerced R life to balance the loss of endorsement.

The argument construed in this way runs into two problems. First, VPG is not a premise in it. In particular, the claim that the I and R ways of life are incommensurate does not figure in it. This argument for the wrongness of a ban on I ways is an *alternative* to one based on VPG's incommensurability thesis, not an extension or elaboration of it. Hence, it is not an argument that supports Berlin's thesis. Second, the argument is based on either the stronger i) or the weaker ii), but both i) and ii) are inconsistent with VPG. This is Talisse's objection to the argument, and it seems to me correct for reasons that I'll expand on shortly.²⁹

Precisely because VPG plays no role in this argument, we should hesitate to attribute it to Galston. In the second way of construing the argument VPG does figure as a premise. A defender of the ban might claim that even if integrity is a positive good, an R life is so much better than an I life that even a coerced R life without integrity is better than an endorsed I life with it, all things considered. One reply to this claim is to try to defend either i) or ii). But another possible reply is simply to invoke VPG. A ban on I harms Dawkins by depriving him of integrity, and because of incommensurability, defenders of the ban cannot respond that the greater value of an R life outweighs the loss of integrity to make it the case that those forced to live an R life against their preferences are better off, all things considered. This gives us an argument for the

wrongness of the ban on I ways of living in which LPPL, the claim that integrity is an important good, *and* VPG all serve as premises. Doesn't it show that Berlin's thesis is correct?

It does not. VPG's incommensurability thesis implies not just that the I and R ways of life are incommensurate but that they remain incommensurate if one is endorsed and the other isn't. It allows us to judge that an endorsed life is better than a non-endorsed one, *other things being equal*: an endorsed I life is better than a non-endorsed I life, an endorsed R life is better than a non-endorsed R life, etc. But that's not the judgment that Dawkins needs to be able reasonably to object that the ban harms him. Integrity needs to be more than just a good, one among many. It needs to be privileged in a certain way, more important or weighty than any goods that may be missing from a life with it and present in a life without it. But the claim that integrity has that much value is inconsistent with VPG. Talisse's charge of inconsistency sticks.³⁰

Galston, I think, has only one possible reply to it. That's to argue that integrity is a good that belongs in the same category as having enough to eat, not being a slave, and not living in constant fear of violent death. That is, it is one of the "basic" goods necessary for a minimally decent life. Recall that VPG permits the judgment that one cannot have a flourishing life without goods of that sort. Presumably if integrity is such a good, then it is appropriate to privilege it over "higher" goods should trade-offs between the two be necessary.

Galston says some things that suggest he does regard integrity as a good with this status. He says other things that suggest a rejection of the "basic"/"higher" goods distinction.³¹ But regardless of whether he accepts the view, it is implausible. To be "basic" a good must be such that without it one does not have even a minimally decent life, much less a flourishing one. It is hard to believe that this is true of integrity or endorsement. Consider someone who defines himself and his worth in terms of his

proficiency at some activity of questionable or very limited value—say, a reclusive college student who is just barely passing his courses because he devotes so much of his time to role-playing games on computers in dark rooms. Most of us are inclined to think that he would be better off if he allocated more of his time to studying, exercising, socializing (face to face) with friends, communing with nature, or pursuing other objective goods. If playing the games often and well is central to his conception of the good life, then perhaps we should think that coercing him to spend less time on them does not benefit him at all. But the suggestion that forcing him to engage in other worthwhile activities deprives him of even a *minimally decent life* surely goes too far.

I conclude that Galston's defense of expressive liberty based on the value of integrity does not support Berlin's thesis. If the claim about integrity's positive value is merely that it is one good among many, then it is weak enough to be consistent with VPG but not strong enough to support the judgment that all things considered a ban on I harms people like Dawkins. If it is strong enough to support that judgment, it will be inconsistent with VPG. And the attempt to eliminate the inconsistency by arguing that integrity is a "basic" good necessary for a minimally decent life fails.

Joseph Raz offers a different argument why a ban on I ways of living would be wrong. Raz says:

... People prosper through a life of self-definition consisting of free choices among a plurality of valuable and incompatible styles and forms of life. This value pluralism, and not skepticism, or value neutrality, is the liberal bulwark against uniformity, against a society imposing through its government or otherwise a uniform vision of the ideal form of life on its population. Furthermore, given that the flourishing life is the self-created life, i.e. a life engaged in freely chosen valuable activities and pursuits, it is not a life which governments or anyone else can give to people, let alone impose on them. Autonomy speaks of an active life freely engaged in by the agent. It is incompatible with any vision of morality being thrust down people's throats. Hence, a government dedicated to pluralism and autonomy cannot make people good.³²

In Raz's argument the value of autonomy replaces the value of integrity, but an appeal to value pluralism remains.

Raz's views about what autonomy is, when it is valuable, and its relation to value pluralism are complex and interesting, but the precise role that autonomy and value pluralism are supposed to play in his defense of liberalism is not entirely clear. Raz rejects liberal universalism and holds that liberal practices are uniquely just only for "societies like ours." Such societies are based on "social forms" or practices that give people many options and demand of them many choices (e.g. the choice of whom to marry and whether to divorce rather than the practices of arranged marriage and no divorce). Within such societies it is only people trained and eager to be highly autonomous who can lead flourishing lives. Since liberal political practices are the ones that most effectively foster autonomy, it follows that they produce more flourishing, at least for people living within the social forms of modern western societies.

David McCabe calls this Raz's "contextual" argument and finds it problematic for a number of reasons.³³ For our purposes the main problem with it is that it cannot establish any version of Berlin's thesis, because it, like Galston's integrity argument, is not consistent with VPG. VPG enters the argument to block the criticism of liberal, autonomy-fostering practices by, for example, the conservative communitarian, who admits that autonomy is a good but judges that the bad consequences of those practices (increased alienation and anomie, decreased solidarity and concern for communal values and traditions) outweigh it. VPG's incommensurability thesis blocks the conservative's judgment.³⁴ The problem is that it also rules out the judgment that for people living within the social forms prevalent in liberal societies, the positive value of being highly autonomous outweighs the negative value of those evils. Raz's claim that autonomy is preeminently valuable may be qualified so that it applies only to people living within certain social forms, but that qualification does not make his claim any more consistent with VPG than the claim without the qualification would be.

Suppose that Raz is right about the importance of autonomy within the social forms of our society. Suppose that people deficient in autonomy are unlikely to be successful in romance, friendship, career, etc., and they are likely to suffer much higher levels of frustration and disappointment in their lives. VPG will allow us to say that these people would be better off with more autonomy and less of these evils only if there are *no* “higher” goods that they have more of precisely because they are deficient in autonomy. It is hard to see how the contextual argument could possibly establish that such a trade-off does not exist.³⁵

VI

By “welfare liberalism” I mean the view that the *primary* reason why illiberal practices like slavery, viewpoint-based censorship, a ban on homosexual sodomy, and so forth are wrong is that they leave the average person *worse off*. Mill’s idea that people are likely to be better off under a state that adheres to the “one, very simple principle of liberty” because they are likely to have more individuality or autonomy, which is essential to human flourishing, is a version of it. So are Galston’s argument that illiberal practices like a ban on LGBT ways of living are wrong because they deprive those living under them of “integrity,” and Raz’s contextual argument that they are wrong for us because they reduce our autonomy (a high level of which is necessary for the flourishing of those of us living within the social forms of modern Western societies). So welfare liberalism comes in many varieties. It is not committed to identifying welfare with subjective utility, or to the idea that welfare (a fair distribution of it) is the only value in terms of which liberal practices are to be justified. The welfare liberal can admit that slavery is wrong not just because of the suffering slaves endure but also (though secondarily) because it treats some persons with disrespect.

VPG's rejection of most intrapersonal welfare judgments and of any aggregation across persons is not a problem for liberalism if the best justification of key liberal practices is not welfarist. Some liberal theorists who embrace universalism defend those practices solely by appeal to deontological moral principles that are "prior" to and independent of the good—such as respect for others' natural rights or the duty to treat all persons as ends-in-themselves. Deontological liberals can accept VPG—as well as hedonistic, preference satisfaction, and Millian autonomy-centered accounts of the good—as fully consistent with a liberal theory of justice. The fact that VPG undermines the project of a welfarist defense of liberalism is no threat to liberal practices, according to these liberals, because what justifies the practices are principles that are independent of any theory of the good life.

VPG's account of prudential value also presents no problem for liberal apologia if the "political" liberalism of such writers as John Rawls, Charles Larmore, Bruce Ackerman, and Thomas Nagel is sound. According to this view, the best defense of liberal practices in a society like ours, where many citizens reasonably affirm a variety of different reasonable "comprehensive philosophical doctrines," is one that is "free-standing" and "neutral" on which account of the good life is true. Any problems that VPG creates for a welfarist justification of liberalism are irrelevant to the "public" justification for the liberal state.³⁶

Value pluralist liberals hold, rightly in my view, that neither a purely deontological defense of liberalism nor one that tries to make it a "free standing" view uncommitted to any controversial metaphysical, epistemological, or moral doctrines, is viable. Galston and Raz assume that a justification of liberal practices has to be a welfarist one; it cannot remain neutral on the question of what constitutes a good life for the person who is living it. What these writers fail to come to grips with is that VPG's rejection of most intrapersonal welfare judgments and of any aggregation across persons makes it

inconsistent with more than just a welfarism based on a narrow, sectarian *summum bonum*. It makes it inconsistent with almost any welfarist defense of liberalism.

The reason for the “almost” qualification is that VPG does allow us to judge a life with the basic goods as better than a life without them. That means that there is one (and only one) possible welfarist defense of liberal practices that’s consistent with VPG, namely, one that alleges that only in a society with such practices is it possible to have a minimally decent life. The problem with that defense is that its claim on behalf of liberal institutions is far too strong. Surely, for example, gay people can have minimally decent lives if they are subject to nonliberal policies that “tolerate” homosexuality (i.e. it’s not criminalized) but deny them the option of legal marriage. And all of us can have a minimally decent life in a society that has abandoned the principle of no viewpoint-based censorship and prosecutes the advocacy of racist viewpoints. Yet the main objection to such policies remains a welfarist one. Liberals who wish to press it have no alternative but to reject VPG.

¹ Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 124.

² Galston defends the universalist claim in chapter 5 of *Liberal Pluralism: The Implications of Value Pluralism for Political Theory and Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 2002). This book and *The Practice of Liberal Pluralism* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) present his defense of Berlin's thesis.

³ For a defense of the view that monism allows for rational regret in hard cases, see Thomas Hurka, "Monism, Pluralism, and Rational Regret," *Ethics* v. 106 no. 3 (1996), pp. 555-75. Note that if explaining the possibility of "rational regret" after a hard choice is made is a good argument in favor of value pluralism, then explaining anguished deliberation prior to the choice ought to be an equally strong argument against it. Why fret over choices between incommensurate bundles of goods if there is no rational basis to prefer one to the other? Value pluralism leaves no room for the worry that one's choice in these cases might be mistaken.

⁴ Much of the confusion can be traced to the mistaken belief held by many of value pluralism's defenders that commensurability between two values A and B requires a substantive "supervalue" C that is the source of their value. In reality all that commensurability requires is that it be possible to rank trade-offs between A and B, to say things like "a lot of A is worth more than a tiny bit of B." That might require a "common currency," but a purely formal notion of "value" rather than some substantive thing like pleasure or desire satisfaction or approval by God can provide it. Galston admits that "monists" can believe in irreducibly multiple intrinsic values. See *Liberal Pluralism*, p. 6.

⁵ If the two bands are incomparable, then neither is better than the other *and* the two are not equally valuable. To rule out the possibility of equal value, we would have to claim that there is some other band such that the Beatles are better than it but Led

Zeppelin is not. (If the Beatles and Led Zeppelin were equally good, then the fact that the Beatles are better than that other band would entail that Led Zeppelin is better than it too). See Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford University Press: 1986), chapter 13.

⁶ The idea that value pluralism is the rejection of simple priority rules, not the denial that there's an all-things-considered best choice on which reasonable people can agree, figures prominently in the Berlin-Williams reply to George Crowder's criticisms of Berlin's thesis. See Bernard Williams and Isaiah Berlin, "Pluralism and Liberalism: A Reply," *Political Studies* (1994), XLII, 306-9. Crowder's paper, "Pluralism and Liberalism," is in the same issue, pp. 293-305

⁷ Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 4.

⁸ John Gray, "Where Pluralists and Liberals Part Company," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* v. 6, n. 1 (1998), 17–36, p. 19.

⁹ See Galston, *The Practice of Liberal Pluralism*, p. 189, and *Liberal Pluralism*, p. 30, paragraphs 2 and 3. On p. 189 Galston says: "Value pluralism as Gray and I understand it suggests that above the line that separates human goods from the great evils of the human condition, there is a wide range within which various individual and communal ways of life are rationally defensible." I take this to mean that *below* that line (wherever it is) the incommensurability thesis is not supposed to hold.

¹⁰ See John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 54-58.

¹¹ This point is noted by Donald Regan in "Authority and Value: Reflections on Raz's Morality of Freedom," *Southern California Law Review* 62 (1989) 995-1095.

¹² See "Where Pluralists and Liberals Part Company," p. 31, and *Isaiah Berlin* (Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 151.

¹³ Brian Barry objects to preference utilitarianism on the grounds that it requires some people to “accept a way of regarding their own conceptions of the good [i.e. as mere preferences] that they could reasonably find repugnant.” Galston seconds Barry’s objection (*LP*, p. 33), but he fails to notice that if consonance with people’s own self-understanding of their conception of the good is a test that theories of prudential value must pass to be acceptable, then VPG flunks it as badly as any preference satisfaction account of the good.

¹⁴ I assume Galston intends something like the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, which required that any neutrally grounded restriction of religious liberty must satisfy the “strict scrutiny” test to be acceptable. Stephen Macedo argues that “Galston’s ‘maximal feasible accommodation to diversity’ is a dangerous assault on the democratic authority to make public policy” in “The Perils of Diversity,” *The American Prospect*, December 30, 2002, pp. 36-39.

¹⁵ John Gray, *Enlightenment’s Wake* (Routledge, 1997), p. 133 and *Isaiah Berlin* (Princeton University Press, 1996) p. 154.

¹⁶ Notice that Gray needn’t deny that a liberal regime is likely to make any society more diverse. The dispute between Galston and Gray is over the level at which diversity is valuable: nationally or internationally. Gray thinks that some regimes that reduce a nation’s diversity augment the world’s.

¹⁷ Bernard Williams, “Introduction” to I. Berlin, *Concepts and Categories* (Oxford University Press, 1980), p. xvii.

¹⁸ Raz calls this the “humanistic” principle: “the explanation and justification of the goodness or badness of anything derives ultimately from its contribution, actual or possible, to human life and its quality,” Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 194.

¹⁹ Will Kymlicka rejects the promotion of cultural diversity as a justification for a legal right of cultural minorities to maintain practices crucial to their survival and identity. See *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 121-23.

²⁰ *Liberal Pluralism*, p. 27.

²¹ Not in any sense that requires us to aggregate flourishing across different persons (something that VPG denies is possible), but only in the sense that there are as many flourishing people in the one society as in the other.

²² See *Liberal Pluralism*, pp. 57-58. The Stephen Lukes quotation is from his “Making Sense of Moral Conflict,” in Nancy Rosenblum (ed.), *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (Harvard University Press, 1989).

²³ “Expressive liberty” is a kind of negative liberty that allows people to “live their lives in ways that express their deepest beliefs about what gives meaning or value to life.” A commitment to a strong individual right to expressive liberty is a core feature of a liberal theory of justice. See *Liberal Pluralism*, p. 28.

²⁴ Talisse imagines three ways of life that are all good—A, a life of Millian civic engagement; B, a life of devotion to traditional religion; and C, a life of Emersonian self-sufficiency. He then argues:

The state indeed has good reason to promote, for example, A, namely that *A is good*. Of course, the value pluralist will insist that the state has no *better* reason for promoting Millian civic liberty than religious devotion or Emersonian self-sufficiency, but surely this is *not* a reason for remaining neutral with regard to these options, and it is *not* a reason to not promote Millian civic liberty. After all, *ex hypothesi*, the Millian way of life is actually good. What could be a better reason for imposing it? How could it be “unreasonable” to promote a good *because* it is good? (p. 134).

Robert Talisse, “Can Value Pluralists Be Comprehensive Liberals? Galston’s Liberal Pluralism,” *Contemporary Political Theory* v. 3, no. 2 (2004), pp. 127-39.

²⁵ Note that the defender of the state's hard paternalism must defend two claims: first, that Dawkins is better off being forced to live an R life than left free to live an I one, and second, that even if the paternalism here is "hard" because it violates his right to self-determination or autonomy, it remains justified because beneficence (the duty to promote others' good) overrides the duty to respect autonomy, at least in cases like this. VPG implies that the first claim is false but says nothing about the second one. The broader value pluralist thesis rejects both claims as false.

²⁶ In chapter 6 of *Liberal Pluralism* Galston agrees with Chaim Perelman that there is a "legal presumption" in favor of not changing laws that have been in existence for a long time. So if a ban on I ways of living is long standing, the presumption in favor of leaving it alone clashes with the presumption against coercion. What then? Do the two presumptions cancel each other out in that case, or is the one against the coercion supposed to be stronger than the one against upsetting the legal *status quo*?

²⁷ Kymlicka says: "While we may be mistaken in our beliefs about value, it doesn't follow that someone else, who has reason to believe that a mistake has been made, can come along and improve my life by leading it for me, in accordance with the correct account of value. On the contrary, no life goes better by being led from the outside according to values the person doesn't endorse. My life only goes better if I'm leading it from inside, according to my beliefs about value." Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 12.

²⁸ Galston, *The Practice of Liberal Pluralism*, pp. 191-92.

²⁹ Talisse, p. 135.

³⁰ The way that Talisse frames his inconsistency objection is unfortunate. He claims that a belief in the privileged value of integrity is tantamount to the Millian *summum bonum* ("autonomy is necessary for anyone to flourish"), which is undoubtedly

inconsistent with VPG. But his assumption that autonomy and integrity are identical is mistaken. Autonomy requires more than just that one live in accordance with one's deepest values and commitments. It also requires that one subject one's values to critical scrutiny and hold them tentatively, for only so long as they can withstand rational examination. Galston's denial that autonomy and integrity are the same thing (see *Practice of Liberal Pluralism*, p. 192) seems to me correct, but it doesn't dispose of the inconsistency charge.

³¹ See his second objection to Gray in *The Practice of Liberal Pluralism* on the pp. 188-89. His point seems to be that integrity is a good no less vital than social peace to a minimally decent life. Unfortunately, Galston has another criticism of Gray that is inconsistent with the spirit of this reply, namely, that Gray "works mightily to distinguish his focus on peaceful coexistence from an antipluralist elevation of peace to the status of highest value" but in the end "fails" (p. 188). This criticism suggests an understanding of the incommensurability thesis according to which it applies to all goods and prudential values (not just the "higher" ones). If Galston accepts this more radical incommensurability thesis, then he is stuck with a version of value pluralism that is barely distinguishable from a complete skepticism or subjectivism about prudential value.

³² Joseph Raz, "Liberalism, Scepticism, and Democracy," in *Ethics in the Public Domain* (Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 105.

³³ David McCabe, "Joseph Raz and the Contextual Argument for Liberal Perfectionism," *Ethics* 111 (April 2001): 493-522. Raz's "contextual" argument should be distinguished from the argument of George Crowder, who maintains that value pluralism supports the special or preeminent value of autonomy for everyone (not just those living under the social forms of Western societies) in his *Value Pluralism and Liberalism*

(Continuum, 2002). Crowder defends autonomy as a “transcendent” (to use McCabe’s term) value. Galston soundly criticizes Crowder’s argument in *Practice of Liberal Pluralism*, p. 190.

³⁴ McCabe considers this deployment of the VPG thesis on pp. 515-16.

³⁵ For this reason I believe that Steven Wall’s attempt to reconcile the conclusion of Raz’s contextualist argument with VPG (about which Wall seems to be agnostic) is unsuccessful. [See his *Liberalism, Perfectionism, and Restraint* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), chapter 7]. One difficulty I have with Wall’s interpretation of the contextual argument is that I do not see why he thinks it proves that “nonautonomous subgroups” in modern western societies (e.g. the Amish) cannot lead fully good lives. (See p. 181). They live in separate enclaves and keep their contact with outsiders to a minimum. To the extent that they succeed in sustaining their own unique customs, gender relations, methods of economic production, and religious organization, it is not at all clear that they are subject to or participate in the same social forms as the rest of us. If the value pluralist believes that 13th century Benedictine monks could lead flourishing lives in spite of their deficiency in autonomy, it is hard to see she shouldn’t believe likewise about 21st century Pennsylvania Amish farmers.

³⁶ Both political liberalism and deontological liberalism also reject Berlin’s thesis that VPG plays a vital role in the best justification of liberal practices. Political liberalism in particular regards VPG as just one more “comprehensive philosophical doctrine”; the public justification for liberal practices should not rely on it any more than on a sectarian *summum bonum* like the Millian ideal of an autonomous life. Charles Larmore argues against value pluralism as an acceptable basis for liberal democracy in *The Morals of Modernity*, pp. 155-75.